

JANICE ALMIGHTY - A CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS MUSICAL COMEDY

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis records the process of writing, devising, designing, directing, choreographing and performing *JANICE ALMIGHTY: A Contemporary Circus Musical*. It is an autoethnographic exploration of anxiety and mental health exceptionalities as both hinderance and catalyst for performance and creation. The author examines storytelling techniques incorporating elements of Contemporary Circus, Text, Aerial Dance, Choreography, Music Comedy and Clown.

DEDICATION

For Arlo James Dottor Hollyman, my heart, my soul, the magic of my world, my son.

For Ryan James Frederick Hollyman, my love.

For all those who dance.

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JANICE ALMIGHTY - A Contemporary Circus Musical Introduction

I was born in Sault Ste Marie, and grew up in the 80's. Before "So You Think You Can Dance", nobody knew what the term "Choreographer" meant, including myself. But in retrospect, I realize, I have always been one. I'd be in a grocery store, making up a dance for the soup cans that they could perform for the Rice-a Roni audience across the aisle. I'd make up a dance in the aisles of the library, through the maze of novels and textbooks. On long road trips with my family, I imagined chorus lines of dancers and acrobats dancing along the telephone wires that ran along the highway. And at age 10, I staged my first full length piece - I choreographed the entire soundtrack of Beverly Hills Cop in my backyard with my sisters. We charged the neighborhood boys (all of the girls were in the show), 10 cents a ticket and they paid in pennies. (I still think it's my best work. And deserves a remount.) The magic of theatre was ignited into my soul as well. In grade four, my enrichment class decided to put on a play for groundhog day - Mr. Gopher's Day Off. I played Mr. Porcupine. We got to eat a real rhubarb pie onstage in front of the entire school and it wasn't even recess. Despite the strands of rhubarb stuck in my teeth which made me slur my words, I was hooked. Bit by the bug so to speak. How do I distill what theatre and dance means to me? It's nearly impossible. What inspires me to continue creating and has been a major motivator in the creation of my MFA thesis show remains rooted in my earliest memories of artistic discovery. Those memories all reside in a feeling of magic. I love creating a world, within the world and living in it for a while. A pretend world within the real world, a real world within the pretend world. It is pure magic.

I always refer back to this story about Martha Graham's advice to Agnes de Mille back in the 40's. I read it on opening nights to remind myself what my job is as an artist, and I read it to cast members and students with the same intent.

Back in 1943, dancer/choreographer Agnes de Mille had just achieved the greatest success of her career, but at this moment, the only thing she felt was confusion. Early in her career, de

Mille had created the choreography for a ballet called *Three Virgins and a Devil*. She thought it was good work, but nobody made much of it. A few years later, de Mille choreographed a ballet named *Rodeo*. Again, she thought her work was solid, but it resulted in little commercial fame. Then, in 1943, de Mille choreographed *Oklahoma!*, a musical show from Rodgers and Hammerstein that enjoyed instantaneous success. In the coming years, *Oklahoma!* would run for an incredible 2,212 performances, both around the nation and abroad. In 1955, the film version won an Academy Award. But the success of *Oklahoma!* confused her. She thought, her work in *Oklahoma!* was only average compared to some of her other creations. She later said, “After the opening of *Oklahoma!*, I suddenly had unexpected, flamboyant success for a work I thought was only fairly good, after years of neglect for work I thought was fine. I was bewildered and worried that my entire scale of values was untrustworthy. I talked to Martha.” Martha was Martha Graham, perhaps the most influential dance choreographer of the 20th century. (Although not as well-known by the general public, Graham has been compared to other creative geniuses like Picasso or Frank Lloyd Wright.) During their conversation, de Mille told Martha Graham about her frustration. “I confessed that I had a burning desire to be excellent, but no faith that I could be.” Graham responded by saying,

“There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.” (Baldwin 2022).

Martha Graham's advice takes this concept a step further by explaining that not only are you a bad judge of your own work, it is not your job to judge your own work. It is not your place to compare it to others. It is not your responsibility to figure out how valuable it is or how useful it

can be. Instead, your responsibility is to create. Your job is to share what you have to offer from where you are right now. (Baldwin 2022).

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

I'm a multi-hyphenate artist working as a choreographer, director, actor, dancer, contemporary circus creator, writer, installation artist and designer. I like to cross weave these artforms together.

As an “artistic weaver”, some of the artistic risks I am taking in this creative process include creating for interdisciplinary artists with a focus on cross-pollinating artistic forms, ie, an aerialist speaking lines (which is typically terrifying for them) or actors exploring apparatus’ (equally terrifying from their perspective). Personally, this all contributes to expanding my growth as a project leader of a large scale works of Circus Theatre. Other risks I will be taking include facilitating and leading a creative process in which exploration of traditional artistic practices are explored in new ways, mixing and weaving all the disciplines together (circus, dance and theatre) using the devised theatre creation method as well as installation design, including inventing new circus apparatuses, where artists who have not worked in various forms will be exploring/implementing new forms.

I am deepening areas of my own artistic exploration and innovation. The multidisciplinary nature of this project and the devised-creation approach will broaden my skills as an artistic creator. Working in multiple disciplines has enriched my desire to weave together elements of theatre, circus, textile installation art, invented apparatuses, dance, music and comedy. My thesis

project will nourish my interdisciplinary process of creation and push me past my own status quo.

MAJOR INSPIRATIONS

MOMIX and PILOBOLUS

MOMIX is a dance company based in Washington, Connecticut. It was founded in 1981 by choreographer Moses Pendleton. MOMIX was conceptualized out of work Pendleton did for a celebration of Erik Satie at the Paris Opera in 1978. MOMIX is an offshoot of the dance company PILOBOLUS, which Pendleton co-founded in 1971. MOMIX presents works that combine acrobatics, dance, gymnastics, mime, props, and film in a theatrical setting. The company is known internationally for presenting work of exceptional inventiveness and physical beauty, MOMIX is a company of dancer-illusionists under the direction of Moses Pendleton.

KIDD PIVOT and CRYSTAL PITE

In a choreographic career spanning three decades, Crystal Pite has created more than 50 works for dance companies in Canada and around the world. She is the founding artistic director of the Vancouver-based company Kidd Pivot, world-renowned for radical hybrids of dance and theatre that are assembled with a keen sense of wit and invention. Ms. Pite is known for works that courageously address such challenging and complex themes as trauma, addiction, conflict, consciousness and mortality; her bold and original vision has earned her international acclaim and inspired an entire generation of dance artists.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

"Circus of the Sun" or "Sun Circus" is a Canadian entertainment company and the largest producer of contemporary circus in the world. Their home base is in the inner-city area of

Saint-Michel, Quebec and it was founded on June 16th, 1984 by former street performers Guy Laliberté and Gilles Ste. Croix. Its theatrical, character-driven approach and the absence of performing animals helped define Cirque du Soleil as the pre-eminent contemporary circus ("nouveau cirque") that it remains today.

Integrating Contemporary Circus and Modern Dance into Text and Installation Design

My own artistic challenge and research should really start with a modern dance, since that's what I feel most comfortable creating and that would essentially be putting my best foot forward. Describing my artistic challenge deserves an opening number at the very least but I will do my best with words. Five, Six, seven, eight....

As a professional artist who has worked as an actor, dancer, choreographer, director, writer, circus artist, installation artist, musician, composer, costume and set designer for over twenty years, I am happiest when I am weaving together these different yet complementary art forms and braiding them into each other like a mid-century modern macrame wall owl. When I am in creation mode, the elements of environmental design, the direction, the choreographic vision, the circus components and the music composition become very interdependent. My artistic challenge would be to wear as many of these hats as I can and weave them together to create a show where all of these elements emerge from my own "clown" brain and become realized with my own hands. As a multi-hyphenate artist, I am most interested in deepening my investigation on how to integrate modern dance and contemporary circus with text and installation art to represent the emotional undercurrent of the scenes in a show. I focus on the concept of movement as text and support it through various case studies of modern dance and circus in Canada, including Cirque du Soleil, Crystal Pite, MOMIX and my own work.

To begin, how does one represent the emotional undercurrent of a scene? Isn't that what subtext is? And isn't that something we do *not* want to see? As an actor, you can't play "an emotion".

Emotions are not playable. A choreographer I worked with once (Serge Bennathan at Dancemakers), told the audience at a talkback session after a show, that often in Modern Dance there is nothing to "get" but everything to "feel". We, modern dancers, do not need to see the subtext or the emotional undercurrent, but we would like to create space for the audience to *feel*.

This theory has stayed with me for a very long time and I often revisit it in my own work.

Sometimes, I like to think of movement as subliminal messaging. Movement has the power to take over where words trail off if crafted with care. This fascinates me: the possibility of using choreography to support text in a non-verbal contextualizing fashion as an emotional supplement in the development of characters.

In my own work, I often incorporate a Greek Chorus, and this has become an effective way to link the text with the movement. Traditionally, the Greek Chorus danced and sang (Weiner 205) so it is not a stretch to incorporate choreography. But what does seem to be a bit of a stretch is for the choreography (aerial and ground based), to be the prime focus of the chorus with elements of installation art, aerial circus and text, and moreover the most significant tool used to execute their function, acting as a bridge to and/or representation of the audience. For instance, whereas the Greek Chorus would traditionally speak in unison, in my work, they move in unison with elements of contemporary circus sprinkled in.¹

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Circus as a genre has been around for a very long time. The word "circus" is synonymous with images of clowns and elephants, ringmasters, trapeze artists, tightrope walkers, jugglers and the

¹ For archival work, please visit my website at monicadottor.com

illustrious big top tent. Some say that the history of the circus goes as far back as the 18th century. Some scholars suggest that it began in ancient Rome (Ames 25). Contemporary circus, however, is a type of performance that combines aspects of traditional circus with theatre. This genre does not use animals and is more focused on aesthetic impact, and on character and story. According to contemporary thought, the new circus is highly hybrid and focuses on new work. I find the following excerpt especially compelling and informative, which focuses on the postdramatic nature of contemporary circus

“The circus artist’s act traditionally was designed to show the skills they had mastered and to display their bodily prowess. Many circus artists often performed the same act for their entire performing lives. This *modus operandi* was contested in New Circus with the drive for artists to move on from being consenting interpreters invested solely in one circus act, and instead become creative artists in their own right, empowered to contribute to the creation of innovative circus work. In this way the creation of new work became a driving focus in New Circus and this continues in Contemporary Circus. As artists from different disciplines entered New Circus in the 1970s and 1980s, they brought with them diverse aesthetics, and a range of ideas about the creation of work.

