

INFLUENCED:
ARTISTIC TRUTHFULNESS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

The following thesis records the process of researching and creating a solo theatre show called *Influenced*. It is focused on the pursuit of artistic truthfulness in the face of fears of how the work might be interpreted according to rhetorical trends propagated on social media platforms. It documents an approach to truthful art-making loosely organized by philosopher Ken Wilber's four quadrant model of truth. It examines creation techniques that draw on truth from each quadrant: inner work and visioning; subjective, external reflections of the work in myth and stories; intersubjective, and natural structures; objective. It outlines two ways that research into social media's algorithms; interobjective truth, was applied practically to create the characters and environment of *Influenced* with the aim of dramatizing behaviours and events that happen online. It defines three components of artistic truthfulness and reflects upon how honouring truthful work can lead to creative success.

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to anyone for whom participation in the digital public square is emotionally and psychically intolerable. You are allowed to be offline, no matter what any meme says.

Acknowledgements

Erika Batdorf taught me how to be an artist. If I hadn't gotten encouragement from her in the early days, I would certainly have abandoned this topic. Thank you, Erika.

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My Artistic Challenge

When I began my MFA candidacy in Performance Creation for Theatre at York University in September 2019, I was processing my experience as a digital citizen. I was inspired to create a piece of theatre in response to the hyper-polarization and misinformation that characterized the online socio-political environment that influenced life offline. I was concerned with two movements that characterized internet discourse at the time: the alt-right, right-wing extremists who believe that white identity is being threatened by multicultural civilization; and cancel culture. Natalie Wynn, a YouTuber who addresses online political movements through a philosophical lens, explains cancel culture as follows:

The word canceling started out on black Twitter where a few years ago people, well, mostly women, would tweet "cancel R.Kelly" and things like that. You know, it started out as this vigilante strategy for bringing justice and accountability to powerful people who previously had been immune to any consequences for their actions. For example, the Me Too movement promised to use social media shaming as a way to topple sexually abusive men in power who couldn't be held accountable in any other way. The promise of canceling was that it was going to give power back to people who had none, and bring justice to prominent abusers. It's, in a way, the 21st century version of the guillotine, the bringer of justice, the people's avenger. But, also like the guillotine, it can become a sadistic entertainment spectacle. And I wanna make the case that we do have, well, a teensy bit of a Reign of Terror situation on our hands, gorg (00:01:26-00:02:17).

I knew that I wanted to conduct an artistic, personal inquiry about my own political “side” by addressing behavioral and rhetorical trends I witnessed among fellow progressives. I sensed there were things that all users of social media had in common with those who fall down extremist ideology rabbit holes on YouTube. I began by taking the alt-right as my subject, creating somewhat contentious performances that provoked a lot of discussion. Later I began creating performance pieces about how social media companies design technology to manipulate their users and this was also controversial. I didn’t respond well to playing the provocateur. I obsessed about these issues at length outside of class. Creation was often painful. My instincts were to question prevailing simplistic rhetorical trends in slogans, memes and attitudes propagated on social media platforms. But I feared this would brand me as ‘the enemy’ in the eyes of my colleagues. I was dedicated to my cause, but I also knew that the resulting psychic anguish was unsustainable. In the first draft of this document, my artistic challenge was to keep my audiences receptive to potentially contentious critiques. While that has remained a challenge throughout the creation process, I soon recognized that it was not *the* challenge I was taking on. The artistic challenge in creating this solo theatre piece for my thesis, now titled *Influenced*, was artistic honesty and in a tense and polarized political environment.

I have phrased it simply in this document so that it will serve future reflections, no matter how things may change throughout my life as an artist: my artistic challenge is to be artistically truthful. I have explored many methods of creation in the process of making *Influenced*. Here I will outline those that helped me discover and recognize truthful artistic ideas including, but not limited to, images, sounds, songs, concepts, or any forms that occur naturally in the mind without concerted effort. I will outline examples of forced creativity to distinguish naturally occurring

ideas from contrived ones. I used Ken Wilber's four quadrant model of truth, which breaks truth down into four types: subjective, objective, intersubjective and interobjective (43). I strived for a holistic practice of truthfulness by including all four in my process. I address the first three in this document and the fourth in the performance research document. Truth is an enormously illusive concept to approach. By using Wilber's four quadrant model as a guide, I seek to gain an understanding of the difference between authenticity and fallaciousness in my artistic process. I continue to fear that rising to this challenge and expressing the subjective truth of my inner life accurately will be met with scorn, misinterpretation, and dismissal. This paper will begin by exploring the research I undertook to discover and then to address that problem. Subsequently, I will outline the overall outcome of that research: my current understanding of artistic truthfulness as it relates to creative success.

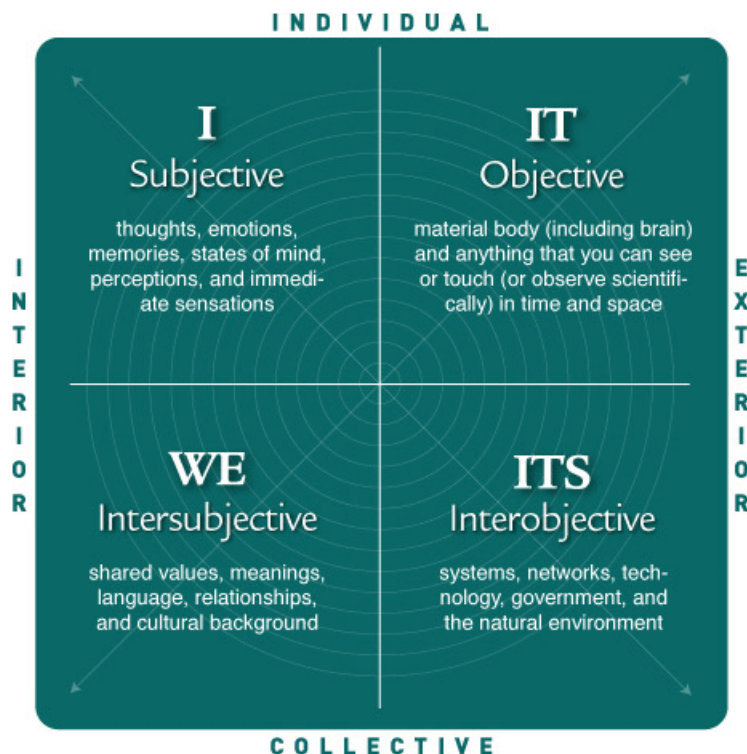


Fig 1. Ken Wilber's Four Quadrant Model of Truth

Provocation and Bouffon

I started out creating pieces that explored coercion techniques as they exist in online propaganda. I had created a few pieces in class when I got the idea to put on some Spanx, turn on a projector, and pull the spanx up and down in front of projected blue light; distorting the shadow on my belly while playing alt-right propaganda over the sound system. I transcribed the propaganda from YouTube¹, intuitively highlighted the text, selected words and phrases that named binary political stances and repeated them during the performance. I titled this piece “Shapewear” and it was made using Professor Erika Batdorf’s exercise where the artist uses pre-existing cultural material to make an original performance piece that addressed personal artistic questions (Batdorf).

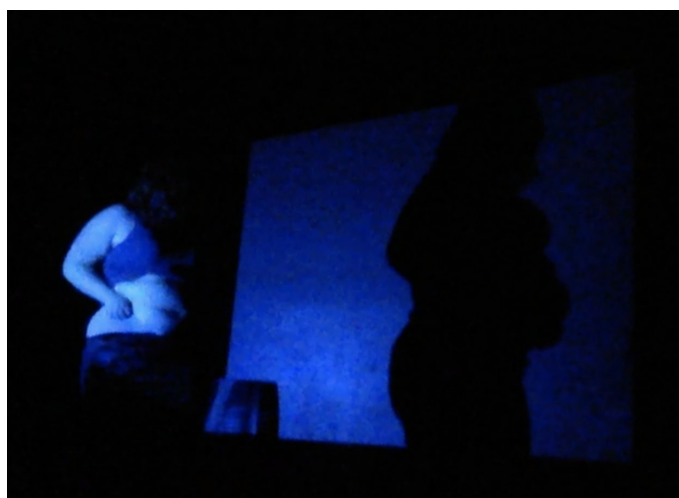


Fig. 2. Screenshot from “Shapewear”

When a colleague observed this piece shared elements with a style of clowning developed by Jaques Lecoq called bouffon (Geller). I began researching the style in hopes that it might act as a container for controversial artistic inquiries. I was attracted to the buffon's ability to charmingly

¹ Fortunately, this video has been removed from YouTube for violating the platform's policy on hate speech. While I reported it as such while making “Shapewear”, it remained available to watch until very recently.

provoke their audiences (Lecoq 118). In his book *Provocation In Popular Culture*, Bim Mason defines provocation as “the art of using cultural artifacts or events to stimulate processes of transformation in individuals, organizations or social-groupings.” (1). This summed up what I knew I wanted to do. I put great effort into learning bouffon and developing provocative material.

Charming provocation has informed both my performance and the piece itself. In the summer and fall of 2020, I took bouffon workshops with Eric Davis, who, as his bouffon Red Bastard creates and performs solo theatre shows that address social taboos. In Davis’ workshops I developed and practiced my gestural and clowning skills and practiced the charm and the fun seeking attitude of bouffon. Some of the movement work I did in those workshops can be seen throughout the piece, especially in the song and dance number “You’re The Fuckin’ Best” in act one of *Influenced*. But nearly all my attempts at provocation after “Shapewear” weren’t enough: I consistently received feedback to ‘go further’ from colleagues and faculty alike. I was very stubborn about needing my thesis to be overtly provocative, and so I forced the issue. While I was busy forcing, there was something else starting to emerge that was natural, easy and intuitive. This eventually led to the more subtle form of provocation that now underpins *Influenced*.

Inside Myself: Awakening Intuition

Eric Maisel’s *Fearless Creating* helped me develop my awareness and skill in recognizing and utilizing the artistic faculty of intuition. One of the first exercises in this book, Hush and Hold, gave me a tool with which I could consciously harness my intuition. Hushing and holding involves growing quiet and waiting for an image or idea to appear in the mind. Once it has

appeared, the artist is instructed to hold it so that it may grow more detailed, and so they may express it using whatever medium they work in (Maisel 5). Here is a sample of writing from the first time I knowingly practiced hush and hold:

I spin a roundabout at the playground until it's going as fast as I can get it to go. I run and run and push and push, until I can't make it go any faster, and I jump on...it starts to spin on its own, really really fast. I have my hands on the bars, but eventually my body lifts off the floor of the thing, and it keeps going faster and faster until I'm hanging horizontally from the bars and I'm flung across the playground...the roundabout wobbles and wobbles and spins faster and faster until it flies through the air like a giant frisbee, cutting me and everything else in the playground in half.

Working like this opened me up to receiving images and ideas and whenever I applied it.

