

PERFORMING THE ROLE OF
SHEILA BIRLING
IN THE PLAY
AN INSPECTOR CALLS
BY J.B. PRIESTLEY

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Abstract of Project in Lieu of Thesis
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IN THE DRAMA
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BY J.B. PRIESTLEY

By

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Chair: Judith Williams

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The following paper documents my work in the portrayal of Sheila Birling in J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*. This role and paper fulfill my requirement for the University of Florida's M.F.A. Acting Project in Lieu of Thesis.

This document provides an in-depth look at my creative process from acquiring the role through the final performances as well as hindsight analysis. In compliance with the format suggestion by the School of Theatre and Dance, this paper is broken up into five components. Part One, the Introduction, explores my graduate school trajectory and the decision to take this role. Part Two, Text Analysis, provides research on the author, the play, and the character. Part Three, Rehearsal Analysis, documents and analyzes the rehearsal process. Part Four, Performance Analysis, recounts and analyzes the performances from opening night through closing. Part Five, Conclusion, explores the lessons learned through this project.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My thesis role of Sheila in J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, was the result of two overarching elements: 1) Techniques learned throughout my coursework at the University of Florida's M.F.A. Acting program; 2) A well-developed intuition, which I believe is a testament to what I know, my abilities and how I have grown. Acting is a craft, not a science. My explanation of my process for this particular role is not meant to be a template for all work, even mine. It is not suggestion, but recollection and analysis.

A number of factors went in to deciding to take this role. Quite honestly, I was not ecstatic about it. It was largely my decision, but it was a calculated one based on practicalities and not passion. I was terribly disappointed when I found out what the season was for our third year. There seemed to me to be few strong opportunities for women. I wanted to do something very contemporary but *Roberto Zucco*, the only contemporary play, overlapped semesters and would have made finding an internship extremely difficult. I wanted a play that was in the fall, so that I did not need to leave on internship and return to Gainesville. Perhaps I should mention here that an internship is required in the third year of the M.F.A. program in order to complete the degree. I wanted to make one strong move in December, hopefully landing where I could see myself for at least a couple years. *An Inspector Calls* was taking place in the Fall semester, so I would not even need to return early from summer break.

I had already worked with Dr. Young in a production of *Circle Mirror Transformation* and that process proved to be my favorite and most successful experience in graduate school. I thought working with him again would be a great experience. Maybe he of all people could find a way to extract some truth out of me in a role or stock character that I had thought possessed

next to none. In some ways, I would have liked to work with another director but again, this choice was based heavily in practicality. Dr. Young was a bit hesitant at first because of the fact that we had already worked together and he thought I should experience working with someone else. However, I listed my reasons to him, just as I've listed them above, and he agreed.

I had another reason for wanting this role: I had already played this character type. This is not to say that I wanted the easy way out, in fact, quite the contrary. I've never been happy with my performance of characters like Sheila. I thought this would be a good opportunity to remedy this issue. I wanted to leave the program feeling satisfied and successful.

We all know Sheila. She is the wide-eyed girl next door who gets a slap of reality and grows up. Her life was seemingly perfect until the moment it all fell apart. Her fresh-faced persona and world outlook are challenged and ultimately forever changed. She's the heroine. She ends the play a bit more hardened, a whole lot smarter and ultimately stronger. And I have played her. She was Mary Haines in *The Women*. She led the perfect life with the perfect husband, house and social status. Everything is wonderful and going as planned until her husband cheats on her. Totally caught off guard, she leaves him (something incredibly rare at the time that the play was written) and goes off to get a divorce. She knows, though, that he still loves her. He had a temporary lapse of judgment, but he can find redemption. She takes him back. And then there is Molly Ralston in *The Mousetrap*. She is an excited newlywed, opening a bed and breakfast with her husband. All is great until there is a murder in her own home. She winds up suspecting her husband and revealing deeply buried secrets. After a close brush with the murderer, she is saved and reunited with her husband. She wonders how she could ever have doubted him.

And now I had the role of Sheila Birling. She has the perfect life, family, and engagement. She even wears beautiful clothing. And then all of a sudden, a girl is found to be murdered and Sheila finds out her fiancé has slept with some desperate girl. She can finally see her family and fiancé for the greedy and self-involved people that they really are. She returns her engagement ring and moralistically rises above the rest, but does not completely dismiss the idea of reuniting with her cheating beau.

Each of these women follow about the same journey and are the backbone of their play. Their similar journey is the most important one in the play and must be believed by the audience. It is a journey that must be intact and specific in order to provide room for the more zany characters to carry out their functions. So while I might deem them flavorless and boring, they are unequivocally important.

My process became centered on the challenge of breathing truth and life into Sheila. I was constantly up against my own inclinations to judge, comment upon, or dismiss her. I was up against physical mannerisms, vocal patterns, and habits of thinking that I had assigned to her. I will discuss these at length in the Rehearsal section of this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH

The Author and the Play

My introduction and research into the author and the play was not done by complete immersion. I would describe my mode of attack as scattered exposure. I would just browse the internet looking at production photos, reading performance reviews and various articles about J.B. Priestley, *An Inspector Calls*, and Sheila Birling.

The first question I ask myself when encountering a play is, “Why?” Why did the author write this? Why is it still important? In my search, I found an interesting observation made by J.B. Priestley that was, perhaps, the impulse for the play:

An ultra-respectable suburb like ours, I began to see, had too many badly divided men, all heavily solemn and frock-coated on Sunday morning, too coarsely raffish, well away from their families, on Saturday night. Managers who were obdurate if the mill girls wanted another shilling a week could be found in distant pubs turning the prettiest and weakest of them into tarts. (Over thirty years later I made some use of these discoveries in a play, *An Inspector Calls*, set in 1912.) It is true that the women and girls who worked in the mills in the district then were no models of feminine refinement. Sometimes, when I finished earlier than usual at the office and walked home, the route I preferred took me past one of the largest mills in the district, often just when the women were coming out. I would find myself breasting a tide of shawls, and something about my innocent dandyism would set them screaming at me, and what I heard then, though I was never a prudish lad, made my cheeks burn... But all this not unwholesome and perhaps traditional female bawdiness - there was a suggestion of mythology, ancient worship, folklore... far removed from cynical whoring. There was nothing sly, nothing hypocritical, about these coarse dames and screaming lasses, who were devoted to their own men, generally working in the same mill, and kept on ‘courting’, though the actual courtship stage was over early, for years and years until a baby was due, when they

married. They may not have lived happily ever afterwards, but they saved themselves from some unpleasant surprises. (*Margin Released*, 63-64)

These observations, recorded in hindsight, were originally made between 1910 and 1914. *An Inspector Calls* is set in 1912. Clearly these insights found their way into the play, beyond the relationship between managers and working girls. Here, also illustrated, is the juxtaposition of the two key females in the play: Sheila, the refined society girl, and Eva Smith or Daisy Renton, the factory girl. Priestley, in this excerpt, shows a sympathy with the mill girls that is also found in the play.

