

LOST FOOL: Re-Inventing a Professional Theatre Process

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ABSTRACT

This supporting thesis document chronicles the exploratory journey of developing and implementing a nascent creative studio practice, resulting in the crafting, rehearsal and performance of a solo, multi-media theatrical work entitled *Lost Fool*. I will research and document my experience of developing content for this production through the process of prayer and meditation, as well as the exploration of collected source images through a variety of movement modalities. The content being examined finds roots in three streams, including: my experience of being lost and/or disconnected, the 7th century Russian Orthodox saints labeled “Holy Fools”, and my Mennonite heritage. *Lost Fool* is the story of a father speaking to his son on the verge of the child’s life-threatening operation. My intention through this multi-modal research model is to grow a new life-affirming creative process for devising impactful and authentic performance.

DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to the One whose strength is made complete in my weakness. I would also like to express deep gratitude and love to my wife Sara, who has championed this educational journey and endured the “deconstruction of Jason.” Finally, a special thank you to my children, Mercy, Ephraim, Eden and Levi who blessed and encouraged me through this whole process.

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DOCUMENT OF ARTISTIC CHALLENGE

For over twenty years I have been making my living by creating original theatrical work. I have listened, dreamed, written, fundraised, collaborated and performed. My audience has primarily consisted of faith-based communities around the world. Over time the business and administrative responsibilities of my company has demanded more and more of my focus. This has brought about exhaustion, less creative play in development and a struggle for authentic performance.¹ I am pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree at York University, with a focus on Performance Creation, to renew my passion for theatre by exploring new creative processes that will fold into a path toward deeper authenticity in performance, and joy in creating.

In 1996 I graduated from York University with a BFA in Acting. Upon graduation, as with many of my colleagues, I acquired an agent and began the endless audition cycle of my profession. At some point in the first couple years of performing for small theatre companies, doing background work and small parts on the screen, I began to long for something more creative and to further develop my craft as a creator and performer.

During the third year of my York University undergraduate training, I was invited to go see a solo show derived from the book of Luke from the Bible entitled, *Accounts of Luke*. Being someone of faith, I was skeptically interested in a show that combined two of my great loves— theatre and God. What I saw that night changed my life. The classically trained, New York-based actor named Bruce Kuhn opened my eyes to see this ancient story. His performance was skilled, powerful and the story was deeply impactful.

¹ I am defining authentic performance as the actor's ability to reveal their unique person—without emotional, physical or spiritual barrier through their performance.

As this longing for something more creative grew, I thought of the show I had seen a few years prior. Soon I felt a tug towards the story of Israel's greatest king, David. The story was ripe and bursting with characters and themes, relevant to today's culture. I began to research David. In just over a year of reflection, research and writing, I had crafted a text-based, narrative script. I then brought on a collaborator/director that I had worked with on two previous ensemble productions in Toronto. It was an exciting two-week process of script refining, character development and rehearsing. At the end of the rehearsal period, I performed it for friends and family. Halfway through the performance I realized the power and potency of what had been crafted; the audience feedback I received during and after the performance corroborated what I was feeling. I have performed that particular production hundreds of times, to tens of thousands of people all over the globe over the last twenty years. It has become a staple in my roster of productions. Next year my company will be producing a film version of the live theatrical performance for its twenty-first anniversary season. This then became my process of creating over my career: spend time discerning the story or stories that resonated with me, research and develop a narrative script over a significant amount of time, build a creative team, premiere the production and then tour it.

However, one of the challenges of being an artist who creates original work is that I am also an entrepreneur and need to provide for my family of six and my employees. I, therefore, spend a considerable amount of time handling the business side of my company. I have had to refine my competence in areas that I am not naturally gifted or formally trained in, such as administration and fundraising. The negative result of this focus on business has been three-fold: first, my post-writing creative development process has become compacted and increasingly rushed, leaving not-quite ready productions. The saving grace of these productions is that they

are strengthened over the course of continued touring. Secondly, I have found myself exhausted and have struggled to remain creative. Finally, I have developed a pattern of pushing, at times, in my acting work which has led to less authentic performance.

Recently I hired someone to do a practices audit on my company. As a result, I have brought on additional staff to handle more of the business, which I still oversee. In the long run I am determined to commit to growing my own craft in the following areas: creating, performing, nurturing relationships, spiritual listening and impartation. I believe that prioritizing these aspects of my work will allow me to function in a place of greater creativity and authenticity.

The focus of my research that I intend to undertake at York University is to develop new studio-based creative tools. Due to the fact that I have worked within a narrative, text-based model, I have never developed, nor had the tools to take creative content in its earliest form and develop it in the studio. In my first year of the MFA program at York University I was asked to generate content in the studio. I had no frame for this creation methodology. Even though I was given exercises to accomplish and shape that model, I often felt stalled in the execution of them.

In this new creative approach, I need to listen to and reflect upon what is going on inside of me and I need to experience the words and presence of the Divine. In the book of Ezekiel God tells Ezekiel, “I will breathe breath into you, and you will come alive” (*The Voice*, Ezekiel 37.5). I desperately need this fresh breath so I can come alive in myself and my creative process.

This became crystal clear to me this past summer as I was doing some thesis research in western Canada. My first year at York University was a continually moving freight train of stress and anxiety. I had just been through an eighteen-month home renovation that was still not completed when I started school. I was trying to step out of my business for two years while finding enough money for my family of six to live on, and to meet the heavy demands of York

University's MFA program. In the midst of this, my Teaching Assistant's union, CUPE 3903, went on strike at York and I went to the picket line for months. My stress level was through the roof.

So, I went to see one of my spiritual mentors in British Columbia. I poured out my challenges to my friend Catherine, and her friend Charlotte who was visiting from Wales. They listened and created a safe space for me to listen through prayer. Anxiety lifted, heaviness lifted, and afterward I was buzzing with creativity. I felt like I had stepped back into myself. Shortly after our time together I produced a large conference in Calgary. My mind, body and spirit felt renewed and I was able to execute my job with creativity and clarity. And, I had a whole lot of fun!

This is the place I long to create from. I want to begin my creative practice with listening prayer and meditation. Madeline L'Engle writes, in her book *Walking on Water*, "Listen to the silence. Stay open to the voice of the Spirit" (12). I want to find inner connection to myself and the Divine. I have had a personal prayer practice for years. This can, however, often fall to the way side in the midst of busyness. For the purposes of a renewed creation practice, I will bring my experience with listening prayer, as well as layering in other ancient or historical structures that I have been researching.

The first structure is called Hesychastic Prayer from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Some call it pure or intellectual prayer. The focus of this prayer lies in the repetition of a phrase, paying great attention to breath, so that a person might, "Enclose your thought in the words of the prayer" (Brianchaninov 48). The purpose of the prayer is to engage the mind, body and soul of a human being. Hesychastic Prayer "...leads the spiritual aspirant into the stillness and creative silence that is termed *hesychia* in the Greek mystical tradition" (Lazarus xlii).

The second type of prayer structure that I will be exploring comes from reflecting on portions of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. These exercises engage the senses through imagination. "...the purposes of the Exercises: to help one (1) to discard disordered attachments and (2) through this means to order one's life towards God, without coming to a decision from some disordered attachment pleasing more to self than God" (Ignatius 5). I will be using these Spiritual Exercises as a frame to facilitate entering into a creative and relational connection to the Divine. Exploring these frameworks and others as a means of developing a practice of listening prayer in my creation process, I am interested in stripping away the thoughts and feelings that impede creative flow and entering into a connection with which brings life and fosters creativity.

I am also interested in fueling creativity and authenticity out of development of proprioceptive awareness. Integrated within my experience of listening prayer or using it as a catalyst, I will explore deepening my body connection through proprioceptive movement techniques like The Batdorf Technique (TBT). As part of my York University Winter 2018 semester, and again during a week-long workshop this past summer, I studied with York professor Erika Batdorf. She is a performer and master teacher who specializes in The Batdorf Technique.

The Batdorf Technique includes performance training—theatre, movement, dance—integrated with training in juggling *deep physical awareness*...it focuses on a thorough practice of learning to feel multiple sensations in the body simultaneously and in doing so, begin to recognize 'numbness' and dissociation and ways to move around physical and emotional blocks. (<http://www.batdorf.org/technique/>)

The technique asserts that the internal body systems of blood, breath, gravity, pain/pleasure, hot/cold and digestion, as explored in TBT are experienced to bring greater internal awareness and connection for a more authentic performance.

At the beginning of the 2017 York University semester, while participating in Batdorf's movement class, I began to deal with significant foot challenges. I am challenged by two different diseases that can manifest in foot pain. During this very demanding movement class I was struggling with pain tolerance and keeping up with class pace. However, once we got into the TBT proprioceptive body systems work, I was gradually able to connect to a number of my own body systems through the pain I was experiencing. This allowed me to more authentically engage with what was going on inside me.

Out of this authentic internal place I will immerse myself in a number of creative movement techniques to generate content for my solo thesis production. This past summer I spent a week working with Cynthia Croker—a dancer, choreographer and Co-Artistic Director of Motus O Dance Theatre Company. We took some of the content I had been exploring in my first semester at York and ran it through a movement grid. What emerged for me was a different, physical way to process the impulses I felt stirring inside of me. Our time together felt catalytic. I realized, then, that it was possible for me, though very new and shaky, to create from physical movement rather than first starting with writing in my computer.

To this end I will be engrossing myself in a number of different movement techniques to explore the themes and worlds I am interested in for my thesis. These techniques include River Work, which was originally pioneered by Jerzy Grotowski. Grotowski, a Polish experimental theatre practitioner, devised an approach to theatre focused on the actor's voice and body. Theatre & Dance practitioner Raina von Waldenburg describes River Work as, "a series of improvised river-like movements that connect the actor to his/her body as a continuum of organic gesture and elicit from the actor extended aliveness and a deep sense of truth. As a

technique, it develops the understanding that ‘all the information is in the body’

(<http://news.mascalldance.ca/river-work-2/>).

I am also interested in using Authentic Movement² as a creation tool in the studio.