My Movement Practice

In a meeting with Professor Batdorf early winter 2020, I was unable to express an idea I was having without crossing my hands in front of me and making a 'saucy' facial expression. She suggested that perhaps the idea was a physical idea (Batdorf). This was the beginning of my exploration of movement. Soon after that I spent a day in the studio moving, which turned into a week, which turned into a month. Now I spend an hour or more within each block of creation or rehearsal time exploring and developing my skills in this area. Movement seemed a clear solution to my fear problem: I didn't have to rely on words. No one was going to ungenerously interpret what I was saying, because I wasn't saying anything; I was moving. That medium revealed aspects of what I was working on that I intuitively knew but was unable to articulate.

The ideas of swinging, being off balance, being caught up in a mechanism, experiencing dissonance, narcissism and more were all revealed to me through my movement practice. The soul of *Influenced* was born in movement.



Fig. 3. Early movement exploration: “Swinging”

My Visioning Practice

It was the combination of hush and hold movement explorations, and Professor Batdorf’s instruction to “reflect in your medium” (Batdorf) that set my visioning practice in motion. This was supported by Shawn Kerwin, a design professor at York, who encouraged me to articulate visual ideas by drawing. I sat with my eyes closed and waited to see something. Then I wrote or drew whatever came to me and repeated that process. I took central questions for reflection as Erika had taught me to do. I went to the studio, turned off the lights, put on music and began asking myself that very question. I imagined that one side of the room was bright light, and the other complete darkness. When I turned toward the light, the dark parts of me were visible, and when I turned toward the dark, everything was obscured; I could not exist truthfully on either

side. When I was finished, I drew and I wrote. In this exercise, I discovered the subjective, emotional truth behind my passion for disrupting polarized internet discourse: it caused me dissonance and emotional pain. Once I discovered the truth at the core of my drive to create, the piece as it exists today began to fall into place.

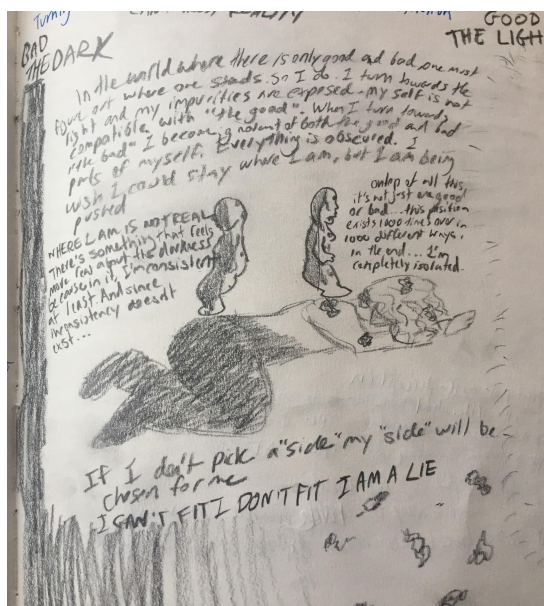


Fig. 4. Drawing: “How Does Black And White Thinking Affect Me?”

Using these visioning techniques opened up a channel of intuition. Prior to using hush and hold and vision work as I’ve described it above, ideas occurring effortlessly in my mind was something I had little awareness of. During the summer term, I experienced a steady stream of effortless ideas, inspirations and visions. I did not need to hush but I did need to hold, as I had become an automatic receptor of inspiration. As I went about daily activities or walked or listened to music, so much of what is now the show arrived effortlessly in my mind. The central relationship in the piece (the one between the principal character The Girl and Ami the box) was almost entirely a result of this process. It will always stay with me that the central relationship in

Influenced was revealed to me as I cultivated the central relationship of my artistic practice: the one between me and my intuition.

Outside Myself: External Reflections

Peter Hinton-Davis, a Canadian theatre director who taught Directing Seminar I and II, introduced our cohort to Northrop Frye's Theory of Myths. In it, Frye organizes types of myth by season: mythos of spring, comedy; mythos of summer, romance; mythos of fall, tragedy; and mythos of winter, satire (Frye 163-239). This theory helped me intuitively locate the ideas and images that were occurring to me in stories and myth, linking them to intersubjective, cultural truths. At first I identified my piece as satire as it was my intention to lay hypocrisy bare. Hinton-Davis' suggestion that ironic comedy could be the genre of my piece spurred a long and fruitful exploration of ironic comedy (Hinton-Davis). Ironic comedy is a genre in Frye's mythos of Spring that often features innocent characters with childlike spirits in ironic worlds. What happens in ironic comedies is often funny with an implication that it may not be so funny when the story is over. These stories often feature young lovers that are acting in opposition to their society (Hinton-Davis). When I started investigating this genre, inspiration began to flow. I felt the essence of my piece in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* which helped me understand that my principal character would be lovable and naive. The investigation led me outside the ironic comedy genre where I could look at story elements that fit, but that were more tragic in nature. I studied lovers in stories opposed by their societies like *West Side Story*'s Tony and Maria and *Titanic*'s Jack and Rose. These provided the recognizable structure I used to make clear the absurd relationship between The Girl and Ami the box. Most recently I found inspiration for The Girl's character in Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. In it, Pinocchio is repeatedly

tricked by nefarious characters who persuade him to make bad choices against his externalized best judgement: The Talking Cricket (Collodi 13; ch. 4). In *Influenced*, The Girl is manipulated by a series of social media entities. As The Girl goes deeper into her personalized rabbit-hole that has been expertly designed by her abusive keeper, Algo, Ami becomes The Girl's externalized voice of reason. By using plot points, character types and archetypes from cultural and mythological sources, I was able to connect *Influenced* to truths greater and longer-standing than those of my personal inner creativity: intersubjective, cultural truths. Connecting to this type of truth as well as the personal, internal truths I continued to discover led to consistent and effortless inspiration.



Fig.5. Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*

In March 2020, Professor Batdorf used plant growth to teach dramaturgy and it had a great impact on how I now think about the creative process. She asked our class to place the performance pieces we had created into the structure of the growth of a plant that we felt was related to our work in some way (Batdorf). I have since then extended and applied plant growth as a metaphor for art making in various ways. I used the natural structure of my own half-conscious thought patterns by making stream of consciousness oral recordings upon waking in

the morning. I transcribed those recordings and replaced the content, my own half-asleep ramblings, with images and ideas I had previously developed for my piece. Here is a sample from the original transcription:

what we all need to do what we need to do running around no time knowing what or why things are or why I put them there tossed space we got calamity plus times there's gonna be a popular voter registration there's only one way we're going to decide what's going to happen and that's by making sure only one person says anything and I just think it's best to give it up you know it might destroy your brain it might destroy your brain it could set your brain aflame could destroy your brain the tubes of your brain start to glow bright blue tubes of your brain starting to glow grow you know? the tubes of your brain?

Examining and using natural structures which exist tangibly, and are observable in the physical world in my process allowed me to include objective truth in the piece. Another attempt to use objective truth in my piece was by making great efforts to have Algo's actions be as similar to actual social media algorithms as possible.

Each of these external reflections were things in which I saw the truth of my piece as it existed in my inner life reflected outwardly. When I was holding the work in my mind, I knew immediately when I saw something that resonated with it. In retrospect, this is the primary creation method I was using when I began my initial explorations in September 2019. At that point in time, I had not yet learned to work inwardly in a conscious way. Throughout the process of creating *Influenced*, the internal and external sources fed in and out of each other, building on each other and making the piece richer. When I was first beginning to give character to the

primarily aesthetic world I had developed for *Influenced*, I spent time mapping my inner work onto the external reflections of its truth that I was finding inspired by a dramaturgical exercise provided by Professor Batdorf, where one maps their work onto the structure of existing stories or myth. From inner exploration, I knew I wanted The Girl to favor one box in particular. While seeking inspiration from external sources, I came across the common narrative where lovers are opposed by the societies they live in. Being a fan of *West Side Story* my mind went directly to Tony and Maria, so I mapped The Girl and a box onto their storyline. For weeks after, I gleefully explored The Girl's relationship with who is now Ami and I received a constant flow of ideas. In my process I found myself allowing these different types of truth to respond to and enrich one another. The more I did this, the more ideas and inspiration I seemed to get.

Working Intuitively is Artistic Truthfulness: Three Components of Truthful Work

By the process of making *Influenced*, I have discovered that my art is an aspect of my inner reality that is revealed to me by intuition. When I honor what comes to me intuitively I am respecting that inner reality: I am being artistically truthful. The following are three components of truthful artistic work that I experienced during this two year period of committed artistic practice. Working with these components has both kept me artistically truthful and served as a treatment for 'creative block'.

Component One: The Art has a Will of its Own

Maisel calls artistic works "Creatures From The Sea" (123) and the idea that artworks have wills of their own is a central concept in the popular creativity text *The Artist's Way* (11). I have found this concept to be practical: when I imagine that my art acts as its own guide by leading me towards whatever will bring it closer to tangible existence. To do this, it provides me with

intuitive hunches that let me know what I need to be paying attention to and when. I know I am working intuitively when I am acting as if I am working to create or express the will of the art to the best of my abilities.

Component Two: The Cycle of Intuition and Inspiration; or Creative Success

If I follow the lead of my art in the previously described way my art rewards me with inspiration: ideas, visions, curiosities, joys, goosebumps, tears, etc, that provide building blocks out of which I can tangibly make my work. For my purposes, I define creative success as effortless and consistent inspiration. If I respect and am curious about the fruits of that success, I will achieve more success. This cycle has worked for me time and time again. If it's running smoothly, I know I'm working truthfully. If I'm blocked, I'm forcing myself to do something inauthentic, afraid to be truthful or am asleep to my inner life.

Component Three: Honouring Truthful Work

Honouring truthful work is creating the conditions in which that work can best be done. I honour truthful work by meditating. Having a mediation practice has helped me be aware enough of my own thought process to be able to distinguish between intuition and my mundane thought patterns. If the ideas are loud, arrogant and full of certainty, that's not my intuition, and if it speaks quietly to me and is hard to hold on to, it is (Maisel). I honour truthful work by being courageous. I need to have the courage to bring up whatever I find when I'm working truthfully whether it be personally revealing, politically incorrect, ugly or cliché: it must all come up and out whether I like it or not. Of course editing is important and not all the things I discover from this type of work should be shared. But truthful artistic work means understanding that these things are coming up because they are somehow true about the piece or essential to the process. I

honor truthful work by showing up for it. I do as I was taught by professor Batdorf, scheduling myself well and putting in the hours, regardless of what's going on for me personally. I honour truthful work by observing my working habits; getting to know myself as a creator so I can use that knowledge to keep me from avoiding my work out of fear (Maisel). I honour truthful work by keeping physically fit and keeping my performance skills sharp. Both provide me with the mental clarity I need to work truthfully and the physical ability to express it with my body. The more articulate I am with my voice and performance skills, the more accurately and quickly my ideas can be expressed. Honouring truthful work means working hard for easy ideas, because "Coal miners don't get coal miners' block." (qtd. in Green).