It is interesting that Priestley wrote the factory girl as pretty, innocent and likable. Gerald points this out, time and time again, how different Daisy Renton is from the typical factory girl. Surely, the Birlings would have made similar observations about the working class women as Priestley outlined here. This explains the magnitude of Sheila's disbelief and disgust when she discovers that her fiancé is having an affair.

I found this piece of research particularly valuable because it launched me into the psychological make-up of Sheila at the top of the play. It gave more weight to the confrontation between Sheila and Gerald when the affair is revealed. It established a relationship between the two women, Sheila and Eva/Daisy, determined more by society than by their limited interaction.

Priestley's life revolved around making social and political observations. After fighting in World War I, he was educated afterwards at Cambridge University and shortly thereafter began writing plays and novels. In addition to being a playwright, he was a novelist and a radio broadcaster. He broadcast in dangerous conditions in World War II, resulting in several injuries. ("J.B. Priestley Author Represented", 1).

The play is a critique on capitalism, born out of Priestley's social and political beliefs. Throughout his broadcasting career, he was always on the side of the working class, the unemployed, and, essentially, the underdog. It makes sense, then, that Priestley's mouthpiece in the play, Inspector Goole, is a working class hero. The Inspector puts the wealthy on trial for deeds that were the result of wealth, prominence, and the general disregard for humanity. Succeeding in an inquisition, the Inspector triumphs over the Birling family. The underdog comes out on top.

The first several pages of the play establish Arthur Birling, the patriarch of the family, as the poster child for capitalism. His first speech reveals to the audience that his views are completely misguided. He says:

In twenty or thirty years time - let's say in the forties-...by that time you'll be living in a world that'll have forgotten all these silly little war scares. There'll be peace and prosperity and rapid progress everywhere - except of course in Russia, which will always be behind-hand, naturally. (*An Inspector Calls*, 10).

An audience watching in 1945 will have the knowledge that Birling cannot yet possess in 1912: that the First World War would start in less than two years; that the labor disputes had not nearly reached a head; that a depression of unparalleled magnitude would occur just shy of two decades into the future; and that Russia would become a dangerous superpower, threatening the Western world.

And so with this speech, occurring less than five pages or five minutes into the play, Priestley mocks Birling and with it, the ego, sentiments and values of the Western world, specifically England, before World War I and II.

It is not surprising that Arthur Birling is the first family member to be exposed in the Inspector's questioning. With the Inspector, the outsider, crumpling the head of the family, it sends a message to the rest and incites the drama that follows.

As mentioned above, Priestley was a wartime broadcaster. It is unsurprising, then, that he wrote this play at the end of World War II. He fancied himself a spokesperson for justice and humanity, just as the Inspector does. As the Inspector aims to tutor the Birlings, Priestley attempts to teach a lesson to a broader audience - his country, England and the world. The year 1945 was important with the war coming to a close. With the threat of danger gone, Priestley feared that people might soon forget it. He illuminated the fact that the closest the Birlings come to changing and learning is when their lives and reputations were at risk. Once they discovered the Inspector was a fraud, they reverted to old behavior. Peaceful and comfortable times promote reflection and change much less than do turbulent times. Priestley urges the audience to remain vigilant and aware. He points out that because a perceived storm is over, more will await. There is a sort of prevention that is necessary that is a result of rethinking one's world view to include more of a social conscience. Priestley points out through the Inspector:

One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us...all intertwined with our lives, with what we think and say and do. We don't live alone...We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when if men and women will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. We don't live alone. Good night.

(An Inspector Calls, 54)

These words, spoken by the Inspector as he leaves, are the message that Priestley hopes to communicate. Sheila hears the message and acts. That, it seems to me, is the hope of the playwright for audience members as well. That makes this piece a slice of much needed propaganda, as well as a drawing room mystery.

Character Work

Throughout this section, I will outline my initial responses to questions posed to us by Dr. Young at the beginning of the rehearsal process, as well as provide a follow-up detailing my reactions after the completion of the rehearsal and performance process.

I began with character work before the rehearsals started. Dr. Young emailed us with a number of questions to consider. My answers are all documented as completed by September 10th, 2011.

Question 1: How does your character get up in the morning, eat, go through the day, go to bed at night?

On September 10th, 2011, I wrote:

I think Sheila is eager when she gets up in the morning. She's a bit of a planner - either literally or mentally making a list in the morning of what she has to accomplish that day. She then goes through her day checking off that list. I think she is very focused and present throughout the day - involving herself fully in each activity, though she knows she may have more to do. She is maybe a little meticulous about her bedtime regime - clothes laid out for the morning, makeup off, hair brushed, room cleaned. It gives her a sense of control and order for when she wakes up in the morning.

While I still think that Sheila is eager and determined, I changed my opinion about her regimented lifestyle. She has never really had the need to be a planner or to be a perfectionist, because much of her life is taken care of for her. She has a maid who picks up after her. She has tutors who are in charge of her schedule. She has servants to cook for her. I do not think she searches for the control that she lacks at the beginning of the play. This is a key shift. She is too

naive at the top of the play to assume that she has the option of navigating her own life. Everything, her school, her job, and her fiancé, have been chosen for her. And so, contrary to what I originally wrote, she is a bit carefree at the top. She is absurdly so with the Inspector, incredibly flip with her responses to his serious inquisitions. She does not have a full grasp of the consequences of her actions. The determination, eagerness, and strength that is present but unfocused at the top of the show, is reigned in and put to use at the end.

Question 2: Write what happens to your character between scenes and before the play begins?

I wrote:

Before the play begins, Sheila is a smart girl with her life in order. She's a hard worker, but things sort of just happen for her - with a little luck, a little aggression (or pro-activity). She's got the man she wants (maybe after a little hard work). She has the clothes she wants (within her means). She is a bit hard headed and determined in this way.

The big part of the question obviously neglected by my answer is the part about the action between scenes. There is no time between scenes in the play. Sheila is rarely offstage. If she is, it is to talk to her mother about the engagement or to sit with her mother while she calms down.