Originally developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse, The American Dance Therapy Association writes,

In its simplest form, *Authentic Movement is a mindful movement exploration between a mover and a witness which encourages the development of consciousness*. The mover moves, with eyes closed, from an intention of mindfulness, non-judgmentally guided by inner impulses, sensations, emotions, and/or thoughts in the presence of a witness. The witness observes, carrying the majority of work in the beginning as he or she strives to see the mover while becoming aware of any personal projections or judgments. The witness is responsible for maintaining an outer consciousness, creating safety, monitoring the time, and for maintaining his or her own psychological safety.

(<https://adta.org/2015/08/18/what-is-authentic-movement/>)

Alongside these creation techniques I’m interested in incorporating aspects of Anne Bogart and Tina Landau’s creation structure called Viewpoints. There are nine Viewpoints including: Spatial Relationship, Kinesthetic Response, Shape, Gesture, Repetition, Architecture, Tempo, Duration, and Topography. During the York 2018 Fall Semester I was able to explore this system within my movement class under the guidance of Sallie Lyons. I was able to work firsthand with this structure and found it immensely helpful as an ensemble creative tool. I intend for the techniques of River work, Authentic Movement, and Viewpoints to act as the foundation or starting place for developing creative content in the studio.

In *The Knowing Body*, Louise Steinman writes, “Images can be used to effect the interior workings of the body, and the body is the effective home of the psyche’s drama” (20). Over the course of this past year I have been gathering nuggets or kernels of image, if you will—content

² It is helpful to distinguish between my definition of authentic performance and the movement exploration Authentic Movement. Authentic performance has to do with a performer revealing their unique person to an audience. Authentic Movement is movement practice derived from inner impulses.

to explore in the studio for my thesis. In Martha Graham's biography, *Martha*, the author reveals how long-time artistic collaborator Louis Horst developed a similar method with Martha, "if the choreographer knew her material, her kernel, she would know how to proceed" (DeMille 108).

These kernels will be sourced from three concepts that have been percolating in me including my experience of being lost or disconnected, the archetype of the fool exemplified in 7th century Russian Orthodox saints labeled Holy Fools and my Mennonite heritage—both personal stories and those found within the history of Mennonites in Canada. I will be taking these kernels, which are comprised of story fragments, sayings, poems, songs and visual images— and will run them through these creative processes. I am excited to deepen my craft and to develop new content out of prayer/meditation, movement and image —the core elements of a nascent studio-based approach.

PERFORMANCE RESEARCH DOCUMENT, PART A

*You're a tree replanted in Eden,
bearing fresh fruit every month,
Never dropping a leaf,
always in blossom
(The Message Remix, Psalm 1.2-3).*

One of the replenishing elements of my thesis exploration has come from a deliberate focus on prayer as an initiator for focus in the studio. I wanted to intentionally root myself, to the best of my ability, in the Divine, trusting that the source I was in relation to had significant resources to mine.

I first turned to the ancient practice of Hesychastic prayer, “[...] such a prayer, when faithfully practiced [...], brings the experience of the uncreated divine light of God and unspeakable joy to the soul. Its purpose is to make man a servant of God”

(<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/prayer-fasting-and-almsgiving/the-jesus-prayer>). The prayer, which is simply: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, is repeated without ceasing over a period of time—for me, over the course of an hour in the studio. This is done silently with head bowed, placing the thoughts of your mind within the heart.

I found this task quite difficult to sustain over a long period of time. However, if I focused on my breath and allowed my thoughts to funnel into one single thought, I could discard other miscellaneous thoughts that immediately arose and stay connected or focused on the source: God. While I did feel like I was able to tap into a powerful connection at times, I also felt exhausted. This pattern of intermittent connection and exhaustion happened each time I tried this practice in the studio. It is little wonder that Orthodox priests of old spent a lifetime learning how to pray what appears to be a simple prayer.

I then began to contemplate what it would be like to take the form—simple repetition of language with an internal focus—and translate that to movement and sound. This turned into an experiment of walking in a large circle in the studio, finding the rhythm in my movement and using that movement and breath to connect with God. I found this approach much more visceral and life-giving.

To this I would sometimes sing a line of music I had percolating inside of me. This too seemed to be a gateway to connection, at times, with the Divine. Essentially, I would, when I felt connected, experience a capacity for authenticity rise up inside of me. Sometimes it allowed me to be courageous in creating later in the studio session. These moments were a delight as I have felt very much out of my element in creating during this thesis experiment.

The other prayer structure I sought to delve into was Ignatian Spirituality. It consists of a series of sense-driven exercises. As I probed more deeply in my research, what I found was an incredibly regimented series of steps that, if fully committed to, require the participant to engage with both a spiritual guide/confessor as well as a thirty-day commitment. This was not going to be possible with my rigorous class schedule and family life.

What drew me to the exercises in the first place, however, was the focus on the imagination and sense as a means of drawing near and connecting with the Divine. So, what now? Would I use bits and pieces of these exercises and explore those? Thankfully George Ganss, S.J., in his translation of *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, writes in his endnotes, “In real life, of course, these forms of prayer are mingled together with great spontaneity; there are overlappings and veerings back and forth” (164). I felt this then gave me the freedom to use the Ignatian Exercises as a jumping-off point in the studio.

Specifically, I would focus on one element of the Divine – perhaps beauty or wonder. Then I would find music that amplified what I was exploring. Starting from a posture of quiet and stillness, I would then add the musical layer. I could find connection in both silence and music. If other distractions would surface, I would simply try to breathe them out and re-focus on the element I had chosen. There were also times when I would add movement into the process. As with the Hesychastic prayer I found myself moving in and out of what, I came to feel, was connection to the Divine. I write this, because in those moments when I felt connected, peace would come and also clarity of thought. I would even say there was a degree of joy that would appear. This experience of joy was very significant for me. I have felt the York University campus to be a very dark place spiritually.

My experience with both of these prayer structures led me eventually to a posture of what some have called listening prayer. What this practically meant for me in the studio was that I would position myself, whether it be through music, movement or stillness, in a posture of listening for that which was beyond myself. I found this an incredibly life-giving way to start studio exploration.

When transitioning from prayer and meditation into creation in the studio, I would use various forms of physical warm-up as preparation to explore content. I began to use elements of The Batdorf Technique in this regard. There is limited published research available on The Batdorf Technique. However, I first came into contact with it through Erika Batdorf, my movement professor at York University, who originated and developed the technique. To re-iterate, a major component of this technique is to expand awareness of the internal body systems of blood, breath, gravity, pain/pleasure, hot/cold and digestion as a means to greater emotional

connection. I would explore these after rigorous movement, getting my heart rate up to amplify my awareness of the various body systems.

During my time at York University, I have had severe foot pain (stemming from lifelong medical issues). This has been a curse and a blessing. A curse, in that it greatly reduced my ability to move freely in the studio. A blessing, as my foot pain became a gateway to engage with these body systems. I would access the pain in my feet first. Then I would move into engaging with breath, blood, pleasure, hot and cold. Digestion and gravity seemed more elusive. Until one day I had a profound experience with gravity and the Divine.

I had just completed a heart-rate-raising warm-up. I fell to the floor to engage with my body systems—a practice I had learned from Batdorf. At that moment I felt completely strapped to the floor, unable to move. I was overcome by a deep emotional response to what was going on inside of me. This seemed to extend past myself into the room and out into the ether. These words grew up from inside of me, “So, what do you think gravity is Jason?” I thought, with tears in my eyes and overcome by emotion, “I have no idea.” Then I heard, “Gravity is my embrace of humanity.” I was completely overwhelmed at the wonder of that thought. Out of this moment came the seeds to develop a theological framework which could mesh with these body systems. This is something I will certainly explore more fully beyond this thesis.

From this place of internal connection to self and the Divine, I sought to take image kernels gleaned from the content I had researched and develop them through movement for my thesis production. These kernels were sourced from three worlds I was eager to explore—my experience of being lost or disconnected, the archetype of the fool exemplified in 7th century Holy Fools and my Mennonite heritage.

I began to research the technique of River Movement. In his book, *An Acrobat of the Heart*, Stephen Wangh articulates the river movement technique by saying, “I begin with one isolation and then allow the impulses and images that arise to lead me from one movement to another” (80). The idea is to begin with what Grotowski calls “plastiques” or physical gestures. These gestures contain emotion, and a river is having one gesture travel to another gesture based on impulse or image. I found this kind of exercise very helpful within the context of a warm-up. However, I was interested in taking images from a text, song or film that I had researched and allowing those to move through my body. With this in mind I created a hybrid of the River Movement in my studio work.

In my research on my Mennonite heritage, I came across a biography of the Fehr family. They were part of the first move of Mennonites to Southern Manitoba in the late 1800’s. The author writes, “Finally they sailed up the massive St. Lawrence River into Canada. The thousands of lights sparkling on both banks lent a magical atmosphere to their new homeland” (Kouwenhoven 148). I appropriated this image for myself, imagining my great-grandfather sailing into the harbor in Quebec, which he had done. I then asked myself where in my body the image I was using felt like it lived. It seemed to start in my outstretched hands. From this plastique I allowed my impulses to move me through space. What I found were deep and abundant emotional connections, as well as a sense of being linked to my lineage.

In a similar fashion I found a starting physical gesture, with my body contorted, from my image for a disease from which I suffer (*i.e.* Hypophosphatasia). Found primarily in Mennonite communities in southern Manitoba,

Hypophosphatasia (HPP) is a rare genetic disorder characterized by the abnormal development of bones and teeth. These abnormalities occur due to defective mineralization, the process by which bones and teeth take up minerals such as calcium and phosphorus. (<https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/hypophosphatasia/>)

As I let this image move through my body, I had a plethora of powerful emotions ripple through me. As with my experience exploring my grandfather's arrival into Canada, these emotions were a gateway to a deeper physical and emotional understanding of what I was exploring. This then became my primary practice in the studio, allowing images from my Mennonite heritage to move through me, gathering the emotional content like ingredients for a soup. What this practice did not provide was physical blocking (actor geography) or even a specific story structure for a show. What it did provide was a way to emotionally and physically dive into images in my area of research for my thesis production.