Creators in Contemporary Circus are now drawing on these varied approaches from influences such as postdramatic theatre, postmodern dance, installation, and live art to create new circus acts. The function of acts as being to display the performer’s bodily prowess is being contested and many creators are now focused on creating acts that can hold meaning. Improvisational processes such as ‘group-devising’ are being used to include performers in the creative process of developing new movement and textual material. This material is often used as segues to run between acts providing a thematic through-line. Some Contemporary Circus companies are now problematizing the act as the structural unit of circus performances, and are creating innovative work which jettisons the act altogether.” (Lavers et al 2019)

In this way, contemporary circus has moved from pure entertainment of days past, with a greater focus on the collaborative-act and the creation of meaning, usually through non-narrative events.²

Historically within Canada, the Cirque du Soleil, based in Montreal, is a paradigm of creativity within the Canadian commercial performance sector. They started out as a small troupe of street

² Extensive video footage and TED talks are available to experience the contemporary circus. Examples and links are: Crying Out Loud, [2018](#); IG Kultur, [2016](#); TEDx Talks, [2020](#); Worthing Theatres, [2018](#)

performers, stilt walkers, jugglers, and fire dancers in the early 1980s, and have grown exponentially over the years (Lamey 2007). In 2006, the Cirque was cited in a Canadian federal advisory panel as a role model for other Canadian firms merging innovation, talent and technology (Anon 2006). The Cirque has also inspired the formation of other prominent circus troupes in Montreal, such as Cirque Éloise and Les 7 Doigts de la Main. The Cirque du Soleil's success is particularly noteworthy considering the generalized decline in the circus arts over recent decades (Kim 2004). The Cirque entered this landscape not by competing with the traditional circus, but by redefining it altogether. The company reinterpreted what the circus could be, dispensing with animals, as well as the image of the performer as 'star' (Lavers et al 2019). The Cirque is credited with having forged a hybrid—and in many ways postmodern—art form, combining the circus with elements of dance, theatre, music and even television. Cirque productions include acrobats, aerialists and clowns, as well as world beat music and fantastic costumes, lighting and sets. The content of the performances is also transnational. Shows contain no spoken language in order to appeal to international audiences. Rather than developing a strong place-based national identity, the Cirque constructs a new imagined community commonly referred to as 'the imagi-nation'.

In my search for case studies of how productions may have incorporated dance/contemporary circus into Greek Chorus work, and various approaches to chorus work, I realized that contemporary circus companies, including Cirque du Soleil, have integrated elements of Greek Chorus into their work. There are numerous examples, such as their shows entitled *Mystère* and *Saltimbanco* where groups of clowns flock in and out of scenes to share information with the audience. They act as a link between the audience and the world of the performance in the way a

traditional Greek Chorus would, albeit in a non-verbal way, through physical movement, dance and comedy.

In investigating physical virtuosity onstage in dance performance, it became evident that using dancers in choreographic unison echoes the Greek Chorus' function of non-verbality, and reflects the choreographer's ability to "tell a tale " even through abstraction. Internationally lauded director and choreographer Crystal Pite's recent work *Body and Soul* is an example of this. *Body and Soul* is a work in three distinct parts for thirty-six dancers that immediately captivates the audience with its force and brilliant technique. The production articulates Crystal Pite's ongoing fascination with conflict, connectedness, and the embodiment of the human spirit (Kidd Pivot 2021). In part three of the piece, the dancers transform into insects, and the sheer athleticism of the choreography creates a distinct emotional undertone that is haunting and mesmerizing, reflective of the work's content and feats. According to Pite, narrative is a focal point emphasized and complicated by dance: "Dance is a really inefficient and maddening way to tell a complex story. So every time I work on something I have to ask myself why am I doing this in dance?" They continue, sharing, " if I can't find a good answer to that question, then I will abandon the idea" (Kidd Pivot). In this way, the challenge of dance underlines Pite's need to share a story, both in narrative and non-verbal form. Pite's choreography reflects a fascination with quixotic and expressive dancing, and its ability to articulate narrative expressively. While storytelling is familiar in classical ballet and early modern dance, it is less common in contemporary ballet, and fell out of choreographic fashion with postmodern choreographers in the 1960s and '70s. (Kidd Pivot, 2021). Pite's work seems to reflect this fascinating lineage. In order to deepen my own investigation of contemporary circus and dance as integrated into the Greek Chorus, and its representation of the emotional undercurrent within the text, it is important

to understand choreographic gesture and the subliminal power of movement. Through years of working as a dancer and choreographer, I have developed a signature style that I draw upon in my work. For instance, there are certain parts of the body that evoke a more vulnerable feeling when used in a choreographic way. The wrists and forearms, when exposed, can reveal deep melancholy and fragility. The side of the neck can ignite a feeling of repose. The upper chest in an extended high lift can radiate joy and euphoria. Gesture can supplement text beyond the power of the words alone. The essence of dance is communication not merely to tell a story or convey an idea but to communicate an experience in the form of action. In dance, the body is an instrument, a sign of intuition and instinct, and thereby bears the qualifiers necessary to generate and symbolize emotional undercurrent.

I am an interdisciplinary, multi-hyphenate artist working professionally as a theatre and circus creator, actor, dancer, director, choreographer, writer, designer and circus artist for the past 25 years. I have been nominated for 11 Dora Mavor Moore awards (which are the top awards in theatre in Toronto), in 5 different categories including Outstanding Performance, Outstanding Direction, Outstanding Choreography, Outstanding Featured Performance and Outstanding Costume Design. I am the recipient of 3 Dora Awards. As an international artist that has toured and continues to tour, I am currently focused on redefining my own artistic practice. I am now invited to do projects globally that, though exciting, are often collaborative and in which I am facilitating mature, often younger artists in a collaborative creative project that I direct, co-create and dramaturg. Alongside these exciting projects, I am hoping to reconnect with my own artistic practice in which my voice is central. In this context, I am investigating how my skills in many different aspects of theatre creation can be utilized concurrently on one project in which I am the creative leader in all facets.

I am creating a full length Contemporary Circus Musical Comedy called JANICE ALMIGHTY. There will be a cast of 10 and I will be devising, writing, performing, choreographing, designing and directing the show. My interdisciplinary research examines how contemporary circus can incorporate elements of musical theatre, dance and comedy. As part of my methodology, I will be involved in circademic research, and my artistic vision includes the dramatization of anatomy; specifically, the circulatory body as a playful and powerful metaphor for the psychological which is part of the stagecraft and set dramaturgy. The set will be designed to represent the circulatory system, with climbable fabric, aerial silks and bungee cords designed to look like veins and arteries. I will be collaborating with Aerial Fabricator/Textile Artist designer Tanis MacArthur to realize the interior world of the main character, Janice. The characters are literally 'lost' in this physical maze representing the internal body on stage, to create an environment that places the main characters INSIDE themselves. As a multi-hyphenate artist who is nationally recognized as a dance/theatre/circus creator, director and choreographer that already works internationally, I am focused on creating a performance piece that could eventually embark on an international tour in circus venues. Similar to other contemporary circus companies such as Cirque du Soleil, my goal is to reach mainstream audiences. My hope is that using comedy, circus, dance, and visual spectacle, I can create a 'popular' piece that incorporates meaningful content addressing relevant issues of our time regarding mental health, particularly affecting our youth.

Collaborators include Femmes du Feu Creations (Holly Treddenick) and aerialist/dancers Lara Ebata and Natalie Fullerton and Aerial Apparatus fabricator Tanis MacArthur. Holly Treddenick is the founder of Femmes du Feu Creations and producer of Circus Sessions. Her dance, aerial, rigging and choreography skills are critical to help create and combine dance arts and aerial

circus. Lara Ebata and Natalie Fullerton are extraordinary dancers and aerialists. Their extensive knowledge of apparatuses and exceptional skills as performers are vital to this creation process. Holly, Lara, Natalie and I have been working together creatively since 1998. Tanis MacArthur is an accomplished aerialist and circus artist as well as an exceptional designer and aerial apparatus fabricator. I have maintained a long history of working with Holly Treddenick and Femmes Du Feu Creations. This project is an organic progression emerging out of that history of collaboration. I have been hired many times by Femmes Du Feu Creations to direct, choreograph, create and perform over the years. This project has particularly been an opportunity to foster my growth as one of the now most experienced circus directors in Ontario. This is important to develop for Ontario Circus and offer diverse aesthetics of Canadian Circus that are a divergence from the large Quebec companies.

My thesis show, JANICE ALMIGHTY - A Contemporary Circus Dance Musical, centres on the character of “Janice ,” who is in the middle of an existential crisis. Her anxiety, depression and OCD have rendered her practically agoraphobic. So much so, that she journeys deep within her own mind, body, and soul, to uncover her unresolved trauma and to try to make sense of her mental health exceptionalities. Somewhere inside her blood system, her veins and arteries, among her fascia and organs, Janice confronts her own ego: “Janice Almighty.” Janice Almighty has ‘broken up ’ with Janice and plans to completely take over their shared narrative. Janice finds herself on a healing path - inside her own self, the struggle/challenge of who is writing the narrative, Janice or her ego Janice Almighty, comes to a head.