Sheila's relationship with her mother, Sybil Birling, is interesting. Sheila demonstrates high levels of care and even protection of her mother throughout the play, but also displays quite a bit of resentment. I gathered that Sheila has always been favored by her mother, who did not see much promise in Eric. This favoritism led to Sheila becoming rather spoiled by her parents. She became entitled and elitist. She was taught to respect her parents and until the third act of

this play, never questioned that. It was ingrained in her. And I think she also saw the benefit of behaving in a respectful manner. It got her what she wanted: clothes; purses; jewelry; and a fiancé. However, there was a price tag to a privileged lifestyle. The pressure that was put on her by her mother, a queen of society, was, at times, overwhelming and unbearable. The family had put all of its stock in Sheila, since Eric appeared hopeless. As a result, Sheila suffered some verbal abuse by her mother. This is evidenced when Sheila recalls a shopping trip where her mother told her she would look horrible in a dress. This was a common occurrence in the Birling household. Sheila was being groomed to be a successful woman of high society and the tactics were often unkind.

I do wish I had done more research as to what exactly Sheila's education would have been like, because researching it after the close of the play hardly seems useful. However, it appears to me now that 1912 was a time when education was beginning to become popular for young girls, especially those of higher classes. Society was beginning to note the possible value to having educated young women contributing to their communities. I do not think the Birlings sent Sheila to school to become a contributor to society, though. She was there to meet other rich young men and women. She was there because of her pedigree. She was there because the Birlings could afford it. It was ornamental. The goal was always to find her a rich, young suitor to marry.

Sheila did work after the completion of school, but it was not a job that she had to earn. She worked as a telephone girl or a stenographer for her father's company. Again, it was all for show. Perhaps she would meet someone at the office. It was all a precursor to engagement. The goal was never for it to amount to any kind of career. Still, the result was that Sheila was able to gain tools that most women might not have. I think the confidence that Sheila realizes she has

from these skills fuels her final decision to hold off on her engagement. I believe she heads out the door of her family home in the hopes of working and contributing to society.

Question 3: Where do you shop? What does your block look like?

I wrote:

Milward's, of course. Upper end department stores. Not quite couture or high end, but as close to that as possible. She functions well within her means. I think there's a family pressure to look as upper class as possible, especially coming from her mother (who obviously isn't the kindest person to shop with). But I can see her moving away from this soon. Finding more of her own style, exploring more shops and parts of town. The block the family lives on is similar - upper class without being full of mansions. But I could see Sheila in the next few years, if she doesn't marry Gerald, moving to a smaller, poorer neighborhood in a small apartment.

I think style and appearance are very important for Sheila and I think this answer holds up over the rehearsal period and performance. The dress that she wears is very much of the time, while her mother's is a little dated. The family would want Sheila to look presentable and current for her engagement party, while maybe not being as concerned about the mother's dress.

As I mentioned above, I do believe that Sheila walks out that door at the end of the play. She is curious about what life has to offer and what she has been missing. She is anxious to explore other points of view, other parts of town and other people that she has not come into contact with up to this point in her life. All of this will lead her to distance herself from her family. However, without their support, she will most likely be unable to shop in the same stores that she always has. She has become a new woman. And I think she will also want to dress like the person she has become. Her new found social conscience may make buying expensive

dresses seem extravagant and excessive. She will most likely have a bigger appreciation for the value of her money when she is earning it herself.

Question 4: Think of how your character might dance, think of an animal that your character reminds you of, find your character's walk.

I wrote:

I think Sheila might let loose a bit when she dances. I think it's hard for her to lose herself in something, but maybe this is it. The first animal that came to mind is a doe. It is graceful and feminine, but spunky, smart and quick to react. I may decide on something a bit more ballsy with a bit more bite. Walk? Glide? With a little flick?

To clarify, "glide" and "flick" are examples of effort actions coined by movement practitioner, Rudolf Laban. The effort actions are defined by four components: space, weight, time and flow. An action can be defined by the first component, space, as either direct or indirect; by the second component, weight, as either strong or light; by the third component, time, as either sudden or sustained, and by the fourth component, flow, by either bound or free. When you exhaust all combinations of the four components, you wind up with eight actions. They are as follows: 1.) Float (indirect, light, sustained, and free; 2.) Punch (direct, strong, sudden, and bound); 3.) Glide (direct, light, sustained, and free); 4.) Slash (indirect, strong, sudden, and bound), 5.) Dab (direct, light, sudden, and free), 6.) Wring (indirect, strong, sustained, and bound), 7.) Flick (indirect, light, sudden, and free); and 8.) Press (direct, strong, sustained and bound).

These are the effort actions as I have learned them and used them throughout my undergraduate and graduate theatre coursework. Depending on the source one may use to

investigate the efforts, “Flow” may be omitted or defined in various terms as both “bound” and “free”.

“Flick” and “Glide” are similar in that they are both light and free. Looking back now, I’m a bit surprised that I made these choices, given the constraints of Sheila’s clothing, specifically the corset, and her heavily monitored manners. But Sheila, having grown up with both these physical and societal constraints, has found a way to move inside of them in a way that does not betray her youth, innocence and vitality. I will go further to say that I found her dominant effort action is “glide.” This is the one she has cultivated over her lifetime to maintain a ladylike facade. The “flick” is peppered in as she becomes upset, as she is surprised, or when she is caught off guard. The “flick” is what is brewing underneath the surface of the “glide.”

Again, looking back, I see areas that I wish I would have attended too more thoroughly. I wondered how they danced in 1912. Dances like the fox trot, geared toward a younger crowd, were becoming more fashionable than more traditional dances like the waltz. This is more evidence of the rising influence of the youth. Ultimately, this play is about passing the torch to the younger generation. It is about turning over the unquestioned and unchallenged notions held for years and years by those in power. In this case, it is the older upper class. The evidence that education for women was becoming popular in the year 1912 and that quicker, more spirited dances were in vogue, makes it clear why J.B. Priestley felt this was an important story to tell.

I received an interesting idea post-performance that it would have been an interesting exercise for Sheila and Gerald to dance the waltz. Who would lead? Who would be the focus of attention? I think Gerald, always the man’s man, would lead. It is clear that up until the end of the play, that he has been in the driver’s seat of the relationship. However, though Gerald would be the focus of Sheila’s attention, Sheila would be the focus of the room’s attention. This is

something that she knows how to do due to her breeding and upbringing. She can perch in the center of the room in a way that will catch every eye.

I absolutely stand by my first impulse to liken Sheila to a doe. I would go farther to liken her at the top of the play to a fawn and by then end she is a fully matured doe. I like the visual of a deer perking up at the first sign of danger. They listen very carefully. This visual was especially important during the Inspector's interrogation of Mrs. Birling. I had a long while to wait on stage and do nothing but listen. There were little things that would set me off, little inklings of danger approaching, and finally the realization that my mother was incriminating my brother that was almost paralyzing to me, I was like a deer in the headlights. Sheila listens with her whole body and she reacts quickly.