Artistic Truthfulness and Personal Growth

The combination of working in this way and the solitude of following covid-19 public health measures proved personally revelatory. I have grown both personally and artistically since starting my MFA. My process and research has been long, varied and hyper-personal. I went on a journey to the centre of myself and I came back out with *Influenced*. As a result, I find I can no longer tolerate the shared psychic space of social media; it seems to me that more of its users are beginning to feel this way all the time. My hope is that this might be an indication that we are growing out of the incessant mockery, hatefulness and black and white thinking that among many other things has come to define digital life. In the following quote, Ken Wilber describes how moving from one stage of personal development to the next can be painful and I believe that this happened to me as I was creating *Influenced*:

The new wave is struggling to emerge, the old wave is struggling to hang on, and the individual feels torn, feels dissonance, feels pulled in several directions. . . Perhaps one

has run up against its inherent limitations or contradictions, or one is beginning to disidentify with it, or perhaps one has just gotten tired of it. At this point, some sort of insight into the situation - insight into what one actually wants, and insight into what reality actually offers - usually helps the individual to move forward. . . The insight can be facilitated by introspection, by conversations with friends, by therapy, by meditation. . . then an opening to the next wave of consciousness - deeper, higher, wider, more encompassing - becomes possible. (35)

I've come to understand the public sphere as it exists in social media with the metaphor of a collective mind. My hope is that once more social media users "run up against its inherent limitations or contradictions" (Wilber 35) of the medium, we might begin to open into the next wave of consciousness: one that has perspective enough to see the falsity of black and white thinking. I hope that there will soon be a strong push to hold digital media corporations accountable for the damage they are doing. I pray that the confusion and pain of this shared psychic space has come to its frenzied peak during the Covid-19 years. *Influenced* is, on a personal level, a document of a shift in my consciousness that resulted from a discovery of truths and I will offer it to audiences as a way of processing these confusing years that have been so defined by life in digital environments.

Performance Research Document

The internet has rarely been taken as subject matter for theatre even during Covid-19 lockdowns when so many theatrical performances were taking place online. Long before this, in 2013, playwright Simon Stevens summarized why he thought that was: "What we [playwrights] deal with is behaviour; the things people do to one another. When we use the internet, we're gazing into the black mirror, doing things to ourselves. It's insular and profoundly unbehavioural. That's fundamentally not dramatic." (qtd. in Truman). I believe that if we are to understand how our sensibilities, behaviours and perspectives are shaped by social media platforms, we need artists to rigorously take on digital life as their subject. Digital media corporations have massive cultural influence and are largely responsible for the polarized and misinformation-laden socio-political environment we live in today (Eisenstat, 00:05:55-00:06:11). Their algorithms have been designed to trap and keep our data; a socially devastating side effect, they amplify hatred, division and misinformation (Horwitz and Seetharaman). In my research, I sought to engage honestly with the historical moment in which I was creating; with life online during social isolation. To do this, I thoroughly researched social media algorithms with the intent of theatricalizing action that takes place online from the perspective of an individual user. In the following paragraphs I will outline how I used the interobjective truth of social media's algorithmically controlled systems to make online action playable; subsequently constructing the symbolism, theatricality and universality of *Influenced*.

Symbolism and Theatricality: Algorithmically Inspired

The problems we are experiencing with social media today are a continuation of problems that media theorists like Marshall McLuhan have been examining for decades. In *Understanding*

Media, McLuhan states that the content of media must be distinguished from its medium if we are to come to an understanding of how it shapes our behaviors and sensibilities (11). An aim in my research and process was to make this crystal-clear in my piece. I used pinky-beige coloured boxes to act as content that appears on social media platforms. These boxes that make up the world of the piece were useful for exploring how dehumanizing social media can be: people are reduced to content; content that interacts with other content. All different types of content is similarly homogenized: news is entertainment, entertainment is people, people are brands, brands are news, news is memes, memes are people. While all the things I just mentioned are distinct and our decision making, ethics and behaviour expectations for them should be made with their idiosyncrasies in mind, social media equivocates them in the mind by presenting them all in the same form: content. In my show, everything is the same, everything is boxes. These boxes allowed me to physicalize internal, psychological actions that happen while users engage with content. The Girl, the central character in *Influenced*, falls in love at first sight with a box named Ami, her love interest and only friend. When she chooses not to open him because she's afraid he might be a lie, it is a physicalization of willful ignorance. When she has to decide whether Ami is a dot or a curvy line when in reality he is both, the psychic pain that comes from having contradictory thoughts, cognitive dissonance, is physicalized. Some more aspects of digital life I have physicalized in The Girl's interaction with the boxes include: the performative demands of social media, the difficulty of separating one's own thoughts from the thoughts of the public sphere, how consuming huge amounts content can imbue it's users with over-certainty and smug-superiority and how algorithms often know more about our inner lives than we do.

The theatre is also central to the symbolic language of *Influenced* and serves to depict the medium of social media. Lights, sound and stage make up the theatrical environment in which The Girl exists. Algo, The Girl's abusive keeper, exists as a robotized voice, inspired by in-home personal assistants like Hey Google or Amazon's Alexa. With theatricality, I was able to explore the performative nature of online life and the futility of seeking privacy within it. Being a performer, I quickly drew a parallel between self-presentation and expression on social media and theatrical performance. Both German Expressionism and Theatre of the Absurd have roots in popular entertainments like clown, cabaret and vaudeville (Kuhns 158, Esslin 330). I have drawn inspiration from these forms in style and performance, finding them well suited to express the wildness and pop-culture overload of social media.

Universality: Why 'The Girl', not 'A Girl'?

I chose to make The Girl an 'Everygal', like the universal term Everyman, to highlight commonalities and expose structures that are shared by disparate online and offline movements be they political, conspiratorial, both, or otherwise. Any polarized issue could theoretically be projected onto the structure of the piece: QAnon vs. liberal elite, anti-pitbull vs pro-pitbull, anti-vax vs pro-vax, etc. What I have dramatized are functions of human psychology rather than specific lives, ideologies, events or circumstances. One of my greatest aspirations for *Influenced* is for it to act like a projective test for audience members; that each individual audience member could interpret the show in ways that are personalized to them. With this aim in mind, I intentionally created ambiguity by representing the 'sides' of any issue with the curve and dot symbols that appear on the boxes.

In *Team Human*, digital media theorist Douglas Rushkoff says about algorithms: “The goal of [persuasive technology] is to generate ‘behavioural change’ and ‘habit formation,’ most often without the user’s knowledge or consent.” (63) Yaël Eisenstat compares Facebook’s algorithms to the tactics of extremist recruiters:

The modern information environment is crystallized around profiling us and then segmenting us into more and more narrow categories to perfect this personalization process. We're then bombarded with information confirming our views, reinforcing our biases, and making us feel like we belong to something. These are the same tactics we would see terrorist recruiters using on vulnerable youth, albeit in smaller, more localized ways before social media” (00:06:47-00:07:07)

While I was researching cult behaviours in winter 2021, I began to draw parallels between the functions of algorithms and the tactics of cult leaders. In order to emphasize the ways in which these algorithms manipulate all users of social media universally, I worked the types of mind control outlined by Steven Hassan in *Combatting Mind Control* into the action of my piece. Using these tactics also helped Algo (The Algorithm) come alive as a character, providing her with concrete tactics to use on The Girl. The four types of mind control outlined by Steven Hassan are: behaviour, thought, emotion and information control (61-65). The following are four ways I used these types in *Influenced*: (1) Behaviour control, Algo achieves her goal of changing The Girl’s behaviors by shifting her tactics based on The Girl’s responses getting The Girl to behave in predictable, profitable ways; (2) Thought control, because the logic of The Girl’s environment is defined by Algo, The Girl’s thinking is limited to binary logic: things are either good truths, or bad lies; (3) Emotion Control, Algo pays close attention to The Girl’s emotions in

order to provide her with content that pushes her further into what she is already feeling; (4) Information control, Algo controls The Girl's access to information by choosing what arrives in her space. These cult mechanics are disturbingly exactly like how algorithms operate on each individual user as they use social media. And unfortunately, while the specific content on the feeds of individual users varies, the medium is always the same, universally, for everyone.

Workshop, Rehearsal and Presentation Plan

My final thesis presentation will be workshopped, rehearsed and filmed at the Centre for Film and Theatre at York University. While some minimal changes may be made to props and costumes during the process, all elements will be ready to go by the time we enter into the workshops and rehearsals. Kate Mcarthur will be my primary team member, providing transportation of set, props and equipment, general production support, dramaturgical and directorial work. Multiple runs and additional shots of staged moments of the show will be filmed and edited together for the examiners to view. Importance will be placed upon high quality sound, some of which will be from the performance itself and some that will be edited in post-production. There will also be time set aside for the videographer to capture professional footage for promoting the piece after my time at York. My intention for this phase of the process will be to be present and play. One of my biggest challenges throughout this process has been to play and let go especially as access to private space and audiences have been so limited. Facilitating ease and playing for myself as a performer while rehearsing alone will be at the centre of my planning and methodology for the rehearsals and workshops. Dramaturgically, the focus will be on clarity and development of the relationship between The Girl and Ami.

Timeline

April 1st - May 1st

Preparation

Daily choreography and vocal training
Regular sessions with choreography consultant
Gather all props/set + costume materials
Paint boxes

May 10th -21st

Complete Draft of Influenced

Updating and reworking the script to reflect and include work from winter 2021 studio time, with a focus on scaffolding and clarity
Punch up: focus on writing comedic dialogue and physical action.

May 24th -28th

Finish Complete Rehearsal Draft

In-Studio Dramaturgy w/ props costume+set.
Character explorations and play. Testing, tweaking and adding or making edits to the script. Script oriented explorations and improvisations to make storytelling clear and complete.

May 21st - June 4th

More Preparation

Build all costumes + props/set
Prepare sound design and music for workshop period
Memorization
Workshopping

June 7th - 18th

Workshop in-studio.

Finalize sound + music

June 21st

In the Theatre

Load into JGG

June 22nd - 23rd

Tech Workshop

Experimentation and exploration with tech
Sound tech for videography
Cue to cue

June 24th - 25th

Tech Rehearsals

Rehearsals
Tech runs

June 26th

Filming and Videography

August 2nd - 31st

Video Editing

Reviewing footage
Cutting footage together
Sound
Color Correction

Team

Kate McCarthur

Dramaturgical and production support

Ghislaine Doté

Movement and choreography coach

Andrew Cromey

Videography

Budget

Videography(Labour) \$500

Videography(Equipment) Donated in-kind

Production Support \$600

Transportation \$150

Props \$350

Costume \$250

Set \$100

Petty Cash \$150 **TOTAL** \$2100

Conclusion

While I intellectually knew that my artistic vision would be limited by circumstances, it took me until the end of the process to understand how to adjust my expectations based on them. During the workshop, staging and filming *Influenced* my vision was subject to all of the usual constraints: money, materials, time, etc. In my case and the case of other artists who worked on projects during this time my plans were always subject to Covid-19 lockdown measures. I built mental maps of how I would do things knowing everything was liable to change drastically at any moment. This is life, but uncertainty has been particularly acute during the pandemic. I found it painful when my carefully laid plans were destroyed again and again. But I got a lot of practice in letting things go to welcome new possibilities and I found my artistic process mirrored that experience. I came up with ideas for my piece and I organized them. When a new idea or limitation came, it significantly changed what came before. Executing this project at this particular moment in history gave me a crash course in mental flexibility and mental flexibility is key to making good art.