JANICE ALMIGHTY is an interdisciplinary work with elements of dance, theatre, contemporary circus, comedy and installation design. JANICE ALMIGHTY follows a woman who is embarking on an odyssey. The Heroine’s Journey, she will travel through the depths of

her own mind, body and soul, and undergo an adventurous journey of self-discovery and healing before she returns. A Greek Chorus of her own blood cells called The Others, accompany her along the way, guiding her inquisitions.

Some of the story elements explored through physicality and image include, actor/dancers and aerialists replicating cellular structures, forming strands of DNA, fascia, arteries, veins and organs and the use of Bungee trapeze to represent Janice being connected by veins and arteries

Some of the creative elements I will be exploring include text, music, bungee trapeze, deconstructed rope apparatus, modern dance, tap dance and a new invented apparatus that we have named “The Janice” which is a textile based, deconstructed Corde Lisse (aerial rope) which has been braided and woven together with other textiles to create an abstract representation of the arterial system in Janice’s body.

JANICE ALMIGHTY is full of character, imagery, text and story within a choreographic structure. It embraces the fusion of musical theatre, contemporary circus, classical modern dance, installation design and the Greek Chorus to create an artistic spectacle that entertains and educates, as well as enlightens.

CONCLUSION

When I was very little, I was asked if I wanted to play the piano. In my family, there are many classical violinists and classical music is revered. I started taking piano lessons when I had just turned three years old. I could speak English before I could play music but I could read music before I could read words. So, music is my first language then right? Funny. I studied for years, and completed all of the Royal Conservatory of Music exams. I even got a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance and Music. I was actually a good pianist. Musicality was part of the fabric of my being, but technique did not come as naturally to me. It required a great deal of practice. I

remember my violinist uncle gave me an abacus for practicing. The theory was to play whatever piece I was working on one time perfectly all the way through and then move a bead on the abacus across to keep track. Following that, I was to play it four times perfectly and then my practicing would be done for the day. This was a very simple and practical way of practicing. The catch was that if I made a mistake, at any point, even the very last note, I had to start all the way back at one. Practicing a song perfectly four times in a row became very doable. But then, four times became sixteen times because four times four equals sixteen. Then sixteen times became thirty-two times because sixteen times two equals thirty-two and so on. These are among my first memories of anxiety. My anxiety over obtaining perfectionism manifested in an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and it slowly took over my mind.

From a very young age, I have struggled with anxiety. I did not know that anxiety was a mental health exceptionality. It wasn't until years later and three psychiatrists deep that I was professionally diagnosed. My first psychiatrist prescribed a drug called Paxil right away. There was no talking it through and no formal diagnosis but I had come into his office crying and couldn't stop. I had been crying for weeks and weeks and his solution was chemical. It did help with the crying but it did not help with the anxiety. I eventually weaned myself off of that pharmaceutical and I broke up with him. My next psychiatrist Dr. Watson was a lovely man. He was semi-retired and was seeing a select few patients in his lovely home where he had an adorable beagle, a snuggly cat and a library full of autobiographies of golden age hollywood starlets that he frequently lent out. I loved going to his home. He told me stories and talked more than I did. I loved listening to him and he was fascinated with my profession as a performing artist. I felt very special. In retrospect, I was on my best behavior when I was at my appointments and I did always leave his home feeling calmer and more capable of maintaining that serenity

throughout the week until our next appointment. Eventually, Dr. Watson kindly told me that he did not see me as someone with psychological problems but that he was happy to keep visiting with me for as long as I would like. I was very good at masking my symptoms of anxiety. Part of what I have come to realize about my anxiety is that a faction of it centers around social anxieties. I do my best to present myself as very centered and calm and charming. I hide behind humor and I prepare my public self the same way I would prepare a role as an actor. Public Monica is fun, funny, charming and confident. Private Monica is full of swirling thoughts and overwhelming incompetence. My own mind had become my worst bully. I wanted to break up with myself. By the time I started seeing Dr. Anna, my third psychiatrist, I was at an all time confusion. My husband and I were considering having a baby. This triggered my anxiety in very debilitating ways. I was terrified. I wasn't convinced that I would be a good mother. I wasn't able to envision a life in which I could continue to be a creative/performing artist and a mother at the same time. I was very worried that it would have to be a choice and I was extremely aware that caring for another human being from infancy onwards would trump any other priority. I wasn't sure I could take that on. I wasn't sure I wanted to take that on. I was at an impasse and I needed help. Dr. Anna took me on as a patient. At the time, Dr. Anna was the head of In-patient psychiatry at Toronto General Hospital. She was the top psychiatrist at one of the biggest hospitals in Toronto. She was the smartest, clearest, coolest woman I had ever met. I desperately wanted to be her friend and I pulled everything out of my clown pockets to charm her. She was very entertained by me but she saw me right to the core. When she told me that what I was struggling with had a name and that name was Anxiety, I was floored. It changed my universe. With Dr. Anna as my guide, I embarked on a journey of self discovery deep inside my own body and soul. I learned so much about myself, my inner workings, my hidden soul and the many

triggers of newly diagnosed mental health exceptionality that I had been wrestling with since my first piano lesson at the tender age of three years old. This deep journey of self discovery and healing is ongoing. A lot of untangling of knots, deep seated fears and triggers, unresolved traumas and wounds.

When I began the process of devising my thesis project for my MFA, I couldn't help thinking about my own journey with anxiety. I wondered if it could be dramatized. I wondered if it would be possible to use my varied set of skills to create a show that entertains and educates at the same time. I started to realize that I had the potential to bring meaningful content to entertainment/spectacle and that the two walk beautifully hand in hand. I started to imagine the dramatization of a character who needs to break up with a part of herself that is holding her back. A part that does not serve her but only continues to hinder her.

When I think about the artists and companies that inspire me, it is clear that the elements that are making their work big are evocative and their shows contain rich content AND spectacle at the same time. This led me to question how I could use my personal relationship to mental health exceptionalities to dramatize my journey with anxiety in a way that would enlighten and entertain. In this ubiquitous time, after a global pandemic, where mental health struggles are at an all time high, the need for art that examines such topics as anxiety and depression could be very helpful. If that existed when I was a youth, perhaps my journey would have been smoother. I had to try.

In the process of creating this show, inspired by my own struggles with anxiety, I uncovered a personal trauma that was left dormant in my own psyche. As a young actress, I was cast in a very successful show with an extremely reputable company. Over the span of ten years, I toured with

this company all over the world. In that time, I experienced many instances of abuse onstage and off by the director of the company. One particular instance turned me inside out.

The director was really mad at me. He was always mad at me for some reason. When he was mad, he wouldn't look me in the eye onstage. It was juvenile and I always felt so deflated.

When we got to the scene in which I played a dog who joins the circus, he was still full of venom. There's this part in the scene where the circus master (played by the director of the company) kicks the dog. He pretends to kick me and it's fake. It's stage combat and it's fake. I'm on stage on all fours as the dog and he mime- kicks me and I react to it and roll over and it's all very fake. I had done the show over 300 times at that point. And he never made contact. He was a professionally trained mime and I trusted him. He had never hurt me before but he kicked me for real that night. He kicked me so hard that I was winded and I was gasping, wheezing and I couldn't catch my breath. The audience must've thought I was a genius. He winded me and he knew he had kicked me for real. That was opening night.

On the walk home I started to feel dizzy and I couldn't quite make it a block before I had to sit down on the curb because I felt unwell. I got through the run of the show and then it was a rough plane ride home back across the country.

When I got home I found out that I was 5 weeks pregnant. He had kicked me in the stomach and I was 5 weeks pregnant.

He didn't know that I was pregnant. I didn't even know yet. But he kicked me so hard. He was mad at me and he was punishing me right there in front of the audience. I spent the whole rest of my pregnancy really worried that I was going to miscarry. I was also worried that something was going to be wrong with my baby. That was the beginning of a very bad five years full of anxiety and I've been an anxious mom ever since.

Dramatizing this story and adding it to the content of my thesis show opened up the possibility of combining spectacle with meaningful content in a significant way. I was able to explore and expand my own artistic practice in many ways. In the process, I have gathered much confidence as a creator, performer and director as well as a designer and writer. This way of creating excites me and inspires me to continue forging my own artistic path. I am grateful and fulfilled and dance into my future keeping my artistic channel flowing with clearer eyes and a wide open heart.

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APPENDIX A: PROJECT PLAN AND TIMELINE

FIRST PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT - CIRCUS SESSIONS RESIDENCY

JUNE 2022

Holly Treddenick and I first explored ideas for *JANICE ALMIGHTY* during a one-week residency as a part of Circus Sessions produced by Femmes du Feu Creations in June 2021 with 20 circus artists participating from around the world.

Our week of Circus Sessions had a 2-night public presentation and a post-show Q&A with strong excitement and positive reaction from the audience.

SECOND PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT - RESIDENCY AT THE BANK ARTHOUSE

JANUARY 2023

I completed a residency at the Bank Arthouse for a workshop creation phase of development in January, 2023. We had approximately ten days of exploration over a two-week period with the performers and co-creators. We had a film crew to archive our process.

THIRD PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT - THESIS PRESENTATION

MARCH/APRIL 2023

Week One: Research and Development

The first step was to review the work generated in Circus Sessions and at The Bank Arthouse. We also continued to review all of the Accessibility considerations we worked on within Circus Sessions and at The Bank Arthouse. We discussed and implemented concepts of decentralized vision and decentralized sound. We incorporated an ASL performer signing the piece and an audio-describer in the showing at Circus Sessions. Exploration of movement and text with our

dancers and aerial performers continued as we established the movement vocabulary that our show unfolds from, devising from the beginning of the show and forming the relationship between aerial, dance and text.