I also began to excavate images gathered from my research on the 7th century Holy Fools and explore them in the studio. A number of years ago, I became interested in the archetype of sad clown through a print I own (Appendix B). I purchased it as it reminded me of the passage in the Bible that says, "Be God's fool—that's the path to true wisdom" (*The Message Remix*, 1 Cor. 3.18-20). For years I had wanted to use the image as a catalyst to create a show. This then led me to research Holy Fools, a group of 7th century male and female saints noted for their outlandish behavior, as a means to draw close to the Divine. Directed to them by an orthodox theologian friend of mine named Brad Jersak, I was captivated by their behavior as a means to draw closer to God. Saint Simeon of Emmesa accomplished many foolish acts, "[He] gathered some nuts into the bosom of his shirt, entered the church during Liturgy [...] and began to extinguish the candles with the nuts. When some people tried to drive him away, he ran up to the amvon [an early form of pulpit or reading desk] and began to hit the women with the nuts" (Novakshonoff 11). There are many more examples of eccentric exploits found within this group of saints.

My time in the studio with the Holy Fool images through my hybrid River modality also produced some startling emotional connections that began with physical gesture. However, what

emerged from this exploration was a question, “What would it be like to become this sort of fool today”? This question now pervades my thesis production. The production’s narrative is about a father talking to his son on the verge of the child having a life-threatening operation. I wondered what I would say to my son in this situation. I also queried, what form of foolish behaviour would I exhibit to express all that I needed to tell him before going into surgery?

Another modality I investigated in my time in the studio was Authentic Movement. This technique requires a mover and a witness to that mover. In an essay of the topic, one of its pioneers, Mary Starks Whitehouse describes, “When the image is truly connected in certain people, then the movement is authentic. There is no padding of movement just for the sake of moving. There is an ability to stand the inner tension until the next image moves them” (Pallaro 21).

Unlike River Movement, where movement is birthed out of physical gesture with eyes open, Authentic Movement is sourced, eyes closed, from internal images from the imagination played out through body impulses. Again, as with River Movement, Authentic Movement is generated through immediate impulses that arise within the actor/mover. However, the premise of my studio exploration was to take the research I had done on the three worlds of “lostness,” Mennonite heritage and the Holy Fools, and explore their potent images through movement. So again, I devised a hybrid structure of Authentic Movement that was helpful to my process.

To that end, I went into the studio with dancer and movement dramaturg Cynthia Croker from Motus O Dance Theatre, to explore my hybrid of Authentic Movement. I would begin, eyes closed, with an image. Cynthia would witness what I was doing. First breathing and letting that image percolate inside of me. When I then felt an impulse to move, I would let my body respond to that internal image. This felt dangerous with my eyes closed. But, also gave me permission to

go down the emotional rabbit hole inside of me. We mined the images that arose in me from initiating words like “lost” and “fool.”

One of the images that arose while moving through “lost” was a forest. So, I piggybacked the forest image onto “lost” for an additional movement session. The forest image produced in me vibrant impulses that had me on an adventure through a dense forest with biting brambles and branches cutting at me. What is exciting is that this session generated the foundation of what is now the last section of my production.

I also sought to explore the movement modality Viewpoints. This creative structure was developed for actors by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau and laid out in their written work, *The Viewpoints Book*. The content of this book deals primarily with “nine Physical Viewpoints, within Viewpoints of Time and Viewpoints of Space” (8). I had worked with this structure, for the first time, in a graduate movement class with instructor Sallie Lyons in 2018. What I found most intriguing was the way an ensemble of actors could create and flourish through the implementation of these viewpoints. These viewpoints are: Time (Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, and Repetition), Space (Spatial Relationship, Topography, Architecture, Shape, and Gesture), and Sound (Pitch, Volume, and Timbre). However, I found it difficult to explore my content through Viewpoints. It was a challenge to use this modality as a solo creation tool. Perhaps I also bit off more than I could chew by researching three distinct modalities in the studio. I do feel that it may be beneficial to use Viewpoints from the vantage point of an actor and also as a director in future projects, but acknowledge that it did not play a significant place in my current process.

The modalities of River Work and Authentic Movement provided a wealth of emotional explorations, movement fragments, character possibilities and story ideas. It did not, however,

give a performance structure or through-line to my thesis project. I found this stress inducing and I began to wonder how these elements would come together.

At the beginning of 2019, my Performance Creation cohort presented a showing of our work in progress. I presented a handful of ideas that had come out of my time in the studio revolving around the premise of a sick child being visited by a number of characters in his imagination. This was very much a work-in-progress. The showing articulated where I was at in my creative process. But, I felt it did not show well; or rather, meet the faculty's expectations of where I should be at in the creation process. The next week, my suspicions were confirmed during a meeting with faculty where I received their extremely critical feedback. What became clear was that process needed to now give way to product. They suggested that it might be a good idea to now take the content from my studio exploration and develop that on the page. They felt that now was the time to go back to my experience as a story-teller. This was a complete shift from the way that I had originally thought about building the performance.

The entire experience of devising a piece out of movement and image has been one of the most challenging and lonely experiences of my life. The emotional, physical and spiritual battles to push through this exploration has been weighty for me and my family. It has taken me completely out of my comfort zone. Choreographers like Martha Graham and movement theatre creators such as Frantic Assembly or DV8 spend their entire careers developing and honing their movement methodologies, in order to create content.

So, if I was going to shift gears and pour my research through the storyteller lens I needed to expand my thinking on this thesis process. Louise Steinman, in her book *The Knowing Body* reminded me that “The storyteller (for our purposes the storyteller who creates

performances) stops time for the audience. He or she invites the watcher to enter the time of the story, to dwell on its inner storehouse of images along with their own” (121).

I delved into my journals, watched my videos, and opened my computer to write. How would I mesh these three worlds—being lost, my Mennonite roots and Holy Fools together? What story was I telling? In her compelling and helpful book *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg writes, “Your body is starting to digest and turn over your material...there are parts of you raking, fertilizing, taking in the sun’s heat, and making ready for the deep green plants of writing to grow” (21).

I set out to write down each story that continued to percolate in me from my physical research in the studio. I would sit with that story, allow the emotions to wash over me and write—autobiographical stories, stories about my Mennonite heritage, stories of Holy Fools and stories of being lost. There turned out to be an abundance of content found in my writing garden—delicious ingredients for a feast. But, what food would I create? Perhaps I could create a delicious soup?

A question started to form in my mind that I was interested in and that I thought would be an underlying question I might ask the audience, “Is it possible to live in the pain and brokenness of life and also be full of peace or joy?” I was also interested in the concept of speaking to my soul. This had come from my time in prayer in the studio. I would take time to make positive declarations over myself, based on the scriptures.

In the end, I came back to developing the story frame of a father speaking to his sick son on the verge of his life-threatening surgery. This kind of frame allowed me to use the son as a metaphor for the soul. It also provided a way to narrow down which stories needed to be told.

Each story finds its emotional roots through my time in the studio with my hybrid versions of River Work and Authentic Movement. There are also a number of scenes where movement sequences affect the stories and the storytelling. When I began the process of trying to create out of movement-specific modalities I knew it would be a challenge. I had never worked this way before and had no choreographic training. The process provided equal parts confusion/struggle and rich emotional excavation. In the end, I believe that the exploration of image through movement brought a new richness to my writing.

PERFORMANCE RESEARCH DOCUMENT, PART B

*And what am I to do?
Just tell me what am I supposed to say?
And I can't change the world
But I can change the world in me
If I rejoice, whoa
Rejoice (U2)*

Project Development

During the first semester of my MFA studies at York University, Erika Batdorf's solo creation class opened my eyes to see that there were many movement-based creation modalities I had no knowledge of. Within this context I began to wonder how best to use my MFA to grow my creation craft. Could I develop a new creation practice out of image and movement for my thesis?

My research began in earnest in the summer of 2018, after the York University strike fiasco. In April 2018, I flew to Langley, BC, to spend time with Eastern Orthodox theologian and author Dr. Brad Jersak. I had become interested in the role of the Fool and Trickster in theatre history. From theatre's early beginnings, playwrights have used archetypes like the Fool or trickster to break societal conventions and norms often holding a mirror up to challenges of the society they are a part of. In First Nations lore, the Sacred Clown fulfills a similar role, while also folding in a connection to the Divine. I wondered if my Christian faith tradition had an equivalent character in its history. In the first semester of my MFA, I wrote a paper on the Hebrew prophets as performance artists. I was curious if there were other groups in more recent history who lived a life of theatricality and connection to the Divine. Dr. Jersak introduced me to a group of 7th century saints labeled, "Holy Fools." These were men and woman steeped in the Eastern Orthodox Church tradition who became fools in mankind's eyes to draw closer to God.

In Eugene Vodolazkin’s tremendous novel *Laurus* one of the characters tells the protagonist Laurus, “You really are a holy fool, for thou hath chosen a life for yourself that is wild and disparaged by people...Be outrageous. Being pious is easy and pleasant, go ahead and make yourself hated...So now disown yourself completely” (146). I find it fascinating that like the role of the fool in theatre, the Holy Fools were often disregarded for their outlandish words and actions. However, these same words and actions contained power to transform an individual and/or society. In the course of time a significant number of these Holy Fools were deemed to be saints. This concept intrigued me, and I was curious to see how I would incorporate the world of the Holy Fool into my thesis.

During that same trip I also met briefly with Val Lieske, Artistic Director of Fire Exit Theatre in Calgary. She spent a day with me as a story dramaturg—searching for the fertile ground in the process and material I was looking to focus on. From there, in May, I jumped into a week-long intensive with The Batdorf Technique in a downtown Toronto studio. This week was helpful in establishing some of the creative frame I would bring into my thesis studio work in the fall of 2018.

In June and then later in August, I amplified my physical exploration with movement dramaturg Cynthia Croker. Using a hybrid version of Authentic Movement to mine a number of concepts, we cultivated a host of emotional content that has become part of the fabric of the production. It also opened (and importantly) steadied my nerves as a movement creator in the studio.