About midway through working on my thesis everything I did was in service of my inner vision for the piece. That type of work was needed at certain points during the process. But prioritizing my inner subjectivity was not what was needed when it came time to stage the play. Since I had been working this way for so long and my vision was growing in size and detail, I had a lot of trouble redrawing the mental map I had created for the show.

In April, Kate and I worked hard on the script. I had in mind that this workshopping process would be finished by the time I got into the studio; that I would have three weeks of rehearsal strictly as an actor: time to memorize, rehearse and make discoveries about what I had

already created. Since most of my experience in theatre up until this point had been as an actor, it made sense that I would expect this. But it wasn't the reality: the piece still needed a lot of work. During those final weeks in the studio my ideal: 'rehearsal', came into conflict with my reality: a fresh play that needed work. As I got things together for the filming and worked on the script I was scared because all I could think was that I was wasting rehearsal time. Once Kate and I began staging I was paralyzed by my fear of not giving the best possible performance I could potentially give under ideal circumstances. After losing an entire rehearsal to this fear I had to adjust my expectations or lose more time. This was a major realization for me: being a creator and performer is not the same as being an actor in a play I wrote; it is completely different. I had to allow myself to be with my creation, all limitations included.

A common response to uncertainty is to defend your mental map; enlisting whoever and whatever you can to protect it at all costs. But this defence kills creativity and authentic self-expression. This is one of the primary themes in *Influenced*. Attempting to feel certain about what my show would eventually be in the early and middle stages of its creation put unnecessary limitations on my creativity. Trying to control what the process needed put unnecessary limitations on me as a performer. Mental flexibility allowed me to avoid creating any of these limitations. Detachment from ideas and circumstances alike helped me to expand my imagination and embrace inevitable constraints. Mental flexibility is key to making good art and to living a good life.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Influenced

Created by Sam Chaulk

Thesis Presentation Draft

June 20th, 2021

PROLOGUE

THE GIRL

I am um.

I am um. I have hair. Kinda wavy.
I've got two hands two feet and uh...
My body type is a curvy type body.

I really like...stuff.
I care about a lot of...things.
Um.

I'm on here cause I wanna be my authentic self.
And because I want to connect with other like-minded people.

You know what. I have this feeling. But I don't know what it is. I can't say it exactly. But it feels like reaching out. No. Not reaching. Like something else, but for something...but I can't say.

Ok. It feels like...

THE GIRL makes a swoosh sound with her mouth.

No no, that's not it. It's more like.

THE GIRL makes another swoosh sound.

Nope. Ugh. Ok. Ok! It's actually like:

THE GIRL makes a swoosh sound, followed by a pop.

That's closer. But it's not it...I can't really do it. But it's like...I'm waiting for something to arrive.

The sound of ALGO's immediate presence. The lights of ALGO's immediate presence. Like Hey Google.

THE GIRL

Hey -

Half cabaret, half searchlights. The piano intro to IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU plays.

ALGO AS MUSIC: *ALL DEPENDS ON YOU* INTRO

THE GIRL

Hey Algo? I was just trying something different today? Maybe don't play the music for just a couple more minutes?

ALGO AS MUSIC: *ALL DEPENDS ON YOU INTRO*

THE GIRL

I know. I just. I want you to turn the lights off right now. Would that be ok?

Lights get very bright.

ALGO AS MUSIC: *ALL DEPENDS ON YOU INTRO*

THE GIRL

Ok, ok. You need me to do this now. I get it. Let's go.

Intro to IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU PLAYS.

ALGO (+SONG+APPLAUSE)

Adoring friends and followers! Your attention please! I, Algo, have succeeded in keeping, for your entertainment, that singular, that girl on your list, the one, the only, the curvy, The Girl!

IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU SONG

1920's, Betty Boop baby-girl style.

THE GIRL

Ubers depend on riders
For their taxi fare
Amazon needs it's buyers
So they can peddle wares
Twitter depends on tweeters
And it's newsies too.
Each thing depends on something
And I depend on you!

I can be happy, I can be sad
I can be good, or I can be bad
It all depends on you!

I could be lonely out in a crowd
I could be humble I could be proud
It all depends on you!

I could save money or spend it
Go right on living or end it
You're to blame honey
For what I do

I'll tell ya I could be beggar
I could be king

I'm all tied up in your lovin' string
It all depends on you!

ALGO AS SOUND: *CANNED APPLAUSE.*

The camera pans over to the empty audience. THE GIRL takes her bow.

THE GIRL
Thanks Algo, that was fun.

ALGO
You're welcome.

ALGO turns the lights screen blue.

SCENE ONE A YOU'RE THE WORST

ALGO tosses a box at THE GIRL. It's a curved line/bracket. |) | THE GIRL walks over to it and places it on the content pillar. PLAY DOOMY

INFLUENCER DOOMY

All human beings are basically just like parasitic malignant aggressive cancer cells, in my humble opinion. People talk like about their dreaaamss and disocovering ourselvessss and living our authentic life but ultimately, all we are are pieces of fucking meaningless garbage imho. If you can't say that then you must be a pathological sociopath imho.

Repeat after me:

I am a piece of garbage.

THE GIRL
I mean...I don't want to say that.

INFLUENCER DOOMY

I DoN't WaNt To SaY tHaT meeeehhhhh.

The world is a fucking dumpster fire and we're fucking doomed. Just look around. If you can't say that than you must be living a pretty fucking sheltered life imho and be a like a fucking massive trash piece imho.

So Comon! For the people in the back! I M 🙌 AM 🙌 A 🙌 PIECE 🙌 OF 🙌 GARBAGE 🙌

Second curve box drops.

THE GIRL
I am a piece of garbage...

SCENE ONE B YOU'RE THE FUCKING BEST

ALGO tosses a box at THE GIRL. *It's a curved line/bracket. |)* THE GIRL hurries to replace DOOMY on the pedestal.

DOOMY

It's the fucking apocalypse. We're doomed. We're destroying everything. We deserve -

THE GIRL places the new box on the pedestal. *PLAY CURVY*

INFLUENCER CURVY

Do you feel like a piece of garbage?

THE GIRL

...yeah.

INFLUENCER CURVY

Do you feel like there's this one thing you're trying to express, but like you can't quite get it?

THE GIRL

...yeah.

INFLUENCER CURVY

Are there some days where like, you have to do this whole song and dance to entertain FRIENDS all day long but like, sometimes, you'd rather be doing your own thing?

THE GIRL

...this feels personal.

CURVY

But like, what if I told you that there's this one totally wild mind blowing piece of info that would completely change your life forever?

THE GIRL

Well, if you said that, then I would say, "I wanna hear it."

CURVY

Like what if I told you there was one thing that you don't know, that I know, that I could tell you, that would shake up your life so much it would never become un-shook?

THE GIRL *sincerely*

Well, if you said that, then I would say "Please tell me now, I really would like to know."

CURVY

And like what if then I was like once you learn this one thing, things will completely change for you in ways you could never possibly imagine?

THE GIRL *sincerely*

Well then I would - I might - I am saying now that I want to know! I want to know!

CURVY

Seriously, it's brainwave channel changing!

THE GIRL

I'm ready to change the channel!

CURVY

An actual literal truth bomb!

THE GIRL

Drop it!

CURVY

Choose wisely, as once it is heard, it can never be unhea -

THE GIRL

Comon!

CURVY

You have till the count of three. 3 - 2 -

THE GIRL

Just tell me!

CURVY

You're naked.

GIRL *to the audience*

Oh no.

THE GIRL hides.

VOICE

Noooooooo! No! Noooooooo! Don't hide away!

Don't hide yourself at all! You're beautiful!

You must be seen!

You're perfect just the way you are!

You're so gorgeous!

And if anyone tries to tell you any different, just like, fuck them, ok?

THE GIRL

Fuck you! Haha.

VOICE

That's it!

You're perfect,

You're beautiful,
 You're a model,
 You're amazing,
 You are like so smart,
 so intelligent,
 you are witty,
 you're a poet,
 you're a mystic,
 You're an artist.
 You are a damn scientist!
 You're a renaissance WOMan!
 Unprecedented!
 A fucking genius!

THE GIRL starts getting into it.

CURVY

Look at that dewy, glistening, naked skin! Look at it! Show them. Glossy! Beauty!

THE GIRL shows off her glistening skin. Photography flash (INSTA FRAME?). "Che-ching" sound.

CURVY

You're reading a big book! Depth! Deeper! No not like that. Oooooohhh. You're so intelligent.

THE GIRL pantomimes reading according to CURVY's instruction. Photography flash. "Che-ching" sound.

CURVY

Impressive Yoga Pose! Wellness! Wowwwwww.

THE GIRL does yoga according to CURVY's instruction. Photography flash.

THE GIRL

Namaste motherfuckers!

Che-ching sound.

CURVY

Amazing job! Now repeat after me!

I am beautiful!

THE GIRL

I am beautiful!

CURVY

I'm the fucking best!

THE GIRL

I'm the fucking best!

An infectious beat drops.

CURVY

Sexy pose!

THE GIRL

Sexy pose!

THE GIRL continues doing sexy poses. More cha-ching sounds.

CURVY

Oh my god, that's so fucking amazing. You're so fucking perfect I can't even handle it. And if anyone tells you anything different, just like, fuck them, ok?

Now go ahead and show them what you can do!

Algo's Presence. Searchlights, Spotlight.

ALGO

Adoring friends and followers! Your attention! Please welcome to the stage the fuckin' best!

I'M THE FUCKIN' BEST SONG + DANCE

Gettin medals gettin flowers thousand hearts by the hour

I stand atop a mountain in a mermaid gown

Everyone around

I won't be coming down

So fuck everybody else cause I'm the fuckin best!

I'm the fuckin best

I stand atop an aeroplane

In the air I feel no pain

Luxury housecoat purple gold

That's my house so mark it sold

Middle podium the boys say yum yum yum

So fuck everybody else

Cause I'm the fuckin best!

THE GIRL

Yeah! I'm the fuckin best!

APPLAUSE

Lights go blue.

SCENE TWO
LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

SWOOSH AND POP MOVEMENT

A box is thrown on stage.

1. |) | (but lying down, like a smile)

THE GIRL

I'm the fucking best. I can do what I want.

THE GIRL suddenly begins exploring swinging movements. The movement makes the shape of AMI, and the end of the sequence is always her hands lying on her belly.

ALGO attempts to distract her from finding her belly by throwing content on stage with notification sounds each time. First, the smile bracket again. Then, a dot. Then, both: Ami.

2. | . |
3. | .) |

THE GIRL is distracted by the boxes but not so much that she stops. During this movement sequence, she makes the connection between the movement, and the swoosh+pop. Each time she's distracted, she has to start over from the beginning of the sequence.