Week Two: Shape and Structure

The pairing off of certain apparatuses with props, ex: deconstructed rope and bungee apparatus with character began to solidify. I was able to finish a second draft of the script and then a production draft. As I developed the material further, I was able to work through a rough sketch of the show and move towards the refining and editing stage.

The PERFORMANCE SHOWINGS will be APRIL 14-16 2023 in Accolade Centre East Studio 207 at York University.

BUDGET

Venue		
Rehearsal Space rental	3000	
Tech	1000	
Audio	500	
LX/ 200 a day	1000	
Total:	5500	
Creative Team		
Director	2000	
Production Design	1000	Aerial apparatus fabrication and costume
Sound Design	500	
Playwright	1000	
Stage Management	500	

Total:	5000	
Filming		
Editor	1000	
Film Crew/Equipment	1000	
Total:	2000	
Performers		
5 artists fees	4500	50/hr as per CADA guidelines
Material Fees		
Costume/Construction	1000	
Childcare		
Childcare	1000	
HST		
Artists who charge it:		
GRAND TOTAL:	21000	
BUDGET:		
OVER/UNDER:		

FUNDING

I was fortunate to receive the CIBC Artist Award valued at \$4000 and I also received an OSG valued at \$15000.

SAFETY

For the activities themselves, all of the performers are trained professionals: we will abide by equity standards for the amount of rehearsal time per day. We carry 5-million liability insurance. Each selected circus artist also carries liability insurance. I work with local professional and qualified circus rigging specialists. All artists sign a liability waiver. The highest safety persuasions are followed, including proper mats and other safety equipment. Safety inspections are mandatory on all equipment.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRIES

January 16th 2022 - Journal

The week started off fast. Prepping for the class I teach on Mondays is a lot of work. After having a break it was shocking to jump back in. The shock of the TDSB changing to online school for my son created more scrambling and split focus. But we survived!

Thought a lot about my thesis project. I started a training regime to get in “circus’ shape. I need to train my way up to get back into the bungee. I made a tentative plan with Holly to do some training on the bungee apparatus in the early spring. If I stay on my schedule I should be ready by then.

I had my first playwriting class with Nina and it was incredible! I love it already! I have so much to learn and though I am nervous I am really excited to work. Jeff is going to be my dramaturg so that is incredible news. I feel so lucky!

It was so great to get back into the Performance Creation class. I have missed my classmates over the holidays! They are all so incredible in so many different ways. It is really special.

Working with Keira is going to be so great. I was so inspired by her presentation! And So grateful she spent the time showing us what inspires her and examples of her work throughout her incredible career. She has so much to offer in so many different areas and I am looking forward to our time together. It's really great to have one-on-one meetings with her as well. Just to talk about my thesis and anything else we are interested in. I am particularly happy that we will get to chat about directing and her experiences in that area. That is something I really want to lean into in my own career. I would love to direct and choreograph musicals, so it will be great to have a conversation about that.

I have given myself some design tasks and writing prompts for this week along with my training schedule. I have scheduled 2 barre classes, 2 yoga classes, and two dance classes (cardio fitpop) at Soulfuel fitness this week. I love training there with MJ and the other teachers and Holly is in some of the classes too so that makes it extra fun. In 2 weeks we are starting a 21 day challenge at the studio and that is always great for a little extra motivation.

For next week I am going to gather all the sections of JANICE ALMIGHTY (my thesis show) and try to format them into a structure. I should try to get a link to the video of the presentation we did for Erika at the end of last term.

Journal February 16th, 2023.

TRAINING

This week I began training inversions again. I started with my inversion bench and then on the silks. I need to incorporate more core work.

I have been taking SoulFuel Fitness classes - Fitpop and Pilates but could incorporate more cardio. I am starting the 21 day fitness challenge next week so that should kick start a good training regime. I have to work up my strength and endurance for the thesis show.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Worked on the Post it Note dance but I'm not convinced it will make it into the final draft.

Possible ideas include the chorus attaching the post its to elastics etc. Sounds terrible when I write that down but looks better in my head.

Working on my Performance Creation presentation - I need to find music.

TEACHING 1011

I must have spent about 1000 hours this week. Thinking about and responding to each student about what I think will serve their process best. It was tiring and endless but I got it done. This course is a lot more work/hours than I thought and it is taking a lot out of me.

Journal - March 16th, 2023

I had a great one on one meeting with Erika. She is always so wonderful to chat with. Helpful and generous and always willing to investigate possibilities. We are so very lucky to have her.

Erika gave me some great notes in our one on one meeting this week.

- Different modalities - utilizing my different skills in the piece
- Which skill set resonates most
- Making the stuff. Responding to what I make.

- Discovery - where is the role of discovery How well do I know it and of the discoveries in working in that way how confident do I feel chasing that further.
- Collaborators - do I have any in mind
- Resonant ideas and themes
- Break up by post it note. haha
- How have Janice and Janice Almighty communicated before? Is there a tie?
- Does the play start in the real world?
- What is the portal?
- Phone call to Janice Almighty - the chorus manipulates the props.
- Lean into the message - is that a normal means of communication.
- Tap dance - what is it? What is its function?
- Props - rubber bands
- Tone of the writing - balance of specific humor pathos.
- Songs - who is singing them and why?

Journal - March 23rd, 2023.

I have been busy rehearsing on my own and with various acting coaches. As an actor approaching a role I have been researching mental health. I found this quote which has been very illuminating both as an actor and as a writer of this show.

“There is a powerful and compelling case, supported by cutting-edge research, that the arts have positive effects on mental health.” (Harker Martin 2020)

This concept applies through many disciplines. For me specifically directing choreography to find a level of joy in the work that counteracts the anxiety and stress that goes along with high level performance which ultimately leads to better performance and more healthy environments.

I have also had many thoughts on identity. I think any questions about the nature of identity and identification are pretty classic dramatic waters: What part of me is myself? How much of me gets ascribed to me by society? The idea of wholeness? Those are profound questions about life and time. How do you know yourself at any moment in your life? So much of it you spend unaware of yourself. Or it's spent sleeping.

Journal - April 11th, 2023

This week has been mind blowing and overwhelming. It has been very difficult to get this very complicated show up and running in ACE 207. The rigging plan alone has taken hundreds of hours of time. The design concept and realization has likewise taken a great deal of careful planning. There was a little snafu in scheduling somewhere along the way and we almost did not get a work study student with their working at heights certification to hang all of the installation set pieces. A classmate of mine has become extremely needy and is taking most of the resources allotted for everyone in the class for herself thereby leaving me to solve many many more problems on my own. I love a challenge so off I go! It has also been very challenging to schedule the 8 other performers in the piece. Everybody has pretty demanding schedules with classes and exams etc right now so I have had to be creative and flexible with the rehearsal schedule to make sure we have enough time. Scheduling is a major trigger of anxiety for me but it is all sorting itself out. I am super nervous and I hope I am physically ready. I am excited and scared!!!!

APPENDIX C: SUPPORT MATERIAL

CIRCUS SESSIONS

Please start watching this link at 8 minutes 5 seconds in

<https://vimeo.com/366378038>

JANICE ALMIGHTY Workshop video

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KkJwbRfOXkpWLRy6CBX4wE2F0Yr4dZo/view?usp=sharing>

JANICE ALMIGHTY
A Contemporary Circus Dance Play
By: MONICA DOTTOR

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JANICE

THE OTHERS:

Other

Other One

Another

Another One

Someone

Someone Else

Somebody

Somebody Else

OPENING NUMBER - IT'S A CIRCUS INSIDE

A large cluster of blood cells dances onstage. It's funny and quirky. They are surrounded by various objects suspended from veins and arteries. There is a web of fascia, arteries and veins that a chorus of other worldly "dance creatures" move through called THE OTHERS. They are constantly moving, often in unison. They represent Janice's interior world, her blood system, her thoughts, her feelings and they connect with her through modern dance. It's abstract. Janice knows they are with her, she sees them, hears them, feels them like an appendage and is often a part of the choreography.

JANICE and THE OTHERS emerge from the blood cell cluster singing and playing kazoos.

THE OTHERS: (Singing)

Who.

Doesn't

want

To live on a

Fair

ground

Ride the carnival rides?
All of the time?

Who
Doesn't
Love
The feeling of
Fly-ing
Dancing with stars in her eyes?

THE OTHERS
I feel safer inside...

HERE

THE OTHERS
Inside of our mind.....

ANOTHER (Annie)
The Others along for the ride

THE OTHERS
HERE

ANNIE
Surfing the tide with me
Hide from reality
Take my anxiety
Throw it away for me....

THE OTHERS:
You mean we
You mean we
You mean weeeeeeee

JANICE and THE OTHERS:
It's a circus inside....
Inside of my mind...
It's a circus
Inside.....

They dance. There are aerial acts. Janice gets more and more tangled in her muscles and veins. Something is short circuiting. Her system is in shock.

Janice pulls down a post-it-note letter with shocking and confusing information.

JANICE :

Nooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.....

JANICE faints. THE OTHERS scramble to catch her, lay her down and grab the letter.

SCENE 2 - THE LETTER

THE OTHERS

Dear Janice,

OTHER:

I know this is going to be difficult to read,

OTHER ONE:

but I'm going to be honest with you.

ANOTHER

For me, our relationship has reached its end.

ANOTHER ONE

Janice, we have both /changed

SOMEONE:

/changed in such profound ways over the last few years.

SOMEONE ELSE:

I think this is just a case /of us

SOMEBODY:

/of us not being compatible

SOMEBODY ELSE:

like we were when we were younger.

OTHER:

Because of this,

OTHER ONE:

it's been awkward between us for a long time./ You haven't

ANOTHER:
/You haven't done anything wrong.

THE OTHERS:
And there is nothing wrong with me.

ANOTHER ONE:
It's just the /evolution

SOMEONE:
/evolution of our relationship.