Question 5: What music reminds you of your character? The music need not be period appropriate.

I wrote nothing.

I did not find anything and forgot about it after a while. This was unusual for me, because I used to work a lot with music. Coming up with a character playlist was an important part of my character development. Now, I do not find that it really serves me at all. Instead of helping me get into the body of the character, it puts the character at arm's length and makes me visualize them as something different from myself. In hindsight, it would have been useful to use music Sheila liked, such as the new fox trot music, to get into character.

Question 6: What is your character's rhythm? Emotionally? Physically?

I wrote:

I think this builds off the walk - glide with a bit of flick. She's steady and straightforward and strong - but there are blips where she does lose it a little. Little physical flicks when she's emotional or uneasy or thrown off course. Maybe a little bit of built up nervous energy that surfaces when she loses control.

Again, I thought of this question in Laban terms, explained in my answer to Question 4.

Her emotions can also be charted with a certain musicality. If her moments are all musical notes, then she begins the play with a legato quality. Everything is tied together. The moment she appears onstage on Gerald's arm leads seamlessly into the toast, which leads smoothly into the ring, which ties quite cleanly into her leaving to discuss marriage plans with her mother. Though the presentation of the ring is a moment of excitement, it is not necessarily a surprise. Everything is still going as planned. Even with the arrival of the Inspector, the moments continue this way right up until Sheila realizes she is the culprit and runs offstage. Here, she makes a shift into staccato. Her moments become sudden and reactionary. When she returns to confront the Inspector, she attempts to maintain that legato quality, but ultimately cannot. It is too late. She suspects Gerald's infidelity and moves in a brash way to find out the cause. Into the second act, her moments remain staccato. She excitedly tries to prevent her mother from speaking. She is prone to outbursts, becoming increasingly cruel and antagonistic. This continues until the Inspector leaves. Her pleas, prompts and advice have been lost on her family. In the quiet moment after the Inspector is gone, Sheila realizes, most fully, the consequences of her actions. This begins her crescendo into her full transformation. It is no longer possible for her to go back to her ways as a naive little girl. She has the lesson all worked out. It is through the last few pages of the play that she makes her decision to leave. This culminates on the steps of the front door at the end when Sheila, no longer with any hope for her family, delivers her final speech:

So nothing really happened! So there's nothing to be sorry for, nothing to learn. We can all go on behaving just as we did... I tell you - whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way... [I'm not] because I remember what he said, how he looked and what he made me feel. And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it," (*An Inspector Calls*, 67).

This last speech is very similar to the last speech given by the Inspector, discussed earlier in this chapter. Where the Inspector had been talking about lessons in terms of society, Sheila is talking about her own lessons. It is undoubtedly clear in this moment that Sheila, and Sheila alone, has made a transformation as a result of the events of the play. And then, to provide a button to this action, she is given the moment to refuse Gerald's second proposal. By the time the phone rings, telling the family that a murder has happened and the police are on their way, Sheila has already been metaphorically saved. It is the rest of the family's guilt and fear that is left hanging in the air as the lights go out.

Question 7: What is your character's sense of humor? Explain.

I wrote:

Sheila might laugh at the expense of others a little bit. She laughs wholly and heartily. I think she is ultimately a kind person, but she thinks she's smarter than most and that manifests in a bit of cruelty humor wise.

I think I would still stand by this opinion. I would go further to say that at least at the beginning of the play, she is amused by things that seem absurd or do not seem to affect her. She is not very seasoned at weighing the importance of issues. That is why she is entertained when the Inspector comes at the beginning of the play. He is adamant about his concerns, which seem absurd to Sheila, not relevant to her, and therefore amusing. I had fun playing with this portion.

Sheila has the whole play to be genuinely concerned about the implications for herself and her family, so why not give her a few minutes of hubris. This comes to a peak when the Inspector tells Sheila he has a photograph of the girl. I laughed at such an absurd statement. It is a laughter that is matched with the Inspector's and then a deadly silence. This is a big turning point for Sheila, as I pointed out in Question 6.

Question 8: How does your character serve the playwright?

I wrote:

She is the first one to really see Inspector Goole for what he is. She is the one who points out the lesson of the play - the first to really point out that a change is occurring and the first one to change.

I think Inspector Goole actually points out the lesson of the play, but Sheila is the product of the lesson. She is the one who changes. She represents the new generation. She becomes a sort of disciple of the Inspector, carrying on his mission, his point of view, and his social conscience after he leaves. Really, it is a story about Sheila. If Sheila's point of view at the beginning of the play represents a larger, popular world view, then her point of view at the end of the play represents what Priestley would like the larger, popular world view to be. If the Inspector is the mouth piece for Priestley, Sheila is the mouth piece for the ideal audience member.

It really does not matter who killed Eva Smith. Eva Smith does not even really matter. Social responsibility and the social contract we live by are what matters. What matters is the awareness one has for the consequences of their actions.

It is at the point that the Inspector makes this speech that Sheila ultimately changes. I found it is the most emotionally jarring part for her, even more than her falling out with Gerald. She realizes at that moment that the way she has been living her whole life has been shallow and

wrong. It has been a lie and a sham. She grows up in that moment. We see it a little bit earlier, as she begins forcefully to stand up to her family that she is heading in this direction. But after the Inspector leaves, she sort of becomes a disciple of his teachings. She is the link to what he said and she will constantly remind her family of such. Again, as mentioned in Question 6, this is the crescendo, or gradual build to her full transformation.

The trick with this moment is that Sheila cannot grow up all of a sudden. I had to be constantly moving her to that point from the moment that she finds out about Eva Smith. She moves even further when she finds out about Gerald and Daisy Renton, his lover. Still, she is brought closer to adult understanding and growing up when she gives the ring back to Gerald. That action is a huge turning point. After Gerald leaves and she stands up to her mother telling her to stop putting on airs, we see the two as equals for the first time. When Inspector leaves, she can finally come out not with an equal understanding of the world as her parents, but with a greater social consciousness. She is the new generation. And Priestley clearly has the torch being passed to the younger generation.

Question 9: What do you think the play is about? Why did he write it?

I wrote:

It's really ahead of its time - a commentary about capitalism and its downfalls. It's a serious, social commentary wrapped in the format of a murder mystery.

Clearly my answer during the first few days of rehearsal, recorded here, is lacking. A much more in-depth exploration can be found in the first section of this chapter, The Author and the Playwright, so I will not reiterate, but rather redirect.

Question 10: What is your character thankful for?