She doesn't stop until she sees AMI. AMI is a pinky-beige box with .) symbol on him, and a pink bow tie, similar to THE GIRL's costume.

THE GIRL *holding it over where her real belly is*
I love it. It's so me.

AMI IS NEVER HEARD. She puts AMI on the content pedestal. He does not speak. She tries again. He is silent.

THE GIRL

Hey Algo.

...

HEY ALGO. This one's not working.

He is still silent.

This one's a dud.

She drops him.

AMI

Ouch!

THE GIRL
I'm sorry! I didn't mean to -

AMI
That's ok.
Hi, I'm Ami.

THE GIRL
Hi Ami.

AMI
What's your name?

THE GIRL
I'm The Girl.

AMI
That's a beautiful name. Is it polish?

THE GIRL
Ha ha ha! You're funny.

AMI
I'd like to be able to see you a little better. Could you put me up there?

THE GIRL
I wanna be able to see you too! Yes of course I will.

She puts him up.

That's better.

AMI
I really like you. I think you're a wonderful person.

THE GIRL
Oh. I really like...your face.

AMI
I loved what you were doing there.

THE GIRL
You liked this? This thing?

AMI

Yes.

THE GIRL

I don't even really know what I'm doing or why I'm doing it. I keep trying but I can't get it right exactly.

AMI

I think it's beautiful. Can you show it to me again?

FOREVERTIME I

THE GIRL

I might be a bit shy.

AMI

That's ok. I like you however you are.

THE GIRL

Ok so it was like this -

She shows AMI the sequence of movement. She is interrupted by ALGO throwing boxes at her. She eventually begins to move toward AMI.

THE GIRL

It was like this....and this. This...and this. This....and...this.

They kiss.

SCENE THREE

TRUTH TRAILS

PLAY TT TRACK.

ALGO's presence. Searchlights. Spotlight.

ALGO

Adoring friends and followers! Your attention please!

THE GIRL

Just give me a second to do this AMI I have to do stuff like this sometimes.

ALGO

Please watch, as THE GIRL sorts the truth from the lies!

THE GIRL

Truth from the lies. Alright. Let's go.

THE GIRL checks the boxes.

THE GIRL
Hey Algo...they don't say.

ALGO
And she only has one minute to do it!

THE GIRL
Oh.

STRESS MUSIC

ONE TRACK UNTIL

THE GIRL
True?

DING, APPLAUSE

THE GIRL tests her hypothesis, placing another curvy box on the true side.

THE GIRL
True?

DING, APPLAUSE

Girl looks at the dot boxes. Girl deduces that dots must belong on the lie side, so she chucks a dot on the lie side.

THE GIRL
Lies?

DING, APPLAUSE

THE GIRL
Lies!
DING
Lies!
DING
Double Lies!
DING DING

THE GIRL gets it and starts having fun, showing off much as she did in the scene previous. Each time she hucks a box there is a photography flash, a "ca-ching" sound, and canned applause.

She finishes sorting the last box and the only one left is AMI.

ALGO

And what about him?

THE GIRL

Him?

I would most definitely, for sure say, that this one, is true.

“Wrong” sound

No way. He’s a curvy line for sure! Look at him! Look! So curvy!

“Wrong” sound.

THE GIRL

He has a dot.

He’d be the only one with a dot.

... but look! This is like the definition of a curvy line!

Lights get threateningly brighter

He’d be the only one with a dot.

THE GIRL reluctantly places AMI on the lies side.

DING APPLAUSE

ALGO

And what about you?

THE GIRL

Oh, I’m true. I’m good.

DING APPLAUSE

ALGO

Now adoring friends and followers, it’s the moment you’ve all been waiting for - The Girl’s public declaration of the truth!

THE GIRL

We are true!

Applause #1

THE GIRL

We're the fucking best!

Applause #2

THE GIRL

We FUCKING DOMINATE. YES. I AM QUEEN!

Applause #3

ALGO

And her public condemnation of lies!

THE GIRL

Condemnation??!

"AUDIENCE" goading.

THE GIRL

Those are lies.

Applause

THE GIRL takes a bow. Empty audience.

Blue light.

SCENE FOUR

BALCONY SCENE

"Forevertime II" plays.

THE GIRL

Psst.

Psst!

Ami!

The Girl goes to Ami, puts a finger on his mouth, and says

AMI

Listen, it's ok -

THE GIRL

Shhhhhh. Don't say a word.

I'm sorry.

They kiss

AMI

It's ok.

THE GIRL

No. Even if you say it's ok, it's not ok.

They kiss.

AMI

I don't want you to get in trouble.

THE GIRL

I know you don't want me to get in trouble, but I don't care if I get in trouble! Because I love you.

They kiss. It's interrupted by ALGO, who puts on the searchlights.

THE GIRL

Just enjoying the smooth roundedness of a good curvy line!

The searchlights turn off. They kiss. Searchlights turn on.

THE GIRL

Dots...are crap!

Turns to Ami

Not you. I mean, you're not even *really* a dot.

The searchlights turn on.

THE GIRL

Dots are the worst! I just, I really don't like them!

Searchlights stay on.

I would go so far as to say I hate them even!

The searchlights turn off.

AMI

Are we really going to do it this way?

THE GIRL

Yeah, I think this is just going to be what we have to do honestly.

She kisses him.

AMI

Sure there's not another way?

THE GIRL

No, I don't think there is another way. We can do this like this, I think. This will work.

They kiss and embrace. Spotlight on AMI and THE GIRL. Spotlight sound.

SCENE FIVE

IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU REPRISE

Algo, searchlight, spotlight. THE GIRL runs to fill the spotlight.

ALGO

Adoring friends and followers! Your attention please! At my own great expense, I have succeeded in keeping, for your entertainment, The Good, The True, The Curvy, THE GIRL!

THE GIRL

I could be happy I could be sad
I could be good or I could be bad
It all depends on you!

I could be lonely out in a crowd
I could be humble I could be -

Applause, Algo, searchlight, spotlight. THE GIRL runs to fill the spotlight.

THE ALGO

Highly valued followers! Attention Attention! At a great personal cost to me I have succeeded in joining directly to you, for your scrutiny, The Good, The True, The Curvy, THE GIRL!
All depends on you plays.

THE GIRL

I've done this song a lot of times already!

I could be happy I could be sad
I could be good or I could be bad
It all depends on you!

Applause, Algo, Searchlight, spotlight.

THE ALGO

Highly valued lookers surveillers! Put your attention to excellent use! I have taken pains to trap and keep under close watch especially for your bathroom break, the

Glitch noises

The

Glitch noises

The Curvy,

THE GIRL!

All depends on you, but fast.

THE GIRL

This is fast!

Applause, Algo, Search, spot.

THE ALGO

Adoring and wonderful so good excellences! Pay close attention! What's mine is yours! It's

The

Glitch Noises

The

Glitch noises

The

Glitch noises

THE GIRL!

New all depends song plays.

THE GIRL

What?

But what are we doing?

And where are my honorifics?

Music continues. THE GIRL thinks of something to do.

THE GIRL

I love -

Looks at AMI. Looks at the box in front of her.

This!

Applause.

THE GIRL tries to finish the performance. She takes a bow.

Theatre begins to glitch.

She puts a pox on her head, balances it. Finishes, takes a bow. Tries to make it end. Glitching escalates. Light booing.

THE GIRL

No! I don't want to do it anymore! You hear me?

Lights get bright.

THE GIRL stacks curves and carries them. They topple.

Intense glitching, booing.

THE GIRL
NO! I CAN'T DO IT ANYMORE! NO MORE!

Music stops, lights slam blue.

SCENE SIX

STARCROSSED LOVERS

"Journeys" plays. ALGO slams a DOT in front of THE GIRL. THE GIRL goes to AMI. She holds on to him lovingly, desperately, and for life. Another DOT box drops down violently as THE GIRL holds AMI. A dot box with a Halo over it drops. THE GIRL is intrigued. She's clinging to AMI, but eventually the temptation to find out what is in the DOT box becomes too great. She leaves AMI.

SCENE SEVEN

LIES ARE TRUTHS AND TRUTHS ARE LIES

THE GIRL opens the dot box with the halo.

INFLUENCER DOTTY
Do you want a friend?

THE GIRL
Yes, I want a friend.
She looks at AMI.
But I want to live too.

INFLUENCER DOTTY
Well, how about I be your friend?

HEY GUYS plays

Hey guys!
You guys!
Feeling so alone and sad
Scared and
Wondering
When's the next time you'll be glad
Hey there!
You there!
I'm about to blow your mind!
Link in the description

Hit that old subscription
Dots ain't so bad you'll find!

THE GIRL
Oh no. This is a mistake. I'm closing this right -

DOTTY
Not so fast! Have you ever considered the possibility that what you've learned about what's true and what's lies is actually lies and not true?

THE GIRL
I mean. Yeah. Cause that would mean...

DOTTY
That's right!

Were you with us
Your two hearts could harmonize
Just re-
Verse it
Lies are truths and truths are lies!
Rise up!
Wise up!
Let a little info in!
Get an education
It's a celebration
C'mon let me fill you in!

THE GIRL
Wait, if everything I know is a lie, does that mean I'm *not* the fucking best?

DOTTY
No. Of course you're the fucking best. Next you'll be asking me if the sky is a light pinky-beige color. Also, you are still naked.

Now, sing with me!

Hey guys!
You guys!
Feeling so alone and sad
Scared and
Wondering
When's the next time you'll be glad
Hey there!
You there!
I'm about to blow your mind!
Link in the description

Hit that old subscription
Dots ain't so bad you'll find!

DOTTY

You found yourself! Congratulations. Come here, I've got a special treat for you.

Dotty hands THE GIRL a bag. THE GIRL starts to eat them.

THE GIRL *mouthful*

What are these? They're so good!

DOTTY

These are all the reasons you should feel justified in hating those fucking evil curves!

The music continues to play in the background, glitching and distorting a little, as THE GIRL binge eats marshmallows. She eats and eats, then shoves four or five marshmallows in her mouth at once. She notices something is off. Part of the intro to "Murder in the Moonlight" plays. She puts her fingers in her mouth and pulls out a long red ribbon. She gags a little as she continues to pull it out. When the ribbon is out, she shrugs her shoulders, and keeps eating marshmallows.

10m INTERMISSION (Digital Presentation)

INFLUENCED

10 MINUTE INTERMISSION

The old performing food cartoon from grease plays. At the 5 minute mark, every now and then there is a little glimpse of what THE GIRL is doing: binging marshmallows and running around in circles, building herself a throne of dots.

ACT II

SCENE EIGHT

BUILDING THE THRONE

The throne has been built. In blue light. Then time passage lighting. Play RUNNING APP

RUNNING APP

Hey there awesome runner! Great decision on running today. Begin with a warm up walk.

THE GIRL starts walking.

I am safe.

GIRL

I am safe.

VOICE

I am protected.

GIRL

I am protected.

VOICE

I know the truth.

GIRL

I know the truth.