SOMEONE ELSE:
I know this isn't what you want/ to hear,

SOMEBODY:
/to hear, but I'm asking you to accept it.

THE OTHERS:
I care about you, Jan. Jan. Janice.

SOMEBODY ELSE:
I wish you well,/and

OTHER:
/and I want you to be happy.

OTHER ONE:
I don't do this without feeling some pain. (*They all gag/ tsk/eye roll*)

ANOTHER:
But I know this is right for me./ I can

ANOTHER ONE:
/I can take it over from here.

THE OTHERS:
xo
Janice Almighty

THE OTHERS start gasping on an 8 count rhythm

OTHER:
(*gasp!*)

OTHER ONE:
(*GASP!*)

ANOTHER:
(*GASP!*)

ANOTHER ONE:
(*GASP!*)

SOMEONE:
(*GASP!*)

SOMEONE ELSE:
(*GASP!*)

SOMEBODY:
(*GASP!*)

On the same 8 count rhythm - possibly twice through

SOMEBODY ELSE:
what?

OTHER:
What?

SOMEBODY ELSE:
What!

OTHER:
WHAT?

ANOTHER ONE:
What?

SOMEONE:
What!

SOMEONE ELSE:
WHAT!!

SOMEBODY:
WHAT!!!

SOMEBODY ELSE:
WHAT!!!

THE OTHERS: (*overlappy ad libby and panicky with each other*)
What did she take? What did she...? Where did she....? Can she do that? Can we just....leave?
No? What do we do? What did she take? WHAT DID SHE TAKE?
(GASP!)
JANICE!!!!!!!!!!!!

*THE OTHERS rush over to JANICE who is struggling and tangled up.
THE OTHERS get her up and stay connected physically to JANICE .
They move as one entity.*

JANICE

CAN SHE DO THAT? CAN.....SHEDOTHAT??? I didn't know she could...break up.....I mean is that...?.is she....?am I.....? is that allowed? That's not allowed! That's not....? She's got to be somewhere inside me right? WE GOTTA GO IN AND FIND HER!!! RIGHT? THIS IS.....Somebody call the....Someone call the....! Call the.....! Get me some iodine!

She faints. Twice. THE OTHERS catch her and hold her.

ANOTHER ONE:
How far could she have gone?

ANOTHER:
I mean, who does that?/ Who does that?

ANOTHER ONE:
/Who does that?

OTHER ONE:
Who breaks up with themself?

SOMEBODY ELSE:

In the middle of an existential crisis?

SOMEONE ELSE:

On a POST IT NOTE?

SOMEONE:

It's a letter.

SOMEONE ELSE:

With a Post it note.

JANICE :

She can't do that. She can't break up with me,

SOMEBODY:

with us. With US.

THE OTHERS whisper us us us us with us throughout the next bit

JANICE:

We're ONE PERSON. She's part of me!

THE OTHERS:

She's part of US!

JANICE:

She can't do that? Can she?

(THE OTHERS join in) Can we? Can we.....?

THE OTHERS
DAMMIT JANICE!

Janice's knees turn to jelly. There's a "freaking out" dance. and THE OTHERS dance frantically, erratically and with rage issues.

OTHER

Oh/ no.

OTHER ONE:

/Ooooooooooh/ nooooooooooooo

ANOTHER

/She's....geeeeeez....

ANOTHER ONE:

Whoa. like. /Wow. that's that's just...

SOMEONE

/she's....oh gosh.

SOMEONE ELSE

Oh geez there she goes/She's....

SOMEBODY

/she's going /off the...

SOMEBODY ELSE

/GOINOFF THE whoa.....

The rage dance continues, the chorus is punching/kicking her intestines.

THE OTHERS

(*maybe pick two to four lines each)

(Whispering hissing overlapping ad libby arguing with each other) We should..., maybe I should..... We. We should. Oooooouch.....don't do that. Ok. Ok.....Ohhhhhhhhhh kaaaaaaaay. I'll just..... Let's just.....Ok. Alright. Ok. Ah geez. (THE OTHERS' rage dance evolves into a hushy tiptoe dance)

Let's just.....

SCENE 3 - THE RESPONSE - A Ballet Ballad

*THE OTHERS pull a telephone receiver over to Janice.
JANICE and THE OTHERS dance around the issues in a fluid quirky absurd ballet. Probably to an 80's love ballad as she dictates her letter. (THE OTHERS speak with JANICE when text is bolded)*

JANICE:

Dear Janice Almighty

So ...um...i got your breakup NOTE. I just... don't wanna dignify that with a response. And i don't wanna to react emotionally. I just want to say **"Fuck You Janice"** but that's not cool. So I'm not gonna say that. Or send the 200 other drafts of "Fuck You Janice" I wrote. I was really stuck on that for a while. Like writer's block....rabbit hole..... I even wrote a song. It's a Heavy

Metal Thrasher throwback to the 90's grunge scene. (*THE OTHERS act this out*) Then I tried it as a ballad. They both need work. Anyways, I'm glad I didn't send you the fuck you songs. But this.....is.....! We grew up together!. We share..... Remember going to parties full of people where we only talked to ourself? **WE WERE FUN!** Together!

I remember when you told me WE were pregnant. I didn't even know! You knew. You KNEW! We were so sick....the whole 9 months, well, 10 months really....**It's 10 months.** 10 months of that upside down, underwater, head spinning hung-over on a boat ride in outer space feeling. **HYPER-EMESIS.** We got through that. WE. Ya. Ya, times have been rough lately. I know, I haven't been my... our...self these last few years but to leave? **YOU CAN'T DO THAT!** **YOU CAN'T BREAK UP WITH ME.** I will find you Janice Almighty. And I will staple you back into my soul where you belong.

(*long pause*)

love.

Janice

(*long pause*)

P.S. **Fuck you Janice. ;)**

(ad lib - Ok blood cells. We're goin in. We gotta find her in there. We'll start in our brain and work our way down. I suspect she's somewhere in our aortic valve, near our heart....let's go!)

SCENE 4A - THE MAYBE DANCE - CUE TRACK # 3 "MAYBE"

A cheesy pathetic dance about self loathing and despair.

SCENE 4B - EGO STORIES

JANICE becomes entwined in a web of veins and fascia somewhere deep within her system. This entanglement dance results in JANICE being suspended from a single point bungee trapeze.

OTHER:

Janice had let her super ego

THE OTHERS:

Janice Almighty

OTHER ONE:

Take over their narrative.

ANOTHER:

Unintentionally.

THE OTHERS:
Weeeeeellllllll.....

ANOTHER:
Unobligingly? (*sotto voce*) is that even a word?

THE OTHERS:
Unrealistically? Unfathomably? Unanswerably?

ANOTHER ONE:
UNWILLINGLY!

ANOTHER:
That's the same as unobligingly. (beat) which I said.

Unknowingly.

THE OTHERS
Janice had unknowingly let her super ego take over their narrative.

SOMEONE:
Involuntarily.

SOMEONE ELSE:
Intrinsically

SOMEBODY:
INSUBORDINATE.

SOMEBODY ELSE:
LY.

SOMEONE:
Wait. Wha....what does that mean.

OTHER:
What does what mean. What.

SOMEBODY ELSE:
Whadda you mean what does that mean.

SOMEONE:

You're mean.

SOMEONE ELSE:
What?

SOMEONE:
What?

ANOTHER:
Can we.....

ANOTHER ONE:
Can we just...

SOMEBODY:
WHO'S TELLING THIS STORY ANYWAY?

THE OTHERS:
I AM.

SOMEBODY ELSE:
Ok where were we.

THE OTHERS:
Janice had

OTHER:
Involuntarily let her super ego

THE OTHERS:
JANICE ALMIGHTY

OTHER ONE:
Take over their narrative.

ANOTHER:
Ya know....maybe we should start with a definition?

ANOTHER ONE:
Ya Defining is good.

SOMEONE:
Def-in-it-ly.

(beat)

THE OTHERS:

(DEEP INHALE)

The ego is the voice within our mind that is constantly thinking thoughts.

SOMEONE:

Thinking thoughts.

SOMEONE ELSE:

Janice's ego

THE OTHERS:

JANICE ALMIGHTY..

SOMEBODY:

Was the voice in her mind

SOMEBODY ELSE:

That was constantly thinking thoughts.

OTHER:

And her voice was loud

THE OTHERS:

(overlappy)

Very loud. So loud. She was the loudest.

OTHER ONE:

Janice Almighty's egotistical voice became so loud that Janice couldn't hear anything else.

ANOTHER:

The voice of reason, the voice of understanding

ANOTHER ONE:

The voice of self love and care

SOMEONE:

All of the others voices were

THE OTHERS:

DROWNED OUT. (look for Janice Almighty - FASCIA COAT)

THE OTHERS start looking through the veins and fascia for Janice Almighty. Janice is lying in a pool of blood.

JANICE

I broke up with myself. Now what do I do? Now what do I do! Janice Almighty was the confident one. The funny one. The one with all the charm. Everybody likes her. Everyone wants to be her friend. The leader, the embracer, the welcomer, the generosity generator. Without her I'm.....stuck... I really thought she'd be somewhere in our heart! But I don't see her in here! So.... Now what? Huh? Am I just stuck here

THE OTHERS

Janice was stuck at Self Betrayal Anonymous, in the department of self sabotage for all of eternity

JANICE

What?

THE OTHERS

(whispering as they move to their meerkat formation around the fascia) What? What? What?

SCENE 5 - MEERKATS

The Others are in a tight knit group formation like meerkats. They overlap each other, finish each other's thoughts and fight for the focus. Like animals in the wild. JANICE pulls a long white strand of fascia slowly into her lap.

JANICE:

They say memories live in the body...

OTHER:

Janice was hostile

OTHER ONE:

Janice felt under attack

JANICE:

They can become embedded in your muscle fibres and fascia and bones.