I wrote:

I think my character is thankful for good people. She is thankful for culture and support of her family.

I think of all the things I originally wrote, I agree with this the least. I think at the beginning of the play, Sheila is thankful for material things. This is evidenced in her reaction to the ring. I made the choice to have a lot of her attention placed on the ring in the whole of Act I. She spends as much time looking at that as she does Gerald. He is something else for which she is thankful. She is thankful for appearance and success, as well as thankful for landing a man of Gerald's status. I also made the choice to have her play with her dress a lot. I wanted to create that sort of material relationship, making the dress into an interactive character. She is in love with the fabric, with the design, with the way she can perch while wearing it.

Sheila is just about the only character that really makes a journey in this play. In early rehearsals, I understood this, but still wound up playing the ending at the top of the show. I knew that ultimately she is smarter than the rest of her family, but I was not letting her find that through the play. I started with her already above her family at the beginning in terms of her handling of the situation, her knowledge and her morals. I could not figure out why she was flat-lining. It was not until Tim Altmeyer came to a rehearsal and pointed out the need for the moment when the facade falls, when everything falls apart. She starts the show with everything! She enjoys an engagement, and not just any engagement, an engagement to a wealthy man. She finally has everything for which she has worked. She is proud of her accomplishment. She believes that she is fulfilling a plan that has been laid out for her. She has put up with a lot from her parents up until this point. She has also put up with her fiancé's lengthy disappearances, but

it is all worth it because she has the engagement now. And then she finds out about the girl with whom her fiancé cheated on her. This is the turning point. And it is very telling of Sheila's character that it is not when she finds out a girl has killed herself that she reins in her self-absorbed behavior. It takes something tangible - something that affects her directly in the moment, something that undermines years of work or tutored effort to make her re-evaluate. And this is very indicative about who she is at the beginning. It is a matter of shattered love that jars her, not death. She is all about emotions, not social responsibility. Yes, she hurt some poor salesgirl, and feels some regret, but that is nothing compared to her hurt and bruised ego.

CHAPTER THREE

REHEARSALS

In this section, I will outline the rehearsal process of *An Inspector Calls* from the first read through the final dress. I will provide highlights, struggles and breakthroughs that informed my creative process.

Early Rehearsals and the Rehearsal Environment

We began rehearsals with Dr. Young with an exercise in character meditation. I've always sort of enjoyed these, but have never been so taken with it as I was the first night of rehearsal. We went on an adventure to our favorite place to a house we designed to meet our character. We then proceeded to step inside their body, to hug them, to interact with them. I felt myself fall so deeply into this that I started to be concerned with how I would find my way out and still have the energy to participate fully in the rest of rehearsal. I started bringing myself out of it a bit early, just so I'd have ample time to readjust.

Dr. Young also led us in various Tai Chi exercises before rehearsal. And though Andrew and I led the cast in warm-ups some nights - games of Beastie Boys, Bang, Categories, etc. - it really was not the environment for high energy warm up games. There was no need to amp everyone up. The play was so much about listening, about the eyes of the characters that we were much better served by focus exercises. Focus on stage is really the element that would make the play live or die. No actor could afford to check out. Looks were constantly being exchanged, behavior observed and conclusions being drawn. There needed to be inner-monologuing behind

the eyes of each character or the action would fall flat. Everyone was involved and everyone was trying to figure the situation out right until the very end. That is the only way that the ending works. This was very much in line with my pre-rehearsal workout routine. Exercise also invites focus and produces mental clarity, which aided me significantly.

Achieving Ease

Achieving ease was a main goal of mine. In fact, it was probably the main goal. I thought truth and believability would probably be achieved if only for ease. And so I got in the routine of going to the gym right before rehearsal. I liked giving myself a small window between the treadmill and the stage in order to eat and change my sweaty clothes. I found that this prevented me from trying so hard when acting. My muscles relaxed and even kind of exhausted, I was free from extraneous gestures. I used my body when I needed it and achieved a lot of economy of movement through this. We read an article last year from *The New Yorker* called “The Eureka Hunt” by Jonah Lehrer which explores what “Aha!” moments are. And it’s no wonder people get their best creative ideas in the shower or when running. It’s because we are relaxed. Caffeine is great for productivity, but not necessarily creativity. This was something I had in mind at the beginning to try. What happens if I wear myself out before rehearsal, when I have no choice but to just “be” on stage, when I’m too tired to “act”?

Through this ritual I did find the ease of Sheila. I also found the detail. I found her opinion from moment to moment. I found how she gets from point A to point B. I found her motivation. I found her relationships. I relieved myself of the responsibility to force anything or rush anything. My understanding would come, I trusted that it would. And sitting back being

easy, I found myself listening a lot. My brain wasn't ticking away, psyching myself up for my next line, going over and over how I was going to say it. I was relaxed and so I was free to respond.

I ran into a little problem with this pre-rehearsal workout routine. It's a problem I could have guessed would arise; I became boring. I was freeing myself too much of my responsibility for action. And so, to make things interesting towards the end of the rehearsal process, I started getting a latte. Here I found Sheila's rhythm. I found the rhythm of a young girl on the brink of everything with her heart sometimes going faster than her brain. She is full of so much emotion and does not exactly have the life experience to create a filter. She operates on whims. She flutters a bit. This makes the moments even more important when she sits back and listens. She almost learns to listen, take information in and process it on stage. This is her growing up. This is her becoming an adult.

Vocal Work

Vocal work was low on the list of priorities for me. I have put it at the forefront of so many other productions and processes, *The Women* and *Romeo and Juliet*, especially. I think I just trusted that I have the vocal tools that I need, and the end result would be where I wanted it to be. There was concern from Dr. Young that I was making her too contemporary, too wild even in vocal choices. I did not let this note faze me. I was conscious of the fact that I was giving Sheila ample playing room vocally. I knew I would rein it in and refine it when the time was right. Karl Wildman, the vocal teacher who gave us notes on a number of occasions, had concern about my volume, particularly when I was upstage on the platform. This concern was also not a

concern of mine. I know that I have a very powerful voice and would employ it when I was happy with the more detailed vocal choices that I was making. I was still playing with different motivations and therefore different delivery of lines and did not feel early on in the process that blowing the wall out with vocal power would aid me at all. If a moment invited me to speak softly, I wanted to explore what kind of emotions would inspire me and how that emotion would take me to the next one. Then I would use that information in character building. I knew and trusted that once in performance, the audience would hear every word that I said. I think the vocal component of the M.F.A. program has served me well.