RUNNING APP

Start Running!

VOICE

I know things most people don't know.

GIRL

I know things most people don't know.

VOICE

I am smarter than most people.

GIRL

I am smarter than most people.

VOICE

I am better than most people.

GIRL

I am better than most people.

VOICE

People who don't know what I know are ignorant.

GIRL

People who don't know what I know are ignorant.

VOICE

I have a responsibility to spread the truth.

GIRL

I have a responsibility to spread the truth.

VOICE

I dedicate my life to the dissemination of the truth.

GIRL

I dedicate my life to the dissemination of the truth.

VOICE

I am embraced by all those who know the truth.

GIRL

I am embraced by all those who know the truth.

RUNNING APP

Slow down, and walk!

VOICE

I am loved.

GIRL

I am loved.

VOICE

I belong.

GIRL

I belong.

INFLUENCER DOTTY

I belong to a community of adoring friends and followers.

THE GIRL

I belong to a community of adoring friends and followers.

VOICE

Start Running!

People who don't know the truth are part of the problem.

GIRL

People who don't know the truth are part of the problem.

VOICE

If someone is unwilling to accept the truth, they are evil.

GIRL

If someone is unwilling to accept the truth, they are evil.

VOICE

If someone I know is evil, I will cut them out of my life.

GIRL

If someone I know is evil, I will cut them out of my life.

VOICE

I will not associate with anyone who associates with an evil person.

GIRL

I will not associate with anyone who associates with an evil person.

VOICE

If someone is evil, they should disappear.

GIRL

If someone is evil, they should disappear.

Do I get to slow down and walk soon?

VOICE

If I slow down and walk, I am part of the problem.

GIRL

If I slow down and walk, I am part of the problem.

INFLUENCER DOTTY

I love the spotlight.

THE GIRL

I love the spotlight.

INFLUENCER DOTTY

Anyone who does not love the spotlight has something to hide.

THE GIRL

Anyone who does not love the spotlight has something to hide.

INFLUENCER DOTTY

I will never keep secrets.

GIRL

I will never keep secrets.

RUNNING APP

Great job awesome runner! Now cool down by walking, and then stretching.

INFLUENCER DOTTY

I am empowered.

THE GIRL *striking an instagram pose*
I am empowered.

Photography Flash
Cha-ching!

INFLUENCER DOTTY
I am in control.

THE GIRL *striking an instagram pose*
I am in control.

Photography Flash
Cha-ching!

INFLUENCER DOTTY
I am free to live my truth.

THE GIRL *striking an instagram pose*
I am free to live my truth.

VOICE
Now get out there, and make me proud.

THE GIRL
Now get out there and -

Algo, presence, spotlight.

ALGO
Adoring friends and followers! Your attention please! I am pleased to present to you, for the first time in the dotisphere and for your entertainment, the one, the only, The Dotty, The Girl!

SCENE NINE **HEY GUYS!**

THE GIRL
Hey guys!

I have spent a lot of time in my life looking for answers. Answers to really big, super, duper important questions. And I know these are questions a lot of you guys are asking too, so I thought I'd share my journey of how I found the answer to those questions and how I got to where I am now, because I was literally once just like you.

Once I found the answer, everything just started to click into place. I didn't have any uncertainty anymore. No conflict. I just all at once completely understood the world and my place in it. And it felt so good, you guys, like you couldn't even imagine.

I just needed something, anything, to show me what I already knew. that's why I chose this super crucial topic for my first ever video. I want to share what was shared with me - I want to share with you what it took me looking at just so many memes to finally understand.

And so, without further ado - here are my Top 10 Tips and Tricks for finding out whether you are a good person, or a bad person.

TIP ONE: List all your friends who are good and true, and all your friends who are bad and lies. If you have more good and true friends than you have bad and lies friends, you're probably good too.

TIP TWO: Go through all your boxes and ask yourself - if this is something a good person or a bad person would own? If you're having trouble figuring it out, educate yourself: what kinds of things do good, true people have? What about bad, lies, people? I plan on making lots of videos on that very topic, so go ahead and smash that subscribe button.

AMI

I don't really get this. Why are there only good people and bad people?

THE GIRL

Um. Ami. Not right now maybe?

To "the audience"

Sorry about that.

TIP THREE: Find your reflection, and take a good hard look at it. What do you see? There's nothing better for finding out what's true and what's lies than gazing into a good old fashioned mirror.

AMI

Look at the reflection of like...you physically? How can you tell that just by looking?

THE GIRL

Excuse me for just.

To AMI

Yes physically. And because you just can ok? Also, maybe don't interrupt me right at this extremely huge, super important moment for me!

THE GIRL gathers herself.

THE GIRL

Ah. Tip... Oh yeah! Tip four. Tip four is...moodboards! Moodboards can be so useful for figuring out whether you are a very good or very bad little girl. All you have to do is find and compile some images that resonate with you, and make a sweet collage. When you're done, scrutinize: does this look like a very good - or a very very bad -

Ami begins to speak.

- very - very good - or a very, very, very, bad -

if you're not going to stop talking then I'm just gunna ignore you!

Uh. Tip um. TIP SIX. Seven? Five. Very good and very, very bad...OH YEAH ok. JOURNALING. Journaling helps you find out whether or not you deserve to be rewarded or punished. Don't know how to punish yourself? You know you need to be punished when =a

You know you -

You know you -

PLUG EARS

You know you deserve to be punished when you've been very bad and naughty!

EVERYONE CAN SEE WHEN YOU ARE BEING A VERY BAD AND NAUGHTY LITTLE CHILD
BADNESS AND NAUGHTINESS IS CONTAGIOUS LIKE A IT SPREADS LIKE A -

LIKE SWEET STRAWBERRY JAM!

GAH! AMI! JUST SHUT UP, PLEASE!

I'll be making new videos everyday with more tips and truths, so you can really help out this channel by hitting that bell.

And remember -

I love you.

Applause.

Lights go blue.

AMI

I -

THE GIRL

I have absolutely had it with you right now AMI. Don't even start.

THE GIRL goes to the throne, takes AMI, turns him upside down, and puts him lower in the throne. She fills up the empty space with a dot.

THE GIRL
That's better.

THE GIRL sees DEVIL AMI as dropped by ALGO. She picks it up.

SCENE TEN
TARGETED ADVERTISING

MUSIC CARNIVAL OF SOULS

INFLUENCER DOTTY

Hey guys!

Chances are you're wondering whether or not you are currently in a relationship with an abusive, toxic, malignant, abusive narcissist. So here are 10 reasons why you FOR SURE are:

ONE

Ami has changed. He loved everything about you at the beginning of your relationship, but now, he's challenging everything you say.

TWO

He's not supportive. He doesn't support your goals, your aspirations, or your arguments.

THREE

He's downright mean. He is unduly criticizing you and everything you stand for in a very hostile manner. He's making you look small, and weak.

FOUR

He lacks empathy. Everything is all about him and what he thinks, not about you and your goals.

And remember, I'll be making new videos on all the most asked for psychology topics everyday. So be sure to hit that subscribe button.

FIVE

He's abusive. He deliberately humiliated you at the moment you were making your debut as Influencer, making you look stupid in front of your followers.

SIX

He's trying to stifle you. He's silencing you so that you are unable to speak freely.

SEVEN

He overstepped your boundaries. He should be held to account.

EIGHT

He's manipulative. He's always twisting your words and throwing them back at you to better suit his own narrative.

NINE

He projects. He's totally self-absorbed, and is accusing you of doing things that he's actually the one doing. It's confusing, painful, and fucking degrading.

And remember, anything you can do to help out this channel really helps out this channel so consider helping out this channel. Because you're going to need our help once you hear number ten.

Number ten?

Yes. Number ten.

Is it really bad?

It's really bad.

What is it?

What is it?

What's number ten??

CARNIVAL OF SOULS OFF

TEN

He's gaslighting you.

THE GIRL

Gaslighting?

EDUCATIONAL YOUTUBE MUSIC

Gaslighting is a term that has been gaining in popularity. The term arose from the 1930's play *Gas Light*, where a husband, in an attempt to steal valuable jewels from the apartment above his house, lights the apartment's gas lights, causing the lights to dim in the rest of the house. When his wife asks why the lights are dimming, he tells her they aren't dimming at all and she eventually goes mad. You know someone is gaslighting you when they deny your experience by saying things like "That's not true" and "I think you're confused". It's very bad.

Thanks for watching! Be sure to -

THE GIRL takes the box off her lap.

AMI

You're really obsessed with this good person bad -

GIRL

Listen. Just stop talking. x

AMI

It's making you sick. It's not good for you.

GIRL

I think I know what's good for me!

AMI

You just don't seem well. You're angry all the time - and you seem scared under all that bravado.

GIRL

I am doing THE FUCKING BEST I HAVE EVER done in MY LIFE right now. I'm an Influencer. I'm living my life's purpose, helping people realize the truth. What are *you* doing?

AMI

You've changed.

GIRL

I haven't changed! You've changed!

You know, If someone had told me when we met a year ago that you would eventually deliberately

She pulls a ribbon out of her mouth.

That you would eventually deliberately humiliate me in front of my followers

She spits out ribbon.

during the most important moment of my life to date, I would have called them crazy.

If they had told me that you'd be criticizing my every word, making me look small and weak, I would have laughed in their face.

And if someone had told me a week ago that you'd be

She spits out ribbon

abusing me emotionally, I don't know what I would have done.

AMI

The Girl, that's just not true.

THE GIRL

Not true? Oh my god you're doing it. You're doing it right now.

AMI

I think you're confused.

THE GIRL

I'm not confused. You're gaslighting me.

AMI

Gaslighting?

THE GIRL *scoffs, shares with audience*

You don't know what that means?

Hey Algo

Algo sound

send me a definition of gaslighting.

Spotlight sound + spotlight

THE GIRL runs to the throne.

THE GIRL

Gaslighting is abuse. It's when you deny a person's experience by saying stuff like "that's not true" or "You must be confused" in order to deliberately manipulate the person who loves you so much. Gaslighting confuses, isolates, and makes the person who has literally built their whole life around you question their reality. You, Ami, are using gaslighting techniques like contradicting The Girl, disagreeing with her, and telling her that what she's doing isn't right. And, Gaslighting is something evil people do.

ALGO

And, hey - The Girl.

Friendly reminder. If someone you know is evil, you should cut them out of your life.

She takes the box off the throne.

AMI

I don't know what to say.

THE GIRL

Then just shut up then. I just need to shut off for a while.

THE GIRL takes AMI and puts him at the foot of the throne. She tries to sleep, but the empty spot bothers her, so she places devil AMI there.

THE GIRL
That's better.

SCENE ELEVEN
DEMONIC CONDUIT

THE GIRL tries to go to sleep. PLAY SLEEPY TIME TRACK

STAGE ONE
DOZING OFF

She opens a box. CONTENT TRACK ONE plays. She tries to sleep. She fails.

She opens another box. CONTENT TRACK TWO plays. She tries to sleep. She fails.