THE OTHERS

(*Overlappy*) Entangled. Entwined. All mixed up. Like mushed together. Stuck. Sticking! Ya sticky.
Sssssssssssss

JANICE

I think that's what it means when you say, "It's part of the fabric of my being."

SOMEONE:

Like a quilt?

THE OTHERS (Except SOMEONE)

.....No.no. no nonono. Nope no. not. no.

ANOTHER:

Her self worth

ANOTHER ONE:

Had plummeted to the point of

SOMEONE:

Solitude.

SOMEONE ELSE:

Loneliness..

SOMEBODY:

Alone...

SOMEBODY ELSE:

...-liness...

OTHER:

crept in...

THE OTHERS: (overlapping)

Oh it was in/it was in/ it was always there/ it was definitely like lurking in the body/ ya it was there/ like hovering/ kinda close to the surface-ish/but deep/ya deep. There.

JANICE:

It's all very knotted and tangled up in here. (*she pulls on a piece of the fascia and it starts to unravel*) That can't be good.

OTHER:

So she went in.

OTHER ONE:

She went DOWN there.

ANOTHER:

She HAD to go down there.

ANOTHER ONE:

Waaaaaaaaaaaaaay down....

JANICE:

I was hoping mine was made of a higher quality textile. Like silk or cashmere.

SOMEONE:

Or a quilt! (*Beat*) Sorry. She didn't have a choice..

SOMEONE ELSE:

Well there's always a choice....

SOMEONE:

is there? Is there though?

SOMEONE ELSE:

well ...choices....

SOMEBODY:

You're making it sound SO dramatic

JANICE:

This feels like polyester. No wonder I'm having hot flashes.

THE OTHERS

Polyester. Doesn't. Breathe!

SOMEBODY ELSE:

It was dramatic

OTHER:

It was bloody....

THE OTHERS:

OBVIOUSLY

OTHER:

Well not to everyone!

OTHER ONE:

Not to her

THE OTHERS:

Not to US..

THE OTHERS: *(overlapping ad libby in whispers)*

Us. Us. Ya us. It's us. Ya. yes. Yes. Us. We're like.....us. Ish.

JANICE:

(dramatic and loud) This is the fabric of my being!

ANOTHER:

Can we keep this moving...like....forward?

ANOTHER ONE:

We have a responsibility here.

THE OTHERS: *(overlapping ad libby in whispers)*

Yes. Yes. Yes we do. It's a little unclear but I'm pretty sure that is right. Let's be responsible. Yes. Responsibility. Yes. Ok. I like responsibility.

SOMEONE: *(interrupting)*

I wish it was clearer.

THE OTHERS:

SHHHHHHHHHH

(beat) They regroup and silently scold each other with eye darts culminating in a military formation

THE OTHERS:
JANICE WAS A CATASTROPHISER.

OTHER:
Catastrophe was her middle name

ANOTHER ONE:
It was actually Alma.

ANOTHER:
Ya it's Alma

ANOTHER ONE:
It's definitely not Catastrophe that's gauche.

(beat)

THE OTHERS:
WHEN JANICE....

SOMEONE:
spiraled down a rabbit hole

SOMEONE ELSE:
of self doubt and insecurity...

SOMEBODY:
..which was often....

SOMEBODY ELSE:
pretty often...

OTHER:
super often

ANOTHER ONE:
...when Janice felt her heart beating faster and faster...

ANOTHER:
and her hands starting to shake...

ANOTHER ONE:

that could also be the caffeine....

(beat)

SOMEONE:

When Janice felt her hands start to shake...

SOMEONE ELSE:

and her palms start to sweat...

SOMEBODY:

and her mind start to race....

SOMEBODY ELSE:

and her breath start to

(they hyperventilate in a choral round throughout the next chunk of text)

OTHER:

her mind hopping from one thought to the next

OTHER ONE:

Catastrophizing...

THE OTHERS: *(they gasp and hyperventilate through these ad libs.)*

What did she mean....why did she do....How do I fix....Where did she go....She can't do that....Is that acceptable.....Why would she.....How can I....DAMMIT JANICE.....

BEAT

THE OTHERS:

JANICE WOULD DO ONE OF TWO THINGS.....

OTHER:

She would either vigorously deep clean something...

ANOTHER ONE:

or she would watch YouTube videos of Meerkats.

THE OTHERS: *(individually spaced out and rhythmic)*

What?

What?

What! What?

Whatwhat?

What.....

The Others become Meerkats in a hilarious re-enactment choreography of Meerkats in their natural habitat.

ANOTHER:

But this time, even the Meerkats didn't work.

ANOTHER ONE:

She had to go down there.

THE OTHERS:

Waaaaaaaaaaaaay down.....

SCENE 6 - DANCE OF THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

JANICE goes down. THE OTHERS follow.
(Carousel Dance)

SCENE 7 - TRASH CAN OF THE SOUL

ANOTHER:

Once Janice had spiralled around and around

ANOTHER ONE:

On a hyperspeedy carousel ride

SOMEONE:

Of catastrofonic supersonic bionic

SOMEONE ELSE:

Totally mnemonic.....

OTHER:

It was an extra-embryonic

ANOTHER ONE:

Membranophonic

SOMEBODY:

Tectonic shift in the

SOMEBODY ELSE:

Pulmonic

OTHER:

Don't be sardonic

ANOTHER ONE:

This is getting a little

THE OTHERS:

CEREBROTONIC

OTHER:

Ya it's almost demonic

JANICE: (*exhausted from the spiral*)

Someone get me a Gin and Tonic!

THE OTHERS;

Ok.ok. Ya. ok. Regroup. Right. Ok get back on track. Good.

SOMEONE;

Janice had known the journey would be long/and

OTHER ONE:

/and she hadn't known what to pack./Moreso....

ANOTHER:

/Moreso, it had been daunting to think about /what she might

ANOTHER ONE:

/what she might UNPACK once she got there.

SOMEONE:

Deeeeeeeep down

SOMEONE ELSE:

sodeep.

SOMEONE:

Janice tiptoed past corridors filled with Cold Case files of mismanaged/

SOMEONE ELSE:

SHAME, GUILT and UNRESOLVED CHILDHOOD TRAUMA.

SOMEBODY:

She moved right beyond an entire room of balloons filled with OCD.

SOMEBODY ELSE:

But she couldn't stop there yet, It was locked anyway. For good reason.

THE OTHERS:

JANICE WAS GOING STRAIGHT TO THE CORE

OTHER:

Past the whirlpool of anxiety,

OTHER ONE:

through the dense fog of sadness and depression

ANOTHER:

and around the snake pit of rage issues to the

THE OTHERS:

TRASH CAN OF HER SOUL.

*A Trash Can appears.
artery.*

Attached to an

ANOTHER ONE:

She did not want to open that lid,

SOMEONE

but she had to see what was in there.

SOMEONE ELSE:

Diving towards the lid

SOMEBODY

with equal parts enthusiasm

SOMEBODY ELSE:

and cringing

OTHER

Janice unclipped the tightly sealed locks,

THE OTHERS

And there they were....

THE OTHERS open up the trash can. JANICE pulls up Ken dolls attached to the bottom of the trash can by veins and releases them to snap back in when she is done talking about them

JANICE:

CHUCKIE BELKOSKY - 10 time junior 10 pin bowling champion of the greater Algoma Region and standing. Chuckie was a confident little fucker. At the Junior Prom

OTHER

to which Janice had gone

OTHER & OTHER ONE

“solo with a group of friends

JANICE

who all had dates”

OTHER ONE

Chuckie had asked Janice to dance to the last song of the night

JANICE & THE OTHERS

Stairway to Heaven.

ANOTHER

It was the only slow dance Janice /had ever

ANOTHER ONE

/had ever been chosen for.

JANICE

In the first 30 seconds

SOMEONE

of the 9 minute super song,

SOMEONE ELSE

Chuckie had left Janice /alone

SOMEBODY

/alone on the dance floor to

THE OTHERS

dance with another girl.

SOMEBODY ELSE

Janice spent the rest of the prom

JANICE

hiding behind the Much Music Video dance party projection screen until the fluorescents came on.

JANICE releases him and the vein he is attached to snaps him back into the trash can.

She pulls up another Doll attached to a vein.

JANICE:

GRAMPA JACK. A compulsive hoarder and secret millionaire,

OTHER

Grandpa Jack had lost his driver's license on account of

JANICE

intentionally driving down one way streets the wrong way, and

OTHER ONE

unapologetically

JANICE

running red lights in residential areas.

ANOTHER

At the age of 17,

ANOTHER ONE

it had been Janice's summer job to

JANICE

personally chauffeur Grampa Jack to his various appointments

JANICE & SOMEONE

doctors appointments,

JANICE & SOMEONE ELSE

banking appointments and

JANICE

treasure hunting for whatever bargain of the week he had uncovered.

SOMEBODY

One week, Grandpa Jack had insisted they head out at

THE OTHERS

8AM SHARP.

JANICE

There had been a super sale on Corn Flakes at the local Bi-Way and he wanted to be first in line.

SOMEBODY ELSE

There was a 6 box per person daily limit but

OTHER

Grampa Jack had pointed out that there were

OTHER ONE

“two of us, so we could each bring home the max.”

ANOTHER

Janice had held her breath on the

JANICE

sheepish walk of shame to the cash register

JANICE & THE OTHERS:

EVERY DAY FOR 7 DAYS.

JANICE

Dodging inside jokes among the teenage Biway Staff members

ANOTHER ONE

‘Back for some more eh?’

SOMEONE

You must Loooooooove CornFlakes!”

SOMEONE ELSE

“ Holy Mackerel how many people are you feeding for breakfast Jack?”

SOMEBODY

That week, Janice had carefully stacked

JANICE

84 Jumbo boxes of Corn Flakes

SOMEBODY ELSE

into Grampa Jack’s basement.