We were not speaking in dialect or accent, but were instructed by Karl to hit our “t”s and “d”s. He told us to “wear the language like a fine garment.” I thought these notes were helpful and gave me something concrete to work with in my refinement of the language. However, we never really had a discussion with Dr. Young about what he wanted from the language. Karl had a very specific idea of how we should be sounding, an idea that was not exposed to us until after he had taken his first round of notes. He explained that he was trying to achieve a Transatlantic sound. Ultimately, like the overall style of the play, we all came to a sort of consensus by performance. It was a hybrid of American and British and of contemporary and early twentieth century dialects.

For the first time, I felt like I was using my own voice in a “stylistic” piece. This is a feat I do not feel like I accomplished before. I think it is largely due to the fact that I started in my own voice, just like I started in my own body. I did not start artificially putting something on. I did not start with what I thought I should sound like or move like. I know now that I am the only instrument that I have. I trusted that I am enough. I trusted that my body and voice has

encountered enough information not only through grad school, but through life to be able to mold accordingly. I am the base and the foundation for all that I am able to create.

Costumes

The dress that I wore for *An Inspector Calls* remains one of the most beautiful garments that I have ever worn. The early 1910s seemed an interesting time for fashion. The dresses were soft and draped over the body. There was an Oriental influence to the silhouettes. The dress for Sheila was built for me. I underwent some of the most intense measuring sessions I have ever experienced. It was made of a peachy colored satin which cinched in the middle with a satin belt with a teal seashell clasp. The sleeves were made of purple lace that draped half way down my arms in a kimono style.

The only issue I had with the dress was the corset I was required to wear with it. I am no stranger to corsets, as we used them a lot in our Period Styles class last year. During my first fitting, I put it on and experienced great discomfort. It made me a little dizzy and hurt my stomach. I expressed this concern and was reassured that I just needed time to get used to it. I requested a corset to use during rehearsal so that I could start accustoming myself to the feel. It would also greatly affect the way that I would move.

Each night I would arrive at rehearsal and look at the corset and come up with some reason why I would put off breaking it in until the next day. The memory of the painful fitting was enough to keep me constantly coming up with excuses. I never wore the rehearsal corset during rehearsal. Finally, my real corset arrived and I was allowed to use it. This one was much more forgiving, but still caused a bit of discomfort. It was definitely an adjustment. It was made

of spandex material that went from just below my bust to mid-thigh. There was boning from the bottom of the bust to my waist. More than anything it affected the way that I would sit and stand. I was used to the idea of perching from Period Styles class. I was taught well that you sit on furniture, not in it. My back would never touch the back of a chair. I was always on the edge to permit me to stand quickly if needed. I never crossed my legs, it would have been impossible. I would allow one of my feet to peek out from under my dress. My feet were often in various ballet positions when standing or sitting. The torso did not move much in sitting or standing, because it was restricted. It was really all about the knees in sitting, standing and moving smoothly.

My work in Alexander Technique helped me greatly through so much of the process, but especially with the corset. I thought of my alignment and my body as moving up and out. This allowed me to adjust my breathing in the corset.

Overcoming Habits

In the past, with roles like Mary Haines and Molly Ralston, I achieved the “style” of the piece by using an affected voice and extraneous gesturing. I punched words to give them emphasis and fell into vocal patterns that sounded like something one might hear in a black and white movie. I slapped my legs and clapped my hands to get my meaning across. What I did not realize at the time was that these were habits and the result of tension. I was not succeeding in playing my action, in playing my objective, or in getting what I wanted. I had a lack of understanding behind each of the choices that I was making. Most were ultimately arbitrary. I said the lines because they were on the page. I played the “mood” or “tone” of a scene and not

the “action” or “want”. And I wondered why it was not successful. I could not find ways to switch up my tactics or the ways that I was going about achieving my objective because it was not clearly articulated from the beginning. I was not changing what I was doing based on my scene partners; I was locked into choices I had made in rehearsal. I was taking the full responsibility for creativity and not relying on anyone else to influence it. I was not listening. I assumed that I had to come up with everything by myself or with my director. When onstage, I felt like I was the only one being watched. I felt personally responsible for the energy in each scene. I was not sharing.

Using the tools I acquired in graduate actor training, I was able to overcome these habits in my final creative process. I learned the value of coming to an understanding of “mood” or “tone” without playing at it. I have overcome a lot of my vocal and physical habits since my beginning days in the M.F.A. program, but I remain self-aware. I use my ability to re-navigate an objective by employing a different tactic to keep a scene active and alive, rather than vocally and physically punching and pushing. By using these tools, I am able to work to fill in the moment to moment work. The moments do not always, and did not in this particular process, fall into place in a linear fashion. Sometimes I must go back and fill in the blanks. However, I trust that I will find everything I need. I do not rush to achieve a final product, but relish in the gradual piecing together of a character. Most importantly, I do not hold myself personally responsible for everything that is happening on stage. I share. I will discuss this more in the following chapter on Performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERFORMANCE

In this final section, I will examine the performance run from opening night through closing.

I came to the bold realization that I do not need a structured warm up. I warm my body up all day. From the moment I wake up, I am aware that I am performing in the afternoon or evening. I behave accordingly. Maybe I do not cater to this idea, but it is ever present. I am ever conscious about the care and attention I give my body. My vocal warm up may then include singing in the shower or teaching my class. My physical warm up happens in Alexander Technique class or at the gym. It happens when I bike to and from campus. I am a performer and have a date with a performance, and so I am always warming up.

A strange thing happened to me the week of the show. I began to lose my appetite and feel myself getting sick. I have been worn out approaching a show's opening before but this felt a little bit different. I was achy, primarily from back pain. I finally reached a bit of a breaking point when getting dressed for the final dress. I had been feeling a bit under the weather, nauseous and achy, but it was something I felt I could soldier through. Then I put on my corset. As I began walking toward the stage, I began to feel progressively worse and worse. I felt an almost overwhelming nausea. My ribs were also in pain. It was then I made the decision to get rid of the corset. I didn't dare ask anyone's permission, because it is often better in these cases to ask for forgiveness rather than permission. So I slipped into a stall in the bathroom, took off my corset, put it in my locker, and returned to the warm up room. I asked my cast mates if my costume looked any different. They said it did not. I looked in a full scale mirror and looked the

same. And I figured the costumers were watching the run and if there was any glaring problem, they would spot it. But no one did. And I felt great. Suddenly I could breathe again. Breath, of course, is rather important for the actor. My nausea and my pain went away. And I still had the muscle memory of everything I had been doing for the past two weeks, so I was able to still move as if I was laced with the sort of constraint that a corset would provide. I understand why the corset was there. I understand the costumers have a vision, just as the actors do. And I often feel there is a sort of striving to be period appropriate. Granted, wearing the corset in the rehearsal process gave me a lot of information. But ultimately, I had to do what I felt was in my best interest. I had to make my health and safety a priority. And every night when I stashed the corset, I was reminded of the power I have as a performer and a person. I have the power to make choices. I have the power to act in self-interest. I have objectives and tactics and obstacles as a person and a character. And I have secrets.