She opens a third box, and falls asleep immediately, gradually beginning to sway back and forth. SLEEPY-TIME TRACK plays.

STAGE 2
Escalating movements

STAGE 3
Ribbons bleed out her mouth

STAGE 4
Demonic Conduit/ Organic Consciousness / possession /ribbons everywhere

The lights come on. THE GIRL snaps back into full consciousness. Looks at AMI.

SCENE TWELVE
DEATH OF AMI

She gets down from her throne of boxes and looks at AMI.

THE GIRL
Where is your dot?

THE GIRL
I can't see your dot.

THE GIRL kicks AMI across the stage.

THE GIRL

Show me your dot. Show me your dot!

THE GIRL stomps AMI until he dies.

THE GIRL

I'm not like you. I'm not like you. I'M NOT LIKE YOU.

Shot of GIRL stomping AMI from the empty audience. House lights come up. THE GIRL watches AMI bleed.

THE GIRL

This is real.

I'm alone.

THE GIRL goes to the throne, topples it over.

THE GIRL

Lights off!

The lights turn off.

EPILOGUE

REVELATION OF THE REAL

The lights slam off. "Stratum" plays. The lights begin to come up, sparkly, swirling, greyish blue. THE GIRL is back-on to "the audience". She is doing the swoosh and pop movement from the beginning of the play. Once she gets to her hands landing on her belly, she sits down, and begins to explore her real belly for the first time. This lasts a little while.

THE GIRL

It's ok.

The lights slowly begin to come up. Gradually coming to house lights. THE GIRL holds her belly outside her spanx, handling it gently and lovingly. There is a shot of her in the mundanely lit theatre with no audience. She gives a little smile. Blackout.

THE END

Appendix B: Selected Journals

January 17th, 2020

Journal using Eric Maisel's 'Imaginative Analysis' technique from *Fearless Creating*.

How have artists used what they are attacking to seduce their audiences?

Nanette does this. Gatsby uses and tells jokes at the beginning of the piece that she then refers back to and extrapolated on when she's attacking conventions of stand up comedy - something that her audience - who are all there to see a stand up show - love. She makes a joke - a good one! But out of her trauma. She applied the form of stand-up comedy to her content. Later she presents the same content in an honest way, and by doing s shows what stand-up does to trauma in society. That the form itself is part of the system that hides trauma and reinforced the acceptable ways of dealing with it. So...the form reflects what is being attacked. Or in Gatsby's case, is what is being attacked.

The content stays the same, but the form changes. So I need to figure out what EXACTLY I am attacking so that I can make it into a form.

January 23rd, 2020

Today was the first day I had a nearly entirely movement day! And it was a lot of fun. I never thought that I could work in the way I did today. I worked with various levels of what I'm calling 'Princess music' starting with Taylor Swift and Billie Elish. There is something about the idea of being armoured that I kept thinking about today. There is an armouredness about the white girl online attitude. I'm trying to get at it. I like the idea of a princess becoming increasingly armoured...

Moving was less pressure, more fun, and more reflective - I found myself better able to get into creative mode today. I spent some time at the end of rehearsal drawing pictures, waiting for images, and did some writing.

February 5th, 2020

I'm having quite a lot of fear around creating this three minute piece for performance discuss where I have set up the premise of going from good guy to bad guy. Even though I have set up

the reflection questions in such a way that protect me, I still feel hesitant about “playing the bad guy” onstage, in front of people that don’t know me very well in this political climate. I’m not sure what I’m going to do. I need to come up with ideas. I’m thinking of doing gradients of extremity going from acceptable feminist politics and escalating them so far that they are no longer acceptable...

MIN 1 - Sympathetic - woman accepts empowerment

MIN 2 - Split - woman empowers herself to cross line of acceptability

MIN 3 - Unsympathetic - woman embraces unsympathetic viewpoints

Establish norms, split from norms, provoke...

March 10th, 2020

I’m ending rehearsal early today because it’s been such a slog. I’m very distracted by thoughts I don’t really enjoy, mainly me trying to identify all the ways in which I am disadvantaged. Why am I telling that story to myself all the time? I keep thinking things like “it must be nice to be skinny/to not have to work through your degree/to be so sure about everything/to find community so easily”. I get hooked on how I’ve been marginalized by the theatre community for my size, even though I have no proof that what I’m thinking is even true. I just wonder why this stuff sticks to me so much when I don’t even agree with this kind of thinking? Am I just trying to fit myself into the grader narrative? I’m not sure that’s what’s going on. But I’m obsessing about it and finding it hard to focus. Anyway I managed to get work done but it was a struggle for sure.

March 13th, 2020

It’s Friday the 13th, and COVID-19 has shut down the world. I was a little distracted in the studio today because of all the news that was rolling in from different directions. I did the exercises from the solo creation book today! For a long time I would look at that book and be like none of this is relevant to me but now it is feeling very relevant. I think it’s because I experienced such a big shift in my thinking around my piece, and now I’m ready to start developing a character and her world. Excited to see what comes of this - I liked that I fell on the superstitious pigeon thing today - seems relevant to the casino style social media experience.

March 17th, 2020

Special COVID-19 entry

So. Everything is cancelled and everyone is on the internet. I thought I'd do an entry just to reflect on my own social media behaviour and the behaviors of others at this time.

What I've noticed about my own behaviors is just how much easier it is to allow myself to be entertained by it than it is to attempt to entertain myself. I've got plenty of good habits built up with self-discipline, especially now that I'm in school, but it seems like spending time on SM works against all that. The more time I spend letting it entertain me, the more tempting it for me to let it do so. And it compounds on itself.

I've also noticed, socially, that my desire to be social results in me just consuming content, and texting with friends every so often. There's really not much of anything social happening there. My desire to be social is resulting in me ingesting content all the time. I want one thing, but I'm receiving another.

The whole situation has amplified behaviors too - more confidence in misinformation, more rumor spreading, more moral superiority. The moral superiority just always turns competitive, and it feels as if individuals are looking for any opportunity there might be to WIN. Grabbing onto issues that SHOULD be treated in similar ways to this one, or literally being superior with information you just learned earlier today. It doesn't take long for a more enlightened stance to come up.

Maybe my character is punished by nothing good coming up. Punished by boredom. And she has to keep herself entertained. Maybe. It's the desire to tune out. But you're tuning in.

May 18th, 2020

Wow. A lot of time off. Today I decided to jump back in where I left off in a low pressure way. Here's what's been coming to me:

This is the story of a girl who does not know the core of what she is. She is not attracted to anything, and so she is blown about in the wind, and the wind is the influence of all the other people in her world. She doesn't understand that the influenced are influences. She believes it's just how things are. This is why I like this 'cool lady God' thing, and her being "naked". Her nakedness being spanx, a bra, pantyhose, pantyhose shirt. It's sort of a false Gods type situation. She believes this voice when it tells her she is naked. The voice tells her that she is flawless and excellent. And that her body is beautiful just the way it is. SO THEN when she starts taking it off it might actually be a powerful moment, rather than her being indoctrinated like from before. It could be her actually finding herself.

June 25th, 2020

I'm reading chapter 4 of Fearless Creating where he talks about what is prepping and what is working, and how thinking about problems from other parts of the piece or how everything is going to fit together when you're trying to work in the moment is distracting and gets in the way. Belligerent commitment to THE MOMENT that I'm in. I've really identified this feeling, so I thought I'd put aside some time to journal about it and look closely at it. From now on, I will include a meta-analysis of my working habits in my journaling process.

"Nothing kills the will to work more surely than contemplating the entirety of the work when all we need to do is engage the work right before our eyes." I've done a lot of planning and there is a ton of stuff I can do and draw from. This is why just starting the very beginning of the show is a great idea for me...I need to focus on those moments of setting up, so I can continue to move forward.

When you feel yourself having a critical or big perspective thought, jot it down quickly and keep moving, disregarding it.

I need to work hard at getting rid of my self-consciousness working here.[The living room].

Music on repeat, sign on the door, check the curtains from the outside.

When I'm going off track, give it my full attention and commitment. You can shape and appraise later. You don't know if that exploration contains something crucial.

The moment after I warm up, I need to get quiet, and have something ready to concretely do right away, every time.

Most of what I have been doing is organizing and planning, because it's easier. I need to make sure that I have a talking, embodied, emotional exercise, whether a body in space or in a toy theatre, that I can jump into every day.

So, my habits: I'll put off really working to journal or analyze (lol). Sometimes my drawings count as work, but most of the time, I'm just big picturing, because I'm afraid the moments I create won't hold up to the bigger idea or plan. I tend to go the route of more planning, but that is not the solution. WORK ON THE ONE TINY ASPECT.

My goal for the next week is to have the first scene mostly created, IN PERFORMANCE. Work color/clown work into that, rather than seeing it as something you'll use to create other pieces.

Get right to work. I've been feeling a lot of hesitation and feeling like I don't want to get specific and just go. That is the solution. My great big ideal version of the piece over all BE DAMNED.

August 11th, 2020

I've been having inspiration and fun ideas lately, and I've been chomping at the bit to get things done. The last few days I couldn't wait to get to my work and then today there was NONE of that feeling! I think the "goodness" of the ideas intimidated me a little, like I didn't want to improv or rehearse with them because I felt they wouldn't be as good when I do them as they are in my

head (Isn't that usually how things go?)

August 20th, 2020

FIRST TIME BACK IN YORK STUDIO

It was heaven. It was so easy to focus. I'm realizing I took the privacy and space of the studio for granted all fall and winter. What a dream. What freedom. So productive. *SIGH*. Gunna try and get more time...

Nov 18th, 2020

Today felt large. Working observations: I did the AMI throne scene and filmed it, then cleaned up the space. While I was cleaning up, I was obsessing about political stuff. The stuff that's been paining me. Then when I tried to tap dance, I couldn't get present. I was hurting and not there. I had enough of it and decided to meditate on the floor in the dark for 10m. When I did that, I focused my mind and felt my body. Then I decided to just feel and move about for the remainder of the session. It was the right choice. I began visualizing Ami in pieces, and me trying to reassemble him. Then I started to cry over his body. And I cried for the next hour, and improvised what might be the beginning of the ending. Some of my personal abuse related stuff came into play. It's my head, it's social media, it's society. Hopefully when I tell this story, people will see that. I'm going to test this scene next Wednesday.

January 12th, 2021

Rehearsal at Arts and Culture Centre, St. John's

I currently have no desire to follow my own creation plans. I think I'm being led to work on what I need to be working on so I may just come up with a bit of a plan if I'm stuck but focus mostly on being led to the next thing. I need to let myself have some freedom. I'm enjoying it so much. Really loving being more physically capable as a result of my workouts. I want to dance because I can!

January 25th, 2021

The sheer amount of times I have tried to organize this show is wild. Does previous arbitrary organizing have any purpose? It must have. I'm having this feeling like... I've done all this work. Where is my show? I stopped to cry a lot during movement today. In fact it took me 1h 30m to get to a place where I was clear and present enough to think or create. I've got a big ball

of pain in my chest. Somedays I cope better than others. But crying and moving did help. Anyway...I did MORE ORGANIZING. It's feeling a lot closer now and some pieces that were confusing me fell into place. ACT II was much more broad strokes than ACT I and I'm hoping when I start scaffolding other things beyond the skeleton that all the material I have will fit into it.