OTHER

She had built

JANICE

an entire fort out of Corn Flakes box bricks,

OTHER

trying to make some light out of the desperate situation.

OTHER ONE

Relieved to have made it to Saturday....

ANOTHER

the last day of the sale,

ANOTHER ONE

Janice had teasingly asked Grampa Jack if he would

JANICE

like a bowl of Corn Flakes

SOMEONE

before she left for the day

SOMEONE ELSE

to which he replied,

OTHER ONE

“ Oh I don’t really care for them much dear”

JANICE:

(She elastic snaps him back down the trash and pulls up another one)

Cathy DePesci's Mother's Daughter's Son. Jake.. *(pause)* He was in a band. *(snap. She pulls up another)*

JANICE:

CLIFFORD CHOWARD. The big fish in a small pond artistic director of FullStain theatre.

SOMEBODY

Janice had done

JANICE

Dinner theatre in the back of a chinese restaurant

SOMEBODY ELSE

with Clifford for years.

OTHER

To get from stage right to stage left,

OTHER ONE

she had to

JANICE

cross through the kitchen,

ANOTHER

passing large pots of chickens soaking on the floor to her right,

JANICE

and a very intense mahjong tournament

ANOTHER ONE

to her left as she

JANICE

frantically changed costumes

SOMEONE

to make her next entrance on time.

SOMEONE ELSE

During intermission of a

JANICE & SOMEBODY

particularly successful production of Jesus Christ Superstar,

JANICE

Clifford came into the Green Room .

SOMEBODY ELSE

Janice was in the direct line of fire,

OTHER

Tyrannically calling her the

THE OTHERS

“worst actress he had ever seen. In his 40 years of directing he had never seen a worse actor.

OTHER ONE

That she was like

THE OTHERS

a black hole, sucking the soul out of the scene”

JANICE

Clifford was a son of a beehive corn syrup in a 2 bit lunch pail hockey town,

JANICE & ANOTHER

drunk on power,

JANICE & ANOTHER ONE

full of inside jokes and empty promises.

SOMEONE

He had continually dangled the coveted role of

JANICE

Gypsy Rose Lee

SOMEONE ELSE

in front of Janice's nose

SOMEBODY

but even 25 years later, she has

JANICE

yet to play the part .

(She snaps him back in with rage and gently pulls up another)

JANICE:

Mrs. Von Ron!

THE OTHERS

Our Kindergarten AND Grade 4 teacher.

JANICE:

Fuck you Rose!! I DID AMOUNT TO SOMETHING!!

(snaps her back in and picks another)

JUSTIN BEIBER. Ok i just wanna say I have no idea what Justin Beiber is doing in the trash can of my soul.

Did SOMEONE put Justin Beiber in here?

SOMEONE

NO!

JANICE

SOMEBODY did!

SOMEBODY

I did not! Someone else must have.

SOMEONE ELSE

Oh come on! Another One could have done it!

ANOTHER ONE

I like Justin Beiber!

JANICE

K anyyyyyyway it doesn't matter.

she unties him. THE OTHERS look at her

I know I've..... lost control of the narrative, but this is still my story...

THE OTHERS

Our story.

JANICE

Let's just.....leave it. I'd wanna talk about it. Can you put him somewhere safe please. Love you beebies

She pulls up another elasticized human doll

JANICE:

Shauna Cassidy?! I haven't seen you in like years?

SOMEBODY ELSE:

Shauna was Janice's

OTHER

teenage soul mate

OTHER ONE

true love strong and free.

JANICE:

(beat)

Unofficially.

She sticks her head inside the trash can and shouts down inside it. It's magnified.

Janice Almighty????

THE OTHERS

ARE YOU DOWN THERE??

JANICE

We really need to talk about this!

SOMEBODY ELSE

Your version of our story is very different than our version of our story. (*beat.*) You've created a narrative about us based on very little actual facts,

JANICE

which by definition is a conspiracy. You're a shitty writer Janice Almighty It's a shitty draft of a shitty play. **Shit.**

SOMEBODY ELSE

I should be writing our story!

THE OTHERS

WEEEEEEE SHOULD BE.....

JANICE

My voice should be the voice of our voice. **YOU CAN'T RUN FOREVER.** I will FUCKING find you.

She closes the lid and looks around.

JANICE:

It's actually kind of beautiful down here. I mean, these are my signature colours. Reds purples blues.. It's very Alexander McQueen - like a really important designer....It's not what I imagined. But...gawd....

I never really thought I'd ever come this far down.

SCENE 8 - YOU DON'T OWN ME

Janice and the chorus dance a dance of freedom. This involves kicking the trash can of her soul off the stage. Maybe to the song "You Don't Own Me"

SCENE 9 -THE EXOSKELETON

The Monkey Trap Theory

JANICE

Have you ever heard of the Monkey Trap Theory? To trap the monkey the trapper hollows out a coconut, fills it with nuts and seeds and drills a hole big enough for the monkey to fit her hand into. The monkey can grab a handful of nuts and seeds but the hole is not big enough for her to pull her fist back through. The monkey is unwilling to let go of the nuts and seeds so she becomes stuck. If she would just let go of what she was holding onto, she could be free.....

SCENE 10 - THE ODYSSEY

Janice is reading an oversized Human Anatomy textbook like a map. She seems lost and disoriented. A chorus of blood cells dances around.

JANICE:
Where the fuck is she?

SOMEONE:
Who?

SOMEONE ELSE:
Janice Almighty!

SOMEONE;
Right.

JANICE:
I shoulda paid more attention in physiology. How am I going to find her down here? She could be anywhere! This all looks very...I mean it's really much more abstract than it is in these pictures isn't it?. K, I honestly don't know where we are. Does any of this look familiar to you? That's ok. I mean, where do you think she's hiding?

She could still be in our brain

SOMEONE
It's a circus in there.

SOMEONE ELSE
And there are a couple of new acts - like bungee trapeze.

ANOTHER
So cool.

JANICE
Bowels?

OTHER
Ooooooooo possible...

OTHER ONE
She is full of/

JANICE

/Wait! Is that? That's...ya that is my anterior superior iliac spine. I know that. That I remember so ya, we must be somewhere around here.*(she points to the relative muscle in the Anatomy book map.)* Like intercostal or are we in my quad....*(she pulls down a compass attached to a vein)* So we just need to hop on the greater lymphatic system and ride it all the way across to...here..... ish. Ok. Ok. Let's go.

SCENE 11 - THERE'S NOBODY HERE BUT US CHICKENS

JANICE

Janice climbs from rib to rib. She sees something between T4 and T5.

Why is it so dark over here.

SOMEONE

(matter of fact) Don't Do it

SOMEONE ELSE

Don't go there /right now.

SOMEBODY

/right now's not a good time

JANICE

That's a little ominous. Do I even want to know?

THE OTHERS *(Overlappy)*

NOPE.no no def not. Not yet.

JANICE

Maybe I should just leave that.

THE OTHERS *(overlappy)*

Ya! Ya! That sounds good.

JANICE

There's probably a reason for all the storm clouds.

THE OTHERS *(overlappy like ordering a dog)*

Just leave it. Leave it. Leave it.

JANICE

Why is it so buried though? Maybe if I just move this fascia aside....

THE OTHERS (*Diverting attention*)
 LOOK! LOOK! LOOKIT!

JANICE
 What! What? Oh wow!
 Look at this sparkly bubble! I hope it's not a gas bubble. It's labeled...(randoM CHICKEN
 FACTS....)
 (She pops it)

THE OTHERS
 JANICE WAS A COLLECTOR OF RANDOM CHICKEN FACTS

SOMEONE ELSE
 She used them as awkward conversation starters at parties circa 1995

SOMEONE
 Chickens are living descendants of dinosaurs

SOMEONE ELSE
 Chickens can dream

SOMEBODY
 Chickens have better colour vision than humans

SOMEBODY ELSE
 Chickens have great memories

ANOTHER
 Chickens bathe by covering themselves in dirt

ANOTHER ONE
 There are more chickens worldwide than humans

OTHER
 Chickens are complex communicators. They have over 30 unique vocalizations that they use to
 communicate messages to other chickens including mating calls, stress signals, warnings of
 danger, how they are feeling and food discovery

OTHER ONE
 The colour of a chicken's egg is determined by the hen's earlobe. Hen's with white earlobes lay
 white eggs. Hen's with brown earlobes lay brown eggs

SOMEBODY

Chickens are very self aware and can distinguish themselves from other chickens

SOMEONE

Chickens can also demonstrate complex problem solving skills

OTHER

The term "Chicken" as in Chickening out is a misnomer. Chickens are powerfully dominant creatures and are actually fierce defenders of their chicks.

JANICE

I remember that awkward phase of not knowing what to say, not knowing what drink to order!

SOMEONE

Gin and Tonic.

THE OTHERS

Fool proof.

JANICE

Knowledge is weird eh? Like a filing cabinet for thoughts... And now they are just stuck in here Let's just gather them up and stuff them back into that glitter bubble? They could still come in handy.

11B - DANCE OF THE CHICKENS

tutus

SCENE 12 - THE DANCE OF ENTANGLEMENT

JANICE is untangling knots in her muscles.

JANICE:

I have always been really good at untying knots. Like really tight knots in shoelaces or ribbons. Even knots in delicate necklace chains. I can always seem to untie them without damaging the chain. Knots in chains are tricky. You have to loosen it up first. I roll it gently in my fingers for a while being careful not to complicate the knot. And then, I start to separate it. Sometimes I have to start over with the rolling until it's loose enough to see two separate strands. But when it starts loosening, it begins to separate and you can gradually untie the chain. It's really satisfying. To get the knot out.

SCENE 12B - THE DOG PART ONE

JANICE

This part's real fuzzy. I'm having a hard time remembering. Did it happen? I forget the details....pieces of....parts of....fragments...