I was blessed with a supportive cast. We were all listening mostly all the time and there to help. One cast member had difficulty in learning lines. The problem was steadily improving, but still constituted a mild concern on opening night and throughout the run. I experienced two hugely profound leaning moments during the run of this show. The first happened one night near the end of the play when a line was dropped. The line was actually not dropped by this actor, but it was his cue line. There was silence for maybe fifteen seconds, which feels like years in theatre time. He then stumbled around getting back on track, jumping a page or two in his cover up. I sat on the downstage center bench with my back to the audience observing. And as I watched his efforts, I had the clarity of mind (not cluttered with panic) to make the conscious choice to let him feel it out for a minute until I decided, no, I have to get us back on track. And I did. But it was not out of panic. My head was clear. It was a choice. And it came with the knowledge that

the audience would be okay after this bout of silence. All of us scrambling to cover would only make it worse and possibly more confusing and chaotic. And so my interjection, knowing exactly where I'd take us back to, came when I had the opportunity to do so. It was not a matter of saving my cast mate; I was fully aware that it was everyone on the line. The success of a performance does not depend just on me, but on everyone. I just knew it was not a life or death situation. And in those moments of silence, I felt complete ease. Pre-show jitters are built on the fear of dropping lines. I was tucked right in to a moment of awkward performance silence and I felt totally easy.

The second moment was probably worse for my cast mate than it was for me. Michelle Bellaver, who played my mother, had a fair share of costume issues. On opening night, the costumers inserted a metal wire into the back of the lace neck on her dress to keep it up. She soon realized, after never having rehearsed with this, that the wire would continually get stuck in her wig. Of course this threatened to compromise the wig situation.

During opening night and subsequent performances, she would have to reach up and free the wig from its entanglement with the wire. One night, though, this seemed to be especially problematic. During a particularly heated entrance, she reached up to free the wig, but it did not seem to work. Her hand still in the wig, she glanced back at me in alarm. I thought, "Oh no, her wig is going to come off. And the fight is coming up." She glanced back at me again, looking increasingly frightened. I felt terrible. She started to back up to me, looking for me to free her. She was reaching back with the other hand to free the buttons of her lace neck. Again, at least that is what it seemed like to me. I thought her hand was holding the wig up. And so, on stage, I started unbuttoning the buttons on the lace and freeing the hair from them. I did it in character. Later my students told me they thought it was a nice moment, helping my mother when she was

obviously overheating from the stress. I re-buttoned everything and patted her on the back to signal that it was all good. Still, her hand was in her wig.

Linden Taylor, playing my brother, advanced for the fight sequence. He was obviously aware that something was wrong. And so the fight went in slow motion, Michelle's hand still in her wig. She is thrown down on the sofa and the action is brought to a stop so that the Inspector may deliver his big speech, the moral of the story. And Michelle gets up and storms off stage. Now, she is not due to exit here, or for the rest of the play. Something must really be wrong. And we hear "Help! Help! I need help!" and what sounded like muffled sobs coming from backstage. We are all wondering: Are we stopping the show?

Andrew, the Inspector, proceeds with his speech at the slowest pace possible. I'm not sure anyone of us is listening at this point, but probably going over what happens next and game planning for the event that Michelle doesn't return. What lines can we cover? Andrew's speech has bought us about two minutes to plan. And then with a look of almost an apology for leaving us stranded, Andrew left the stage for good. And there was silence. It wasn't even Michelle's line, but Michael was so thrown I think that he stumbled over this line. I lived in the next few lines. I was very much alive and ready for anything. I was not sure how we were going to do it or if we were going to stop or who would even stop us, but I continued to do my part. I was aware once again that it was not only my responsibility. It was everyone's.

And then Michelle returned before her next line. It was incredible. And then it was business as usual. Well, maybe not entirely as usual, as everyone was a tad thrown. The wire on the dress had gone through Michelle's finger. One of the stage crew members had to pull it out and wrap it in gauze. There was blood on the lace. I'm so glad I did not see that on stage. I might

have fainted. When I asked my students the next day if they had seen anything odd, they responded, “Um...no...Oh! Except that guy who forgot his lines!”

These two moments are incredibly profound to me for the same reason; I learned that I know how to exist on stage. In other words, the person I am every day is the person I am onstage. In life and onstage, we learn to roll with the punches, to adapt to our present situation and, when necessary, to re-negotiate our practiced routine.

I do not point out these moments to illustrate other’s shortcomings or to congratulate myself on any kind of heroic behavior, but rather to point out how human we are onstage. Moments go awry. And though we are shown time and time again that we cannot always rely on anyone else or even ourselves, still, we must.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Acting will always be an experiment to me and an ongoing learning process. Each role asks that the actor take a journey and re-navigate what might even seem like worn territory. However, it is all new. A role asks that the actor once again search their techniques, ideas, and imagination to discover what may serve the world of the play and the character within that world.