July saw a family driving trip to Winnipeg, where I spent a considerable time at the Canadian Mennonite Archives at Canadian Mennonite University. All four of my grandparents were Mennonite. In recent years I have become increasingly interested in my heritage and have

been eager to figure out a way to explore this on stage. My lineage is Russian-German, and my ancestors were pioneers coming to Canada to escape persecution and poverty. Mennonites came out of the Anabaptist movement. They were a people violently persecuted for rejecting the teachings of the Catholic Church in the 1600's. In the historical novel *Chariots of Smoke*, author Margaret Epp articulates the core belief of the Mennonites through the man the movement was named after. Menno Simons declares, "I learned that to follow Scripture in all matters was to forsake the fundamental teachings of Catholicism." (Qtd. in Epp 123).

The summer also saw the building of a creative team for the thesis project. I secured director Tom Carson. A graduate of York University's directing program, Tom is a Dora award-winning director from Toronto and, besides freelance directing, is the Artistic Director of Smile Theatre—a company that creates performances meant to enrich seniors' lives. I had worked with Tom on previous projects and felt that if I was to be traversing new territory in the studio, I needed to have someone I trusted who I'd already had developed a shorthand with to shape what I was creating.

During an exploratory time in the studio with Tom during the fall of 2018, I had an epiphany about how we might use video in the production. I have worked with a number of video artists in my work through the years and Regan Neudorf immediately came to mind. Regan is a graduate of York University's theatre program and a multimedia designer. He previously crafted the audio and video content for a specific section of three large-scale conferences that I produced. To this team I added Ben Hilton, another graduate of York University in music composition. A freelance composer and musician, he developed and produced the sound design for my last production, *Searching for Abraham*. Hilton's work is extremely textured and carries a unique sonic signature. I felt that it was right in the ballpark of what I would be creating. Finally,

my long-time tech director Wayne Deering would be building sets, and designing how the media would be implemented on stage. Wayne also came on board to act as tech for the performance, running media, sound, and light.

With this team set in place, I worked from September 2018 to January 2019 to develop the research I had done during the summer of 2018 and explore that content in the studio through the modalities of what came to include hybrid versions of River Work and Authentic Movement, as outlined in detail previously. Very slowly the content and structure of the production came together. This was a long and arduous process. I had a great deal of fog in figuring out what I was building. I felt confident in the ingredients; however, I couldn't see what kind of soup I was preparing. During the month of January 2019, I moved back and forth from the studio to my computer to assemble the script. A more finalized script came into focus at the beginning of February 2019.

The result of the long-simmering script, I believe, is a stronger show. The challenge is that I have, by necessity, pushed the development of both sound and video design later in the creative process and my team is now strapped for time. So, for my planned thesis showing, these elements will not be as robust as the final production envisions. I still feel that the work my team is doing is strong and effective. I am excited that this production will be showcased at our York Performance Creation cohort's microfestival at The Theatre Centre's Incubator space April 22-28, 2019, and then become part of my company's (Jason Hildebrand Creative Arts) fall 2019 North American tour. This additional time will give my team the space to build additional layers to their already solid work.

At the beginning of February 2019, I also went back into the studio with one of my York cohort, Gülce Oral, to refine a handful of movement sections that came out of my time in the

studio, including my work with Cynthia Croker. Gülce has worked alongside me over the last two years at York. She is familiar with my work, and I with hers. This gave us a common creative shorthand with which to work in the studio. As a result, the previous work was deepened and refined.

Last November 2018, while working in the studio with my director Tom, an idea began to emerge about the performance being set in a children's hospital. The concept was that a father would be speaking to his young son on the verge of this child's life-threatening operation. I imagined three old-fashioned pleated hospital screens framing the set. I also wondered if we could build these screens in such a way to use them, at times, as projection surfaces. This idea has held fast, and my tech director Wayne has built three hospital screens on rolling platforms. We have purchased three short-throw projectors that will illuminate these screens. They will sit on the base of the rolling platforms and will provide a dynamic and physically agile backdrop for York University's Atkinson studio where I will be presenting my thesis performance. Set design may change going into our YESFest performances at the Theatre Centre Incubator Space and then further develop in the touring production.

Production Support for Thesis Showings

Wayne Deering (Tech Director) will run video for the three short-throw video projectors, and sound from Qlab. He will also run lighting from a rented lighting board. 20' pipe and drape will be provided by York University and will cover one wall of the studio. This will be used as a backdrop. We will use the small PA in the studio to amplify sound. Lighting will be rented for the Thesis performance and the cost shared between our Performance Creation Cohort.

Rehearsal Space

Much of my studio research in 2017 and 2018 was accomplished in various York studios. However, starting in the late part of 2018 and into 2019 I moved my studio practice from York to large rooms and gymnasiums at Toronto Alliance Church and Toronto Chinese Alliance Church. I have relationships with the leadership of both churches, and they were pleased to provide free rehearsal space.

Presentation Venue

Atkinson Studio E, York University (February 28, March 1, 2019)
YESFest, The Theatre Centre, Toronto, ON (April 23-28, 2019)
North American Tour, Venues TBA (September – December 2019)

Budget and Funding Plan

I have devised a budget and funding plan based on a three-phase rollout. As seen in the development costs below, the only hard costs were the building of the screens and projectors. My tech director was able to source used short-throw machines and save us thousands of dollars. Each of the creative team has graciously agreed to defer payment until the show is touring in the fall. There may be additional development expenses leading up to Phase 3.

2018/19 Production Development Costs

Set (materials and build), projectors,	\$2,500	
Props & lighting rental		
Media design and production	\$2,000	(payment deferred until tour completion)
Sound design and production	\$2,000	(payment deferred until tour completion)
Director	\$2,000	(payment deferred until tour completion)
Technical director	\$1,500	(payment deferred until tour completion)
Total	\$10,000	

* Expenses will be covered for this project through three avenues.

1. The initial \$2,500 will be covered by Jason Hildebrand Creative Arts 2019 revenue
2. A charitable fundraising campaign will be launched in April 2019 through Jason Hildebrand Creative Arts. Tax receipts will be offered for all donations.
3. Any additional expenses or short fall in fundraising will be rolled into production

touring fees.

- all expenses will be paid by January 1, 2020.

Three Development Phases

Phase 1 – Thesis Performance, written thesis and thesis defense, York University

Thesis Performance is developed, rehearsed and performed alongside written thesis requirement.

After which, there will be a thesis defense

Phase 2 – YESfest, Theatre Centre, Toronto (April 21-28, 2019)

Upon completion of Phase 1, the creative team will re-convene and develop a plan to prepare for the YESfest.

Phase 3 – North American Tour (September – December 2019)

Upon completion of Phase 2, again the creative team will re-convene and develop a plan to prepare for Fall 2019 North American Tour.

CONCLUSION

*You really are a holy fool, for thou hath chosen a
life for yourself that is wild and disparaged by people.*
(Vodalazkin, 146)

My *Lost Fool* thesis experiment has been tumultuous and full of growth and challenge. Much of the work I have done has been mined deeply and through the soil of my own journey while in school and over the course of my life. As I have mentioned earlier, often my thesis development has been completed on my own without community, working in the studio until the wee hours; pressing into the fog of a new process that was completely out of my comfort zone. Add to this, stepping away from my professional life for two years and spending significantly less time engaged with my family at home, I have felt quite lost and discombobulated during this process.

I repeatedly found myself wondering if I was delving into different forms of Listening Prayer in the most effective manner to draw close to the Divine, or mining hybrid forms of River Work and Authentic Movement in a way that honours their pioneers yet feeds my creative process. And, what kind of production was I building anyway? To be frank, much of my time in the studio playing/working I had no idea where I was truly going. Near the beginning of development, I had a strong sense that I wanted to explore this lostness I felt in tackling new processes, as well as the worlds of my Mennonite heritage and the 7th Century Holy Fools. I had little idea of how these worlds would collide and then mesh into a production. In fact, the final draft of the script emerged only weeks before the showing. I have had to learn how to be patient—to give myself a measure of grace as the work percolated in me—especially when I received critical feedback during this steep learning curve.

However, I decided that if I was going to immerse myself in a new way of developing content for this thesis production, I wanted to leave everything on the table to incorporate into the exploration—all my victories in the studio and all my messes and weaknesses as well. I was interested in the form and content I was exploring, and also the way this process affected me. As Madaleine L’Engle writes in *Walking on Water—Reflections of Faith and Art*, “It is a joy to be allowed to be a servant of the work. And it is a humbling and exciting thing to know that my work knows more than I do” (171).

Discouragement would often follow me into the studio. There were times during this thesis whirlwind when I was overcome by anxiety and panic. This is not something I have struggled with previously. The relentless York University class schedule and pressure to create in a new way forced me to find strategies to bring encouragement into my process. As a result, I got into the habit of making declarations of truth over my fear to spur myself on.³ I found myself searching the Old and New Testaments in the Bible to find words to strengthen me. I would repeat phrases over and over, often rolling declarations into my Listening Prayer exploration in the studio. Phrases like, “[You] are more than a [conqueror]...” (NIV, Romans 8.37), paraphrased from the book of Romans, became a staple in my meditation. I also found other poetry and music anchored in encouragement. A number of these declarative phrases worked their way into the opening scene of *Lost Fool*, where (within a different context in the play) the father tries too hard to force joy into the room and makes declarations to his son who is about to go into a life-threatening operation.

³ In my Christian faith tradition some participants find the practice of making biblical truth declarations a life-giving experience. The idea is to partner with the words of scripture in order to change one’s present emotional, spiritual and physical reality from, for example, one of discouragement to encouragement—to birth what is not yet into what now is. It draws a future hope into a present reality through conscious agreement with that truth.

I also wove the experience of finding myself in the midst of being overwhelmed by panic and anxiety into the various emotional states-of-being that the father finds himself in throughout the play. As I mentioned earlier in this document, one of the questions that became interesting to me during studio exploration, and that I wanted to ask the audience was, “Can we human beings live in brokenness and still find joy and peace?” As a result of taking the father through this emotional rollercoaster, I was able to open that question up during the final moments of the play where the father chooses to walk, in his imagination, on the broken glass to his son and recognizes that the worlds of pain and peace can co-exist.