SOMEONE

Janice gets off /the subway

SOMEONE ELSE

The subway one stop early so he/ doesn't know

OTHER

doesn't know where she lives. /He gets off too.

OTHER ONE

He gets off too. He says

SOMEBODY

"Which way do you walk?"

SOMEBODY ELSE

Janice goes the other way even though its the wrong way and one street too early.

ANOTHER

Janice waves and ducks behind the pole. She watches him disappear.

ANOTHER ONE

She gets back on the next train.

THE OTHERS (*in a cannon*) (Iza, Melissa, Annie, Mac, Naomi, Cassidy)

She doesn't want him to/ know where she lives.

She doesn't want him to/ know where she lives.

She doesn't want him to/ know where she lives.

She doesn't want him to know where she lives.

ANOTHER ONE

She doesn't want him to follow her home.

JANICE

This part. I know this part. I remember this part. This is the part where I got the part.

The part of the dog.

Part one.

ANOTHER

Waitwait really? Do we hafta rehash/this again.

SOMEBODY ELSE

/this is an important piece

ANOTHER

I don't want to be apart of this I'm not a part of this

SOMEBODY ELSE

Oh don't pretend that you weren't complicit

ANOTHER

You always do this....

I'm

SOMEBODY ELSE

I'm not responsible

ANOTHER ONE

We're all a bit responsible

ANOTHER

I never wanted...I was NEVER complicit

ANOTHER ONE

You were there.

ANOTHER

Don't besmirch my good name

SOMEBODY ELSE

Besmirch? That's not a....use a real word!

ANOTHER

Besmirch is a perfectly cromulent word...

ANOTHER ONE

Ok we don't want this to turn into an ugly grammar war

SOMEBODY ELSE

Like the last time

ANOTHER ONE

That was...ugly

SOMEBODY ELSE

So much unnecessary onomatopoeia.

ANOTHER ONE

You know what happens when it gets emotionally overwhelming in here

SOMEBODY ELSE

Ya it gets too rhymey

ANOTHER ONE

There's nothing worse than gratuitous rhyming.

SOMEBODY ELSE

She can't remember because you won't let her!

ANOTHER

It's not my fault!

SOMEBODY ELSE

You are deliberately mixing things around in here.

ANOTHER ONE

It does seem really mixy

SOMEBODY ELSE

Stop interrupting. And don't move that.

It's time she remembers!

ANOTHER

Why? WHY?

SOMEBODY ELSE

She can't move forward unless she looks back....

THE DOG - Part 2

JANICE

I played a dog in a play once. It was a really good part! The dog gets lost in a parade then joins the circus and then gets found and reunited with her family when they come to see the circus. I love that part.

THE OTHERS tie JANICE up in knots

SCENE 13 - BIG FEELINGS

*Janice plays the toy piano. THE OTHERS sing a song about feelings. And play
toy instruments.*

WARNING
THIS CONTAINS FEELINGS
WARNING
WE SING THEM IN A SONG
FEELINGS
ARE SORT OF LIKE MAGNETS
ATTRACTING AND REPELLING
AND THEY COME ON REALLY STRONG

CAUTION
TAKE IT FROM AN EXPERT
CRYING
GOES ON A BIT TOO LONG

NERVOUS
WE'RE OFTEN FEELING NERVOUS
AND THAT ONE'S UNINVITED
IT CANONBALL'S ALONG.....

BIG FEELINGS
WE'RE HAVING SOME BIG FEELINGS
OH WHOA
(is it hot in here? No? Just me? ok.)

THESE ARE MY

BIG FEELINGS
WE'RE HAVING SOME BIG FUCKIN FEELINGS

BIG FEELINGS, FEELING THESE REALLY REALLY
REALLY BIG FEELINGS.....

THEY MAKE ME FEEL LIKE ENDING
THIS
SONG.

SCENE 15 - MY FEEBLE ORGAN BAG or The Dance of the Meat Sacks

Janice is slow dancing with a giant heart organ. Maybe to Stairway to Heaven. The Others are each slow dancing with a giant slab of meat that looks like a muscle or organ. It's very Graham.

My body is starting to betray me! But we were fierce! We were strong! If there was an olympic high kick team we would've been on it. We did naked cartwheels on Parliament hill. That kind of confidence comes from confidence! *(sheepishly)* It was the 90's.*(whispered with a fake echo effect)* we were invincible...vincible...vincible.....

If I were to be reincarnated into a Sartorius muscle then I would want to come back as you, in my 20's! fierce.

And you. YOU. You were the strongest muscle of them all! I relied on you, I depended on you, I counted on you and ya those are all the same way of saying I NEED you. What happened?

Huh? I mean I know we had a C-Section and that couldn't have been fun for you and you went on maternity leave which I fully support as a woman and a feminist and a mother but our kid is 9 years old now so GET BACK TO WORK.

Vacation is over. I want my vintage abs back. Six pack.

JANICE

A love letter to my muscles.

Dear Muscles,

If I could slow dance with you I'd tell you, it's ok. Just sway. Let go of the tension. Be still. But keep moving. Go ahead. Feel it. You are safe and you are loved and I appreciate you dontcha know. You have held me up when I feel down. You get me out of bed. You move me around. It's always one step in front of the other.

Look at you yer just a bundle of nerves. Wearing yourself out. I know you are tired Gawd yer all moving so slow. It's like one of those dance competitions where the last couple standing wins a turkey or something.

Anyway you are safe and you are loved and I appreciate you. But I need you to keep moving. Take a deep breath and sway. If you need some space, Just space it. Space it out. Let's just space it out.

Love Janice

JANICE

Maybe that's the truth. It could just be age. Or it could just be the end of pretending.

THE OTHERS dance the meat to the back and get the hearts on.

THE DOG - PART 3

JANICE

He was really mad at me. He was always mad at me for some reason. When he was mad, he wouldn't look me in the eye onstage. It was juvenile and I always felt so deflated.

When we got to the Dog Scene, he was still full of venom. this part... there's this part in the scene where the circus master where he kicks the dog he kicks me and and it's fake it's stage combat and it's fake I'm on stage I'm on stage on all fours and he kicks me mime kicks me and I react to it and roll over and it's all very fake. I had done the show over 300 times at that point. And he never made contact. He was a professionally trained mime and I trusted him..... And he had never hurt me before.... he kicked me for real that night. he kicked me for real. he kicked me so hard that I was winded and I was gasping weezing couldn't catch my breath. The audience must've thought I was a genius. He winded me and he knew he had kicked me for real. that was opening night. on the walk home I started to feel dizzy and I couldn't quite make it a block before I had to sit down on the curb like I kept having to sit on the curb I was like I didn't feel well and we were all walking home together so he he knew I wasn't feeling well. I got I got through the Run then it was a rough plane ride home.

When I got home I found out that I was 5 weeks pregnant. He he kicked me in the stomach and I was 5 weeks pregnant.

He didn't know that I was pregnant. I didn't even know yet. But he kicked me so hard. He was mad at me and he was punishing me right there in front of the audience. .

I kinda spent the whole rest of my pregnancy really worried that I was going to miscarry. Or worried that something was going to be wrong with my baby. That was the beginning of the bad. A very bad 5 years. I've been an anxious mom ever since.

SCENE 16 - JANICE DANCES AROUND HER ISSUES

THE OTHERS bring JANICE her tap shoes.

- JANICE FINDS HER UNREQUITED TAP SOLO AND DANCES IT with Cassidy and Annie?

SCENE 17- SEARCHING FOR JANICE ALMIGHTY

*Janice performs a bungee trapeze dance with the chorus.
They journey. Looking for Janice Almighty.*

JANICE

Janice almighty was...young, fun, strong, confident.....

OTHER ONE:

Janice almighty was a bitch

ANOTHER:

A boss

ANOTHER ONE:

A bossy bitch

SOMEONE:

A Bully

SOMEONE ELSE

Superficial

SOMEBODY:

Emotionally immature.

SOMEBODY ELSE:

Janice Almighty was the keeper of our core beliefs

SOMEONE:

Ya the bad ones

OTHER:

Like Janice is shallow

OTHER ONE:

Janice is dumb

ANOTHER:

Janice is reaaaaaalllly bad at math

ANOTHER ONE:
Janice was like a black hole

THE OTHERS:
sucking the soul out of the

JANICE:
JANICE ALMIGHTY IS GONE!!!

SCENE 18 - FUCK YOU JANICE (Ballad on Toy Piano)

THE OTHERS slowly bring JANICE a red toy piano. She begins to play and sing. It is a cheesy song, but she sings it with total sincerity and melancholy. The chorus, attached to red elastics, listens. Maybe whistles along sometimes? Or kazoos?

JANICE.....WHYYYYYYYY?
DAMMIT JANICE.....DIEEEEEEEE?

We were one person.
And now we're two
Without the glue of you
I don't know what to do.

Now that we're through.....
JANICE.....(LONG PAUSE)
FUCK YOU.

SCENE 19 - LOVE HURTS

JANICE and THE OTHERS dance with blood as they silent scream.

SCENE 20 - FINDING JANICE ALMIGHTY

JANICE sees a tiny figure in the distance, covered up in her arteries. She untangles her.

JANICE:
Jan? Jan? Janice? Janice Almighty! Is that you? What are you doing in here? Gosh yer so small. I wasn't expecting you to be so small, I was thinking you would be...well...inflated?

What's that? (*Janice Almighty whispers something in Janice's ear*) Huh? Oh. Oh! Oh ya? Huh! Really? It's that easy?.....Oh! Ok. Ok. OKAY!

Janice unties Janice Almighty and puts her on her shoulder. They clean up their soul by putting the dog into the trash can.

SCENE 21 - HEART STRINGS DANCE

JANICE, JANICE ALMIGHTY AND THE OTHERS dance a Dance of Freedom and connection - forging new neural pathways as a team. Janice goes up in the heart hoop.

THE END.