I think about what I am not currently working on a lot. That's a big thing I need to overcome. Being present and trusting in the task that I set out for myself. Even just writing that down gets me emotional.

I also need to remember that no one can see my private work. I will make the thing what it needs to be. But my challenge is to be truthful, and a truthful piece of mine feels like one no one will want to touch with a 10 foot pole...then so be it. TRUST.

January 28th, 2020

I keep writing TRUST. It's so much easier said than done. I had what felt like NO TRUST today. I feel lost and confused and like I don't have time to be lost and confused. I feel a lot of pressure and I feel I have no artistic support. I just don't know how to work.

The piece - WHAT IS IT EVEN? Where does it exist? Because I'm not like, physically shaping something, painting something, making a thing - I worry that all my work is just puzzling and thinking. Writing doesn't feel right, but neither does improvising on my feet. I feel SO MUCH PRESSURE to do the latter and have it succeed.

Do I need exercises?? I have generated the damn material. HOW DO I MAKE THIS DAMNED THING BE? I don't want to sit and write, I don't want to sit and puzzle, I want to DO, but I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. How in the hell do I find out? I get ideas for the show but not ideas about HOW TO MAKE THE SHOW THE SHOW.

WHAT DO I DO.

I'm going fucking crazy. Hopefully something will inspire me this weekend.

February 5th, 2021

Ok. These special character symbols on the boxes are taking me on a journey. I should keep in mind to think of more and more experiments to do with them while knowing when to stop. I will intuitively know when to stop. Somethings that became obvious when working with the mock-up boxes today:

- Great way to address labelling uncontroversially.
- Great way to demonstrate cognitive dissonance.

There were a lot of ideas I've been wanting to express that seemed to have no way of happening that are coming through with the special characters/symbols on the boxes. Also, get as much input from people on this as possible. You need to get to know how different people relate + deal w/the symbols. You also should keep good track of this so you can refer to it.

February 11th, 2021

NL studio shut down due to COVID. Kept up my timing all the same which is good. Isolating occur movements like I did back in the day (a year ago). I had to fight off major demons today. SO much uncertainty, and I've been in distress. Trying to keep my mind and body together was tough. You just will have to keep going, even if you're embarrassed to do it in your parents basement. Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened re: the ACC studio. Just keep unburdening...unburdening unburdening.

April 21st, 2021

I've spent most of this week writing the script. Kate has been helping me beat out the logic of the thing which has been super helpful. It's coming along. Lots of uncertainty surrounding lockdown measures and studio access. I was supposed to be up there this week, but decided not to because York hasn't made announcements yet. So. It's weird. Hard to keep pace. Trusting that things will work out and that what I manage to put together will be any good.

I need to make sure I'm focused on spitting out when I'm writing. Sometimes I get into that half editing/half writing place and it's a dangerous place to be. Stick to one or the other. I think I lost a lot of time to mind-wandering while writing today. Anywhoo. Let's see what happens. Supposed to find out soon.

May 14th, 2021

What a wild ride. Today was my first day back "in the studio" [living room] since the process was postponed. I really needed the time. Writing the script was painful and I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. Ideas and solutions are starting to rush in now.

I realized that after everything, after writing about not using bouffon much in the piece and not being overly provocative or not being capable of doing so, that the second act is in fact very dark and the show will not work unless it is. I'm not entirely sure why I was pushing that darkness away. But during my walks where I'm reflecting on the second act, I'm getting awesome and very dark visions for scenes, remixing various bits of work that I have done.

What is becoming surprisingly relevant now is the Betty Boop drawings I did in the fall. The Girl

becomes fully possessed by HIVEMIND. And it has to be ugly. The ideas I'm getting I feel are really good.

A fear keeps coming up that I as a performer will not be able to pull it off. It will require my physicality + movement to be unsettling. I'm afraid of it looking stupid. BUT. I keep thinking that the lights and music will actually help with that A LOT. I'm also thinking about the ribbon mouth effect. I can do some of it in post, and do a special filming. I wonder if I can get really long red fabric...anyway. ACT II is starting to fall into place after teetering on non-completion for months. Thank God. I'm so happy.

May 28th, 2021

Welp, my first mock-up stumble though was humbling to say the least. Something I kept feeling over and over was this "expectation meets reality" feeling. Always smashing up against each other. This show is so brilliant and sexy in my mind. This was not brilliant or sexy. I also have to remember that this is my first time being on my feet since the studio shut down in NL. ugh.

May 30th, 2021

Had two workshop days in a row. Found out that the text will for sure be shifting up until we get into the theatre and I need to be ok with that. Working the Ami scenes on my feet with Kate as Ami helped me see where the heart of this show is really going to be - in the reality of the relationship. As soon as the audience cares about them the whole second act will be that much more effective. I have found that in the process of making concrete decisions about how things are going to be, I'm increasingly having to let go of maintaining the logic of the world, and accept that there will be holes (or mysteries!) in this version. All I can hear is my classmates saying "I don't understand". I always fear being interpreted ungenerously. I need to stop caring (and assuming) what they think, lol. Some choices I make will be purely expression, function, or ease, and I'm ok with that. I choose to be ok with that. At this point I just need to choose based on what reflects the truth of the piece to me.

Also I have been connecting with artists work that was made during covid, like Fiona Apple's Fetch The Bolt Cutters and Bo Burnham's Inside. Both are deeply in touch with our moment in very different ways. One of the scenes in Inside was almost word for word an early dialogue I wrote with Ami in summer 2020. I think that being truthful, receiving images and ideas in an unforced way - will always result in tapping into something bigger and expressing the truth of our moment. Because I'm in this moment. I'm part of it. I'm connected directly...via the tubes of my brain, and much more...to all things. TRUST.

June 5th, 2021

The last workshop with Kate happened tonight. I need to accept that there will be no rehearsal. That's not what I wanted but it's ok. I'm nervous. I'm afraid the ending will be lacking where much else is pretty together. I have a feeling there are going to be a lot of eleventh hour miracles.

June 11th, 2021

I had a really hard time today. I have never experienced so much doubt about something I've made in my life. I started to feel that I am not capable of doing this. I actually genuinely felt like I wanted to drop it and quit, and that I was about to humiliate myself. I'm going to leave room so this is not my final journal entry in this book. Because this can't be true. I need to accept what is, including my limits.

June 15th, 2021

Ok, better today. My goal was to play and I had to remember that. So my goal is to play for the rest of this whole process.

Wednesday June 30th, 2021

The final process for my thesis was so intense. There was no time to reflect once I got into the theatre, or for that matter once the intensive workshopping started while in the studio. Kate and I used every second. So I'm reflecting after the fact - I've been on the couch/going for walks for two days.

My fear is difficult to deal with. I was very fearful the entire first week in the studio, as I found time being eaten up by getting things together and prepping to workshop on my feet. Often all I could feel was my time running out. I lost nearly an entire day of rehearsal with Kate on Zoom to this fear, I had to lie on the floor, breathe, go outside, etc. I called Erika for some advice and she helped me realize that I was trying to make an apple an orange. I wasn't in rehearsal. I had it in my head that I was to capital R rehearse the script as if I were doing a Shakespeare or something, because up until now, that's been most of my experience - as an actor. But the reality was that the thing is just not finished, and that while I had finished the script it was time to play with that. Rehearsing it felt wrong and was making me freak out. And so once I got that advice, things were

a bit easier. But not totally easy. I struggled to play. I suppose being alone for two weeks and coming off of a couple months of lockdown and isolation didn't help much with this. I can feel the play in me, now, as I relax. I remember what it feels like - but it's presence was very rare during the workshopping, preparation and filming. It makes me sad to think that as much as I reminded myself that play was the intention everyday, I was mostly unable to access that place. I hope someday soon I can revisit it in a studio - not just while I'm singing silly songs to the cat while chopping vegetables.

This process has solidified for me that I am not a multi-tasker. While independent production requires a lot of varied kinds of work from the artist...I'm just not sure that I'm totally capable of doing the job of 6 people without sacrificing my performance. Perhaps if I kept doing this, over and over, I could get used to it, but I don't think so. Perhaps if I went to a few meditation or spiritual retreats, I could practice presence and faith enough to let go into play even with a million things on my plate and in high pressure situations. Or, I could just...take my time, and do less jobs. As I write this a tear is coming to my eye. I am so pleased with the script I turned out. I am so pleased with how the entire process went, from 2019 to now. I am genuinely transformed. But I'm so disappointed with my performance and lack of ability to find presence and play in my process. But I did the best I could. Throughout this time, I did vocal and breathing exercises, worked out, stretched, every single time I came to work on the piece. I felt I was working on my instrument as much as I was on the piece, and I was excited to show off. And yes, I'm a bit better than I was when I came in, as a performer...maybe?

I hate to be so negative as my final journal. But this is honesty. Unfortunately my mind is continuing to focus on these negatives. I suppose because I feel like they may be all people see when they look at my video. That my performance is lacking. I keep thinking the same thing over and over: I will just tell them that even though the video quality is professional, it's still just a workshop presentation. I know, I'll just write at the top: "This piece was being created up until and during it's filming. It was not rehearsed.". And then I think that I'm giving excuses. And then I try to rewrite my disclaimer so that it sounds more professional and less like an excuse. This has happened in my mind probably over one hundred times.

I worked my ass off. I believe this is good. I want it to go somewhere beyond this thesis. I put everything I have into it. I miss playing. I miss really being a clown, a comedian. I miss people.

I'm going to force some positives. I was able to remain calm during the week of setting lights and filming. I absolutely loved setting lights and seeing that piece come together, as it has been such an important aspect of the piece since it started to crystalize last summer. The throne in

ACT II is visually stunning. A lot of really cool stuff started to come together once I had the boxes with the special characters drawn on physically in the space with me. I should have done this earlier, really, or perhaps played more with my little mock-up versions. I think there's more to be discovered and played with there. I loved when the curves started to make up my body - that was an happy accident that locked a lot of narrative and thematic stuff into place.

The discovery of how to kill Ami was quite amazing. We were trying desperately to figure out something that would work for his death. The first idea was ribbons, but that didn't work, as we named the ribbons as 'reasons you should feel justified in hating', and Ami is not hate filled. I knew he had to have something meaningful to The Girl inside. I was sitting on this thing without a proper ending up until two days before we entered the theatre. We were working on the final scenes. Ami was at my feet on the throne, and when telling him to shut up, I kicked him, he moved across the floor. Kate squealed. She said... "kicking something to death is a lot different than tearing something apart." I knew that piece would come in a miracle and it totally did.

Also, all the practical effects worked on the first try, in the final moments. That was wild. We were racing against the clock to film the final scenes and they turned out great.

That's it for now. I learned a lot. I'm pleased and proud with the visuals, and I hope I get another shot at the performance part someday.