In reflecting back on the journey of examining Listening Prayer and the modalities of what became hybrid explorations of River Work and Authentic Movement, I find an expanded creative toolbox. This thesis exploration was incredibly valuable. Especially beneficial to me was the rich emotional landscape that was mined and then incorporated into the stories in *Lost Fool*. So many of the layers of emotion which found their way into the production’s stories were mined in the studio through this development process.

One of the components I most enjoyed exploring through these modalities, and will continue to use in future creative development, was rigorously playing with images that I had researched. In *The Knowing Body*, Louise Steinman writes, “A resonant image has many layers of meaning. It can be paradoxically simple yet complex, obvious yet obscure, rational in form yet mystical in meaning” (62). This description provides a portal into how it felt to allow my researched images to expand from my mind to include my spirit and body, and then give myself permission for my body to express those images through movement. It was quite a revelation. I ended up with exciting emotional content. I also devised movement sections, primarily in my work with Cynthia Croker, that I would later come back to develop more fully with my fellow

MFA Performance Creation colleague, Gülce Oral. It was so rewarding to recognize and integrate these movement ideas into the production. This movement-based expression was brand new for me. In fact, a number of audience members who had seen my previous work commented that they had never seen me use movement and gesture in that way on stage. They felt that it gave the production an increased depth.

I believe there is still room to further develop some of these movement sections as well as add some additional movement in the next incarnation of the production at the end of April at The Theatre Centre. I will be heading back into the studio with Gülce to strengthen and deepen the father's trip to Holland where he rides the old red Dutch bike, as well as the final moments of the play where the father enters into the journey in the forest. I'd like to also see what it would be like to incorporate more effective gesture into the Prince Croissant section. In addition, I am very interested in developing a more robust imaginative journey for the father to explore during the scene transitions. Since the showings, I have wondered if the three screens could physically move during scene transitions to represent a journey through a forest labyrinth. The journey would ultimately find its conclusion in the last scene of the play.

While I was delighted with both the concept and how the projected screens looked, they were underutilized in the showings. With the full vision and script emerging late in the development process, my media team were not given enough time to fully realize the project. As with a further exploration of movement, we will fill out the production with additional sound and video content. Layers of video will be added to the work that has already been produced to strengthen the storytelling and provide a richer visual landscape.

I am likewise interested in the possibility of incorporating or filling out a few of the scenes with more story content (already developed) for the April showing at The Theatre Centre.

I am interested in expanding the sections that discuss who the Mennonites are and what they believe.

From a performance perspective I felt that I moved in and out of authenticity. I believe that the creation work I did in the studio grounded me in many of the sections, including some of the movement sections. However, I also recognize that, with the script, blocking and screen movements coming together so late in the process, I found myself disconnecting and pushing as a performer to figure out what to do next on-stage. In the end, I feel like that struggle may have been an interesting one to watch. I am, however, very excited to be more secure in what is going on on-stage so I can more fully immerse myself in the journey of the father.

Finally, through the father's movement and dialogue, I was pleased with how my Mennonite story and the concept of becoming foolish to reveal the truth came together in the midst of an overarching theme of lostness. The development of a Listening Prayer practice grounded the devising process. Out of this practice, the exploration of elements of River Work and Authentic Movement modalities gave me another important creative source to mine content. Though the *Lost Fool* thesis experiment was fraught with a host of emotional, physical and spiritual challenges, it has allowed my capacity and desire to incorporate movement and image into future work to grow significantly.

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APPENDIX A

Lost Fool Script Sample

Episodes...

You've Got This – Go Team!

You are Loved

You are not Alone

You Don't Need to Be Afraid

You Need to Fight for Blessing

You are a Survivor

Life Is an Adventure

The play is set in a children's hospital one hour before a child's life-threatening operation. There is a vague reference to the time period of the late 1970's early 1980's. However, it could just as easily be set outside of time.

The father is the sole actor. The audience is the child.

There are three hospital privacy screens on stage. They are built on rolling platforms and are movable. Onto these screens are projected images from short-throw projectors mounted on the screen platforms. These images reveal, at times, the inner emotional landscape of the father and are intermittent throughout the entire production.

There is a hospital table in the middle of the room with a breakfast tray on top.

The play has seven episodes.

The child is a metaphor for the soul.

EPISODE 1. YOU'VE GOT THIS – GO TEAM! / I'M ALL ALONE

Dad enters hospital room with a toothbrush in his mouth. He has been here for a while. His duffel bag is lying beside the only chair in the room stage left of the screens. He walks in quietly making sure the patient is not sleeping. The patient is sleeping. He goes to his duffel bag, puts away the tooth brush and puts on deodorant.

He looks at his sleeping son, careful not to wake him up. The father is exhausted.

He notices the food on the tray - there is a croissant, a banana, muffin, etc. The tray itself also has other things on it – Kleenex box, Lego helicopter and a stuffed dog

Oh, for crying out loud. For crying out loud. Why would you deliver food, this morning? I filled out the form last week. Honestly, these people? And, it's not supposed to be milk. It's supposed to be apple juice on Tuesdays. And, he can't even drink anything today. How many complaints do I have to make to get these people...? (*He eats the food through this whole rant*)

The father remembers he wants to set up a party for his son. He goes into his duffel bag, pulls out a banner, party hat, kazoo and glasses. As he is setting up the son stirs.

Hey...wait...keep your eyes closed. I've got a surprise.

The father puts on a hat and grabs kazoo)

Ok, open your eyes...

Surprise! *(he blows the kazoo)* A little birdy told me that you have a big day today. So, I thought we'd celebrate. I know we only have a little bit of time

I've come to get you joyful! It's a joy party! Cause that's what we need this morning. Let's start with a little song, you know it well!

Let's do the actions!

I've got the joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Where?

Down in my heart, where? down in my heart.

Come on sing with me.

I've got the joy, joy, joy, down in my heart, Where?

Down in my heart to stay!

Cause I'm so happy, so very happy, I've got a lot of joy down in my heart!

Yes, I'm so happy, so very happy, I've got a lot of joy down in my heart!

Cha, cha, cha!

And guess what? *(Announcer voice)* When you come out of the OR you'll receive these lovely prizes!

Tell him what he's won Don Pardo!

He's won...

A gigantic wedgie! No?

A pet walrus names Ralph?

Tickets to a fart chamber? But you fart all the time!

A brand-new car! Not old enough to drive?

How about...1,000,000! Not interested.

Hmm. A pet tiger!

Ok, I don't think your mom would let you have that.

Well, what about a get-out-of-making-your-bed-for-a-month card?

Or, front row Jets tickets?

Or, a fleet of Match-box cars. You can make forts for them for days..

A brand-new bike, bike, bike (echo)?

Ah ha, that's it. A new bike it is!

I promise to buy you a new bike when you get home.

Hey bud, wake up. I'm bringing the joy here. You need to get on board. We need to get your spirits soaring when you go in today.

Bud, on! Come on. I got the hat, and the kazoo & the stuff. You're not going to...fall asleep on me here. Hey! Hey!

I have been doing a little truth research.

It is important to declare true things over yourself when life gets hard. I really think that when we hold hands with truth our world looks different.

Ready to be encouraged?

The joy of the Healer is my strength. Hence the joy party!

I refuse discouragement! I know sometimes you get discouraged. I get discouraged. But today we say no way!

I give no place to fear in my life! I do not have a spirit of fear! Shazam!

Terror shall not come near me because the Defender is the strength of my life and always causes me to triumph. You are a champion!

I have been given power to tread upon serpents, scorpions and the power of darkness. How cool is that. You are more powerful than G-force!

I am more than a conqueror. Yes! You are!

What do you think of those bud? Pretty good? I'm going to declare them when you're in there soon.

Bud, bud? You're falling asleep again. Ok, you sleep. We still have time.

The father is exhausted from his pep talk. He cleans up the party stuff.

Short audio/video movement is seen on screens during episode transition.

EPISODE 2. YOU ARE LOVED / I STILL HAVE TO HAVE THIS OPERATION

The child is sleeping. The father pushes the middle screen back to give him some space in the room to internally process apart from the kid.

I'm so tired. I think I'm getting tired of sleeping on this floor.

You sleep,..

I need to tell you some things bud. Before you go in. *(long pause)*

You know, when you were born, I slept on the hospital floor too. We thought you were gonna be a girl. So, when you came out a boy, we had no names. We were gonna call you, what was it? Mercy or Trinity, so something like that. Mom was in labour forever. All through the night. I remember, the doctor on-call had these...really big hands. Our doctor was on vacation, I think. Your mom pushed and pushed and pushed and you would not come out. She was so exhausted. You had, have a big head. We didn't know...

And, your big head got stuck. You wouldn't come out. Emergency C-section... You were cute with this enormous melon. That's what the nurses kept saying... "What a cute baby. His head is huge." Man, could you cry. Right from the start. Never ending crying...

After you were born, that's when I slept on the floor beside your mom's bed. You were with the nurses. Then I went home. We had this tiny apartment. You wouldn't remember. I filled up the bathtub and sat in it. A baby was coming home. Why should I have a kid? I'm not responsible. I don't know how to take care of a baby. I don't know how to take care of me. What if I screw him up or drop him What if I wreck the kid? I can't do this. Why would I have a kid?

Then, when we got you home you would cry - all the time. All of the time! It never stopped. We were going crazy. We didn't know what to do... We would take turns walking you, rocking you and singing over you. Hours and hours and hours. I was so tired. You made me crazy. But, you were a fighter. And, the more you cried, the more I fell in love with you. You were a tough little man.

You hated to be held. Hated it! Only when we put you down would you stop crying. We didn't know what was wrong. Didn't know what to do. Then the doctor's visits started. Endless appointments. No one could figure out what was wrong with your head. Until they did. Then you needed an emergency operation...immediately - in Switzerland. The only place this operation had ever been attempted. And even then, only one person had ever lived. We were going to Switzerland. Then we met these two doctors here at Sick Kids. They'd never done an operation like that before. But, they were experts in the field and felt they could pull it off. We signed off on your life...

And here you are again five years later, and I've only got a few minutes... *(begins to panic)*

The father retreats to the space in front of the middle screen. Images of the father in different states of being are projected onto the screens. He takes this all in and eventually runs behind the centre screen, so the kid won't see him having a panic attack.

(has a panic attack behind the screen). Breathe. You're ok. He's ok. You're ok. He's ok.

EPISODE 3. YOU ARE NOT ALONE / YES, I AM

The child remains sleeping. The father re-enters the hospital room.

I'm sorry I wasn't here! I'm sorry I wasn't here at the beginning. But, I'm here now. I'm here bud. I came here. I didn't go home. I came right from the airport. I just came here and stayed.

When I found out you had to have *another* operation, I... I was so (*exhale*). We knew something was up for a while. You weren't yourself. I just couldn't believe you'd have to go through it all again. Worried that you would... I was worried. You know, I couldn't...function... I felt like a paint can in one of those shakers. I wasn't helpful. I was just...

Your mom just said, sort it out. Whatever it takes. He needs you.

So, I left. I know. I got on a plane. I can't. I needed to be not home...somewhere else to process...that you might not. So hard to watch you. I needed to re-group - talk to myself. To talk to the Healer. To be surrounded by people who would care for *me*. Buzzing...vibrating inside. I couldn't it shut off. I'm having a hard time shutting it off now. It comes and goes...Breathe. Just breathe. You're ok.

I went to see my friend Catherine out west. Remember me telling you about her? She's a grandma and super cool. And she talks with the Healer. A direct line connection. She's good at it. When I'm with her, when she prays for me, peace comes. Like I get reconnected. My fog lifts.

She was on vacation with her friend Charlotte from Wales at a little cottage. It was a beautiful day. Sun shining. But, inside vibrating. Confused. Foggy. Lost. She's sitting on a lawn chair in the garden when I arrive.

Years ago, I was sick. I was sick too bud. Different than you. Before you were born. But sick. I should have died.

I got Necrotizing Fasciitis...Flesh-Eating Disease. Overnight I went from completely healthy to almost dead.

I started out thinking I had food poisoning, but this was food poisoning times ten. And it kept getting worse.

Then a few parts of my body started to swell and turn purple. It felt like someone had cut me open, put in spare tires and closed me up.

We went to the doctor...

She took one look at me and I knew from her expression it was not good. I almost had no pulse. At which point, everything started to slow down until my life was moving in slow motion...

Paramedics arrived, they got me in the ambulance and then I stated to go into septic shock. Ya, septic shock - my body started shutting down.

At the hospital the waters parted.

Doctors and nurses in full masks and gowns. My room quarantined. "What the heck did I have?"

They had pumped 23 liters of saline into my body to kick start it. I was massively bloated, and it was not working.

The doctors decided the only way to stop the septic shock was to give me a particular drug.

Now I am not allergic to anything...except apparently that drug.

My throat began to swell shut.

I leaned over and whispered, "I can't breathe." Everyone stopped, turned their heads to me and then all at once they kicked into emergency mode.

Machines were wheeled in; doctors were barking orders to intubate... "we need to intubate!"

And I thought "Finally, this IS a good reason to intubate!" Sara and I had watched the TV show ER for years and almost every episode they intubated someone, usually for no good reason.

Then I thought, "I'm gonna die...huh...where's my Touched by an Angel moment? where is Monica and the white light?" Then I thought, "Wait a minute, I hate that show!" At that point, I stopped, "Why am I being so selfish here?"

And then clear as I speak to you right now, I heard these words, "I know what I am doing."

And those were the last words I heard for a week. They had put me out.

The truth is I should not be here. I should be dead.

ICU for one week on the razor edge of death. Two weeks more in the hospital, 3 months of home care from nurses and about 12 months to recover.

I am a walking miracle...And so are you.

When we learned you had to have another operation, I went to the person who helped me when I was sick. Catherine.

Her daughter had just died from cancer. She was a mess as well. But, she taught me how to listen again. To find peace. Use my imagination. Imagination is a porthole to connection with The

Divine. See the unseen she always says. We used to do this when you were little - imagine together, remember?

So, I fly west and drive to this little cottage. I get out of the car. We hug. We sit. We drink tea and catch up. I tell her all the stuff that hurts my heart. She listens.

We go in for lunch – a tasty spread of leftovers. You would have loved it. They had those little wrapped Baby Bell cheeses that you like and pickles.

Then I meet her friend. What a character. She has a funny Welsh accent. They are a dynamic duo. Batman and Robin. The hairs on the back of my arms spring up. They see the unseen. They see with their heart eyes. That's what we called it when we imagined together...heart eyes.

After lunch we move to the little living room in the cottage. I talk some more. They listen. I'm standing in the middle of the room. Feels like a wrestling ring. They stand on either side of me. Maybe an intervention? I am cardboard. They are not.

They begin to pray. A forcefield is created around me. A safe bubble. I begin to let my guard down. A chuckle reverberates. It's not me. A full-blown laugh, a joyful howl. Oh, my goodness, she is full-on belly laughing! Why is she laughing? I feel angry. I want to leave. The other one is speaking some kind of weird language. (*father speaks in tongues/gibberish here*). I'm still cardboard. Heart sore. Anxiety spiking. No one can help me. No one can help you. They don't believe this. You are so distant. Crack!

The father gives himself spiritual surgery. It happens here through movement. First precise and specific and then less specific and more brutal. The father's is right in the middle of the operation when he realizes that the child is awake and watching him.

Hey bud, you're awake? How long have you been watching me? No, I'm ok. I'm just...just using my imagination. Do you need anything? (*pause*)

You know what, I should tell you a story. Your mom is always bugging me to tell you stories. So...this is a story about, a prince, prince Croissant!

Oh yes, there's a smile. I love you too bud!

Short audio/video movement is seen on screens during episode transition.

EPISODE 4. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE AFRAID / WHAT YOU FEAR KILLS YOU

The scene begins with the father enacting the Prince Croissant story with the contents of the breakfast tray. He then moves out into the room as the story progresses.

Once, upon a time in a land not too far from here there lived a royal Prince. His name was Croissant. Prince Croissant! And he loved to go on adventures with his royal parents King

Leviticus IV and Queen Edie Anna. They lived in a royal castle which lay atop a vast land of great beauty.

The previous day, the Queen left for a far-off land to make a peace treaty with that land far, far away. So, this day it would just be the Prince and the King. Oh, and of course the kingdom's trusted wise fool and the prince's closest friend, Captain John One Leg.

He had lost his leg in a battle with a beast, rescuing the prince from the kingdom's arch enemy - Dr. Tasia! He was pure evil and constantly trying to destroy the kingdom any way he could. It was said he now possessed a giant of pure fear that could overthrow the kingdom.

This morning the prince woke up with a funny feeling in his belly. "What could it be he wondered?" He would soon find out... As he walked down the royal staircase to have breakfast, Captain John One Leg burst through the front door of the castle crying, "Agggbrgarbar! Yur King has been captured, yur King has been captured! Dr. Tasia has called for ye to fight his giant. If ye wins, the King will be returned and Dr. Tasia will leave our lands. But, if ye loses, yur father the king and yur entire kingdom will fall into Dr. Tasia's hands. Do ye accept the challenge?"

Prince Croissant trembled in fear. "Fight a giant? How can I fight a giant of pure fear?" Captain John One Leg said, "Aye laddie, we must be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves. We will work together, you and I. I will play the fool and you will defeat the villain with the thing he has not." "What's that?" said the Prince. "First let's see the enemy, then we will know how to fight him."

They made haste, which means they went fast, and arrived at the field of battle. On one side of the field was the evil Dr. Tasia and his army with the king tied up beside him. Standing on the other side of the Dr. was the most hideous giant ever seen. He was at least 10 feet tall and was horrible to look at - covered in armour - with a sword in one hand and a spear in the other.

A chill went down Prince Croissant's back. He could feel fear rising up inside of him just by looking at the giant. Would he really have to fight him? Prince Croissant and Captain John One Leg walked to the centre of the field. The giant went out to meet them.

"Remember, we do not fight with flesh and blood. Our weapons of war are not of this world. Your father the king taught me that!" said Captain John. "I will distract him with foolish things, so you can get in close to deliver the greatest blow."

"Captain John, how can I win this battle? I am but a child and am not experienced against such a foe. This giant is all fear and I feel it in my bones."

"Use whatch yer father taught ye. See the unseen, harness it as he taught ye and deliver the blow." Then he winked at the Prince and the Prince understood.

From the bag which Captain John carried into battle he pulled out three things – oh, gross...it was a dead dog tied with a rope, a small cloth bag filled with nuts and a long staff.

“Be ready! I will distract him so you can get in close.”

Croissant nodded at Captain John, looked at the hideous giant walking towards them and then past to Dr. Tasia and his father in chains. He could do this. He was more than a conqueror. His father had taught him that. And, with only the clothes on his back he waited for his chance...

Captain John came close to the giant shouting at him, “Argbargargar! What do ye see at the end of this rope? Tis a reminder of what ye will be at the end of this fight. Captain John and the giant circled each other. The angry giant hurled his enormous spear at the dead dog anchoring it to the ground. Then the giant turned to fight the Prince. But was assaulted by a hail of flying nuts which were being thrown by Captain John behind him.

GRRRRRR, the giant turned to Captain John in annoyance beginning to run towards him. “Get ye ready!” cried John. The giant was almost upon him when he slid through the giant legs and whacked him in his privates with the stick. The giant doubled over in pain and dropped his sword. Captain John rolled out of the way.

“Now!” Captain John cried. The prince ran towards the giant and stood behind him. The giant turned to face his attacker and all at once the Prince wrapped his tiny arms around the giant’s waist and hugged him with all the love he had in his heart.

The giant was stunned. He couldn’t move – an unknown feeling travelled through his whole body. “NOOOOOOO!” cried Dr. Tasia from across the battlefield.

The giant looked down at the Prince with tears in his eyes. Never before had he felt such a thing. Never before had anyone even come close to him.

In a huge booming voice, the giant said, “what have you done to me? What is it that I feel?”

“It is love!” said the Prince.

“I will serve you and your father forever.” said the giant.

“You are free, you can do as you wish.” said the Prince.

The Prince, Captain John and the giant, whose name, it turns out was Harold, walked across the field. It was now deserted, except for the king. Dr. Tasia had fled in shame, with his army...for now.

The King and his son embraced. “I am so proud of you my son. You did exceedingly more than I could have asked or imagined. It is always love that triumphs in the end. Let’s head home to the royal castle. That’s enough adventure for one day.”

And so, they untied the King and walked home arm in arm – even the giant – and spent the afternoon recounting the miraculous adventure they had been part of.

What do you think bud? I guess your smile means you liked it. Oh, there you go again falling asleep. Well...I guess it was a pretty tiring adventure.

Father watches the kid as he falls asleep.

Short audio/video movement is seen on screens during episode transition.

APPENDIX B

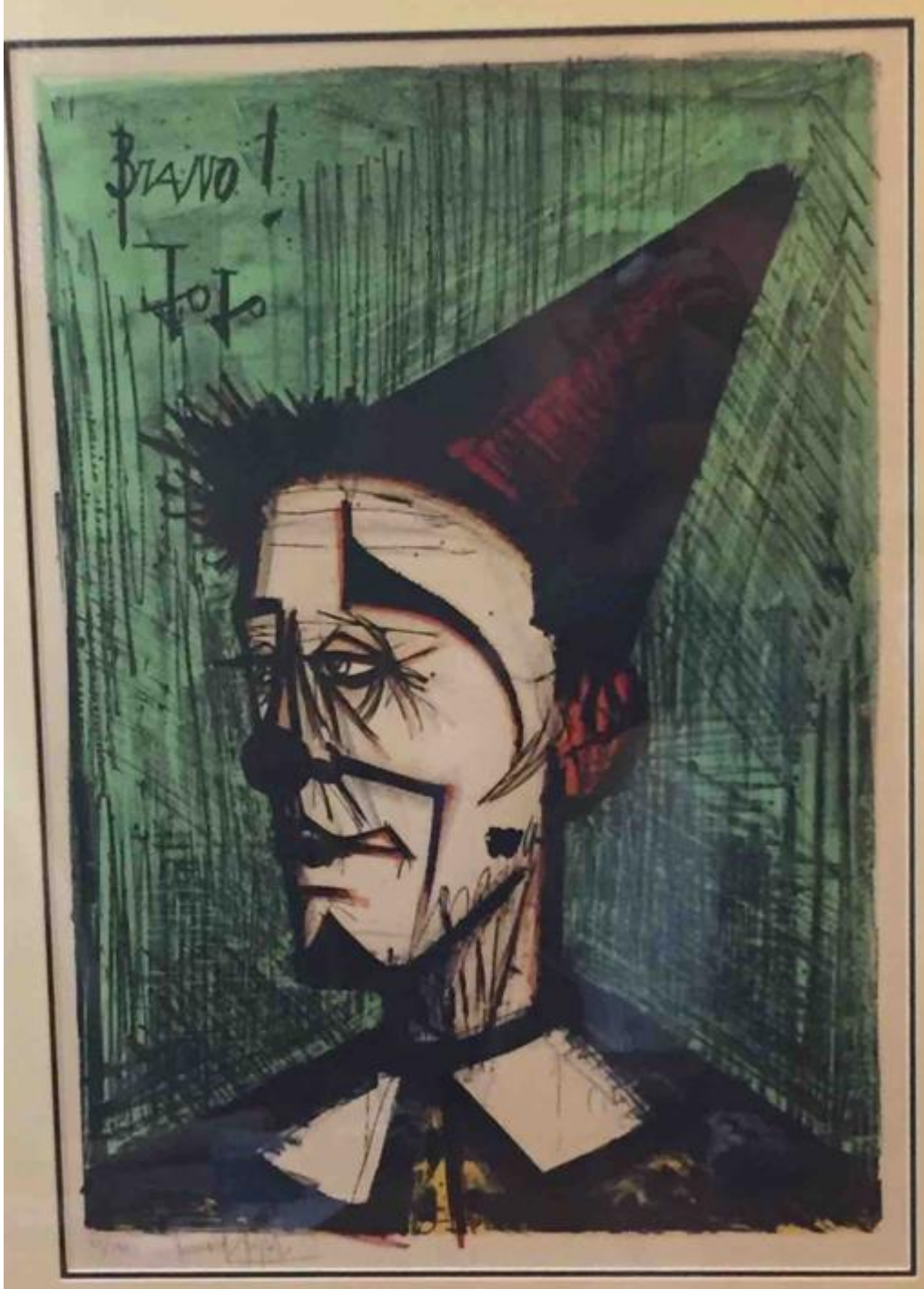
Supporting Images



1. Jason, 6 years old, Sick Kids Hospital, Toronto, ON (1977)



2. Jason with father Henry, 6 years old, Sick Kids Hospital, Toronto, ON (1977)



3. "Lithograph" by Bernard Buffet



4. Hospital Privacy Screens



5. Dream sequence screen shot from Wim Wenders film, *Until the End of the World*.

APPENDIX C

Production Timeline

December 2018-April 2019 (and beyond) Timeline

Tues	Dec 11	12-3pm	Full Creative Teach Meeting (Meeting House, Oakville)
Fri	Dec 21	10am-12pm	Meet with Regan
Wed	Jan 9	11am-12pm	Meet with Tom
Fri	Jan 18	12-4	Tom & Wayne
Tues	Jan 22	9am-12pm	Rehearsal Jason only (TCAC)
Wed	Jan 23	9am-12pm	Jason only (TCAC)
Thurs	Jan 24	12-5pm	Rehearsal w Tom & Wayne w Deann (TCAC)
<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Jan 24</i>		<i>First Draft Written Thesis (Michael G)</i>
Fri	Jan 25	9am-12pm	Tom, Ben & Wayne (Gwyneth) (TCAC)
Sat	Jan 26	8-11am	Jason only (TAC)
Sun	Jan 27	9am-12pm	Jason only (TAC)
Tues	Jan 29	10am-5pm	Jason only (TCAC)
Wed	Jan 30	9am-12pm	Tom & Wayne, Ben & Regan (TCAC)
Tues	Feb 5	half day	Jason & TBD (TCAC) York room specs to Wayne
Wed	Feb 6	12-5pm	Jason & Wayne (TCAC)
Thurs	Feb 7	half day	Jason Wayne & Tom (TCAC) Lighting plan confirmed
Tues	Feb 12	half day	Jason & Gülce (TCAC) (Gwyneth & Erika) Set completed Costume finalized
Wed	Feb 13	9am-12pm	Jason & Wayne (TCAC)
Thurs	Feb 14	9am-5pm	Jason & Tom (TCAC)
Sat	Feb 16	9am-12pm	Jason only (TCAC)
Sun	Feb 17	9am-12pm	Jason only (TAC)
Tues	Feb 19	12-5pm	Full Creative Team (TCAC)
<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Feb 21</i>		<i>Written Thesis Final Due</i>
Sat	Feb 23	12-9pm	Full Creative Team tech rehearsal/cue to cue (York) Jason, Tom, Regan, Wayne
Sun	Feb 24	8-11pm	Jason, Tom, Ben
Mon	Feb 25	8am	Pick up lights & cables (RP Dynamics, Mississauga)
Mon	Feb 25	9pm	Set up lights and run audio cue to cue. Jason, Wayne
Wed	Feb 27	7-10am	Work sections & Dress Rehearsal (York, Atkinson)
Thurs	Feb 28	11am	Thesis Performance (York, Atkinson)
Fri	Mar 1	4pm	Thesis Performance (York, Atkinson)
Sun	Mar 3	9-11pm	Strike lighting & cables (York, Atkinson)
<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Mar 15</i>		<i>Final Written Thesis Document Due</i>
Mar 11-15			Performance Team debrief meeting, what is needed for YesFest

<i>Mar 25</i>	<i>MFA Thesis Defense</i>
Mon April 1	Final – Poster, online images, press release and marketing & outreach plans (YesFest)
Mar 16-April 21	Further performance development & Rehearsals
April 22-28	YesFest – Theatre Centre
Summer 2019	Further performance development if needed / Rehearsals
Sept-Nov 2019	North American Tour

APPENDIX D

Selected Journal Entries

Feb 18, 2018

Another imagination journey. Struggling with a headache all day. Finding myself really connected to Blood & Breath. But mostly to Pain. My feet are killing me. Breathing through the pain. I was expanding and releasing through the pain. Felt Holy Spirit breathing into the room.

Allowing myself permission to sit in the lostness. Breathe, and sit in the not knowing. Fear rises, anxiety rises. But, I am clocking those feelings. Marking the pathways in my body. They sneak up my back on the right side and wrap around my right temple. I am feeling the anxiety in my chest. Breath rises up. But, I can feel it and also breathe down – good while on stage.

June 21, 2018

Cynthia Exploration in the studio, Day 4

Yesterday we spent time working using Authentic Movement to move through ideas of what it means to be lost and sick. Along the way, I found myself in a forest in my imagination.

So, today, we started with that image of a forest and let that image move through my body. It was a powerful time for me. Cynthia put on some very helpful music; I need to follow up with that to see what that was.

Images in me were dark and bloody. Choppy at first and then smoother later. I spent a good deal of time close to the ground. It was interesting to experience emotions attached to the images I was exploring. Many of them were wrapped in pain – like someone was reaching into my chest and pulling out hurt that had long since been hidden.

Two movements stood out for me.

The first is with me lying on the floor on my side, with me walking in a circle around and around. Almost like a bicycle wheel. It felt very cyclical. Like a pattern I couldn't get out of. I brought up feelings of being trapped and unable to move forward.

The next was this kind of reaching that came out of what I can describe as a slimy pit. Like a reaching to get out, to put myself up. Begging, no reaching for God. Reminded me of Psalm 40 – he lifted me out of a slimy pit...

Each one felt powerful and dark. Full of yearning.

We ended with something lighter and more joyful. Just moving around the room catching a releasing bubble of joy. It was a good way to finish our week together.

Cynthia has been great. Looking forward to working with her more at the end of the summer.

Sept 29, 2018

York 209 Studio

Psalm 31 – Shelter, fortress, soul sanctuary

Prayer of Jesus / Hesychastic

It is an ancient way, unquenchable yearning for God—Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy on me.

How do I bring healing into my work through the Trinity?

Something about a gift of the name of God written on my heart.

Pg 31. St Ignatius devoured by wild beasts, but because he had Jesus written on his heart the heart was completely preserved. So strange. Infidels cut out his heart and saw this.

Today, I enclosed my thoughts in the words of the prayer. Well, that's what I wanted to do. My mind is all over the place. It's freezing in the studio. Bring warmer clothes. It seems that my mind is popping all over the place. Lord, help me to focus. I am keen to learn how to contain my thoughts. There is power here. I can feel it. There is a creative force that is waiting to be released. How then do I let it get released in my body? Viewpoints? River? Authentic?

Found some images from Laurus tonight. Tried out using a plastique pose from an image in the book. Arseny's hands on two tall trees. Letting that shape take me into another and another. Kind of fun. Almost like I was in some kind of rollercoaster. In a strange way I felt like I entered the character in a fuller way. Not sure I am doing the River Work correctly. But, feel like the exploration is worthwhile. Emotions surfacing.

More to come...

Oct 30, 2018

Beautiful Feel

So much frustration with my feet. They are so sore from being in Sallie's class. I can hardly walk. Why am I torturing myself being in this class? I am learning so much, but at what cost?

Found a meditative groove today based on some prophetic words from Kathryn Klassen. I was able to wrap my mind and body around these thoughts for a long time.

When I saw her on Sunday and told her about the thick spiritual warfare I experienced in the studio at York and then my struggle with my feet she said, “Oh ya, beautiful feet. You have beautiful feet. They are meant to walk in the shards of people’s brokenness, to empathize and bring hope.” I really don’t know what that means. But, I broke down crying when she said beautiful feet. I have never felt my feet to be beautiful...

So today, I just began to walk, with the mantra Beautiful Feel stuck in my head. Emotions began to surface around my own brokenness. Deep seated. Rich and painful.

I must have walked for an hour around the studio speaking, singing and moving through beautiful feet. I still feel overwhelmed.

It was freezing in the studio, but at some point, I just took off my socks and I entered into walking in a straight line on the broken shards. It was one of the most powerful moments I have had while at York. Words emerged, thoughts.

You are not good enough, you are a failure, you will never amount to anything, which moved into you are beautiful, you have so much to offer, come with me through the pain into joy, into hope. You are lovely, you are a treasure.

Tears streaming down my face. So powerful. I felt the healing balm of the Spirit on me. How am I going to include this in the show? What about my showing coming up?

Beauty in pain. That is where I need to sit. Pain can be a gift.

...I recorded the whole thing and then of course, when I got home, somehow it had been erased. Totally sucks.

Jan 4, 2019

Meeting House Oakville – Full team meeting

Excited to have my first full team meeting today. Tom, Wayne, Regan & Ben at the Meeting House in Oakville. I know I’ve been in dialogue with everyone, but it was awesome to have everyone in the same room.

Still feeling intimidated by my lack of specificity or focus in the work. But I was able to cast a direction, characters, set and stories to catalyze a discussion.

I laid everything out with my cue-cards and character chart. And laid out the vision of the hospital and the Prince of Fram story. We began to sort through the “why do we care” elements along with the “what is this about” stuff.

Is this about the kid?
Is this about the Dad?
Who do I care about?
Who am I invested in?
Does the empty bed work?
Is the child the Dad's brokenness?
Caring and loving vs care giving

Noted that the kid is not off limits. Need to write more kid
- Start exploration tomorrow

Kid world – what does the Dad say to the kid?
- What is the world inside the kid?
- Kid construct?

Dad story vs kid story
Dad story – why does he need to tell this?
Kid journey – does the kid teach the dad?
How does the kid speak? Images? Only in response?

Then is there a public vs private dad?
Dad is sleep deprived, fighting with God by telling stories, desperate, can't rest! Must do! Must make healing happen.

Is code red Dad falling asleep?

3 worlds – Dad, Hospital, kid

Lots of ideas flowing all over. Great input. But I thought I had a clear direction. Now I am just overwhelmed by how to proceed...

Jan 12, 2019

Balzac's Kingston

Stay in the fog!

Is the fool dispatched to break off the fear in the kid or the dad?

So funny that Wayne and I both have events in Kingston today. So, we met at Balzac's. Love these kinds of moments. It was great to meet and catch up. We talked about set design & build. We are going to buy three metal wardrobes from Ikea and figure out how to stretch fabric across them to project images onto. He also has a lead on three short-throw projectors from the US on eBay. Regular price is \$1,500-\$1,800. This is way out of our budget. So, we shall see. We will

need to do a big financial/donor push through my company after this to cover these kinds of costs after the thesis showings.

We also set up a production schedule for Jan. I was texting Tom and we figured out dates. Still need to get Feb locked down.

It's all very exciting. I still feel like I am coming closer to know the "attractions" on this crazy road trip of a show. But, not yet the kind of car we are driving or what road we are on or even what our destination is. Oh Lord, give me eyes to see!

Feb 12, 2019

Studio with Gülce

Super exciting to work the Catherine/surgery scene today with Gülce. She has such a different approach through the body.

Discussed we didn't want to be on-the-nose with the movement and dialogue. Wanted to bring emotional and story work I had done in the studio previously into this session.

Started out just discussing what was going on emotionally in the scene and then what was going on with the dialogue. Started to play around with different gestures based on impulse with the text. Struggled a bit because I didn't have the text in me yet.

Found what we fondly referred to as gladiator barrel chest. As I move into describing becoming vulnerable, the opposite happens in my body – my chest puffs out in defense and then we found this emotional shaky body thing that began to emanate from my hands and knees – like they couldn't be contained in the barrel.

We worked this scene for a while and I'm really happy with where it went.

Later in the day...

Studio with Gülce, Erika & Gwennyth

Continued our movement journey with the scene with Erika and Gwennyth watching. Feeling very nervous because I've had to cancel two rehearsals this week due to weather and then another one because Tom was sick. Not feeling as prepared as I would have liked.

Jumped right in and found some more rich stuff in the form we created. Important to breathe so I don't get caught in "trying" to show the pain rather than living in it.

Struggling with my sore rib again in rehearsal. One month later and it's still bugging me.

But, found some fertile ground in the spiritual surgery – we worked on, after the crack, being very specific and then more violent with the surgery.

Then finding the kid watching me. It'll be interesting to see how an audience reacts to that.

All in all, a very good day of rehearsal for this section.

Excited to figure out the Dutch section and fill out the end forest section.

Feb 23, 2019

Tech rehearsal with Wayne, Regan & Tom

Worked through all the images tonight. Ben couldn't make it so we will have to go through sound cues tomorrow night. Regan created some powerful images. He is very detailed and brilliant. I had hoped he would have had these for us sooner. But, I realized that he wanted very specific guidance on things – where I am always interested in the collaborative approach – bring me a whole bunch of options and we will play. It was important for me to realize that I had not communicated to him my expectations. It's all good in the end.

Especially powerful are the forest images. Really excited about taking everything to the next level of dept for the April showing.

Long evening of essentially the intro and outro of all the images. Really found a great way to visually move through the transitions.

Feb 28, 2019

1st Showing

Holy Crap! I can't believe we got through that. It was a crazy freight train. I cut off 8 minutes from the dress. SLOW DOWN. But, we did it. I just need to sit in the transitions more fully. I lost those lovely moments today. I'll need to keep working on the text to get it down.

I felt very good about implementing Eric's notes from the dress. Really found the joy of the FOOL in the opening, Prince Croissant and the mud at the end.

Also, can't believe how awesome it was to have audience. My favorite moment and a lovely surprise was after the spiritual surgery when I see the kids watching me. Such a huge laugh.

My acting was up-and-down or rather in-and-out. Was really battling to stay connected and remember everything. But, I think it must have been interesting to watch me fight for it. I know that when the show settles a bit more I will push less. Good to be aware of this.

So cool to allow myself to enter into those movement sections and see and feel the audience respond to them.

I can't believe how tired I am. Like a wave coming over me. At the end of the day, after watching all my colleagues shows. I am sooooo done.

Watching all the shows today was so exciting. So proud of them. All such beautiful work.

March 1, 2019

2nd Showing

Yes! It's done! The pressure is off! The impossible made possible. So excited to have the weight off my shoulders. And YES! We did it. Just can't believe we got this far. So grateful! So grateful to Sara and the kids for holding on. So soon I can jump back into my family again. So soon.

Grateful for Wayne. I can't believe his crazy week – two other shows each over the last three days...

Between the weather and sickness, Tom is still standing.

The show, oh, the show, felt good today. Much clearer today. So much more to explore. But, to feel an audience there responding to the work is thrilling. It's been such an uphill battle to find language and movement to express the things percolating in me.

I was able to slow down today and sit in the scene transitions a bit more. More to mine here. Which was really exciting. I can't wait to spend some time developing these sections. Wondering if we can create some kind of visual labyrinth on the screens and perhaps use them to also create a spatial labyrinth that ends in the forest scene at the end. I feel like there is so much potential to mess with these screens.

The moment where the father sees the kid watching him during the spiritual surgery worked again. Love the humour in that moment. So rewarding with the audience.

I tried a different transitional moment in the Holland section when the kid wakes up. It still doesn't work. Need to work that to make it more effective.

Did a better job with the text today – felt like I was more connected for longer without fighting for what's next.

Wondering if I need to fill out the show to make it 60 minutes? I'm wondering if I need to grow the Mennonite section? I think that the key section may be good to add as well. Maybe throwing in some of my poetry within the transitions. I'd also like to see the genealogy being added to added to the video component and perhaps x-rays and info about the diseases. Maybe some pics... Will review when I get the team together.

Had a funny moment today with the Lego falling apart. Love that anything can happen in theatre.
So exhausted. So very exhausted. But thank you Jesus!