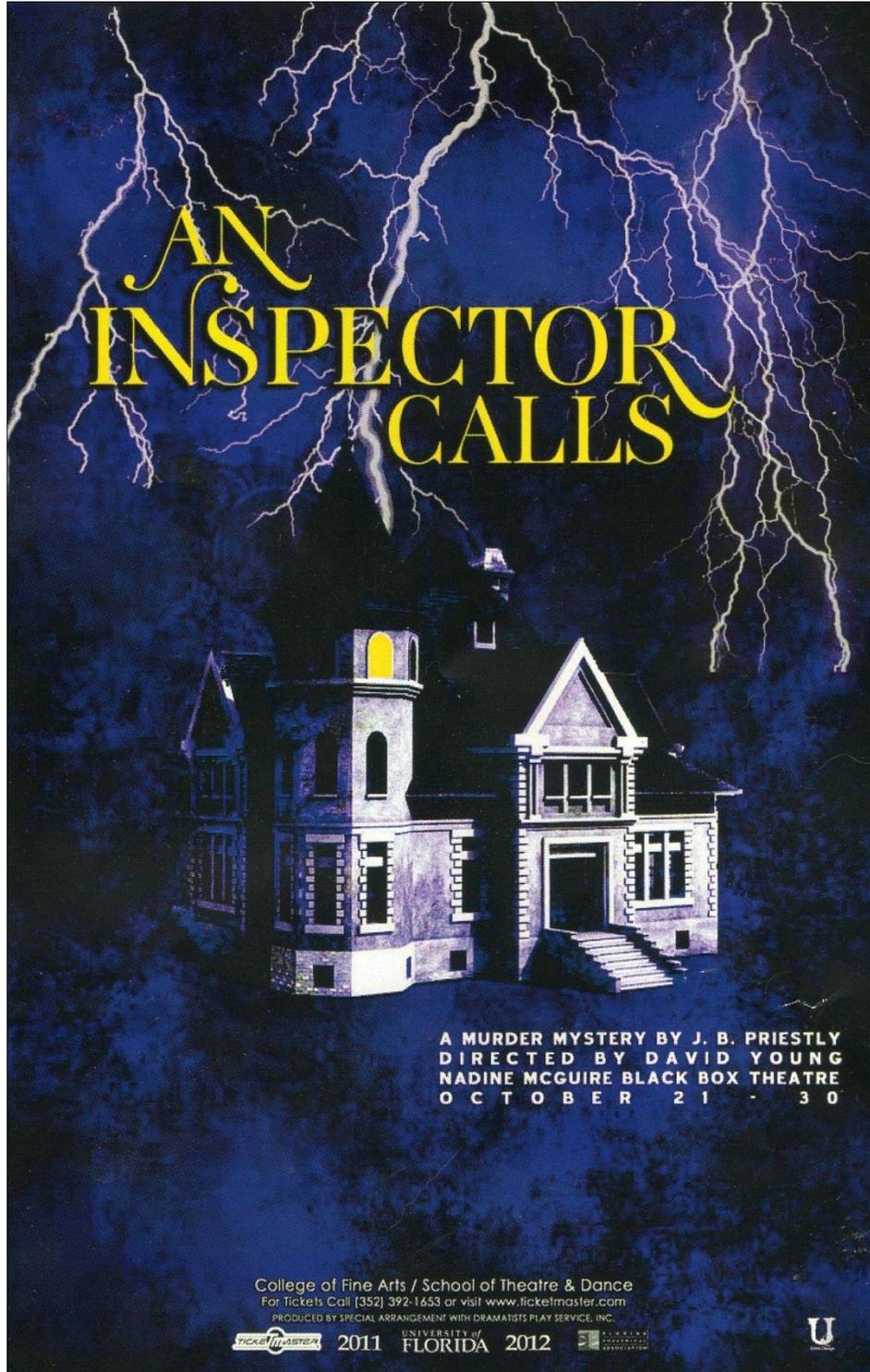
At the end of grad school, I may not be the best actor, but I am the best actor I can be at this moment. I am a smarter, more self-aware and more confident actor. I am a generous actor. I am kinder to myself and to others.

A role is a role. It need not be one's crowning achievement. That was an incredible lesson for me. I strive to do all that I can in a role at the time I am doing it. In hindsight, I may have other wishes, but that cannot be part of the rehearsal and performance progress. That is something for an acting journal to be employed in the future. Participating fully in a process, trying, making mistakes, making discoveries, failing and beginning again are all the things that make a wonderful creative process.

It is wonderful to have those who we trust to give constructive, honest and helpful feedback about our work. For this reason, again, it is productive to work with a director that we respect. In the end, we as actors must really learn to do it for ourselves. Self-criticism and analysis can be the actor's best tool, but they can often be the actor's downfall. I have learned, as I have demonstrated in this paper, how to take stock of my work in a way that is beneficial and constructive. There is no need to beat oneself up about work on stage, because of the fact that it

is a work in process. We are always refining and moving forward. Theatre is not fixed, it is a moving point and a moment in time. The actor must move with it, employing the tools that work and disposing of those that serve no purpose. That is what I have learned in graduate school.

Appendix A – Production Program



AN A MURDER MYSTERY BY
J.B. PRIESTLY
INSPECTOR
DIRECTED BY
David Young
CALLS

Lighting/Chandelier Design

Timothy Reed

Costume Design

Adriana Fernandez

Scenic Design

Tim Watson

Sound Design

Mike McShane

Properties Design

Ali Akbarian

Stage Manager

Tiffany McKenzie

Special Thanks

Paul Favini, Tim Altmeyer, Charlie Mitchell,
Mihai Ciupe, Stan Kaye, Lisa Davis, Zak Herring,
Tony Berry, Todd Bedell

Special Thanks for Coaching

Kathy Sarra and Karl Wildman

THERE WILL BE (1) TEN-MINUTE INTERMISSION

**PRODUCED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH
DRAMATIST PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

**The use of photography or video is strictly prohibited.
Cell phones and text messaging are not permitted.**

DRAMATIST PERSONAE

Arthur Birling	Michael Martinez-Hamilton
Sybil Birling	Michelle Bellaver
Sheila Birling	Jessamyn Fuller*
Eric Burling	Linden Taylor#
Gerald Croft	Paul Sabayrac
Inspector Goole	Andrew Bailes*
Edna	Rebecca Hamilton

** Denotes work in partial fulfillment of MFA Thesis Project
Appears courtesy of Actor's Equity Association*

PRODUCTION CREW

Assistant Stage Manager	Joselyn Oliva
Assistant Lighting Designer	Topher Stumreiter
Sound Board Operator	Terrance Jameson
Light Board Operator	Erin Connolley
Technical Director	Zak Herring
Master Carpenter	Tony Berry
Scenic Studio Assistants	Jovon Eberhardt, Molly Ilten, Anne Tully, Tim Watson, Jaime Frank
Costume Studio Manager	Lisa Davis
Asst. Costume Studio Manager	Kate Glennon
Costume Studio Assistants	Lee Martin, Tracy Floyd, Becky Strafford
Master Electrician	Todd Bedell
Light Shop Assistants	Timothy Reed, Mike McShane, B Lussier Topher Stumreiter
Director of Operations	Sarah White
Poster & Program Designer	Joseph Urick, Chase Milner
Stage Crew	Kevin Roost, Luisa Pedro, Robert Barkley, Candice Alvarrao, Katherine Arston-Kynn
Wardrobe Crew	Andrea Erkelens, Alexina Cyr, Pete King, Alexander Johnson, Athena Patterson-Orazem,
House Management	Students of THE 4950

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

An Inspector Calls has been a fascinating murder mystery since it opened in 1946. The play has 2 main themes: the family and the Inspector. By the time the play ends, the Inspector has transformed the family into a skeleton of its former self.

The play focuses on the problems that develop between people when they cut the heartfelt bonds of compassion and drift into a world of greed and fear. Ultimately the play calls for a return to a deeper sense of ourselves in relation to each other.

The play operates on the theory of six degrees of separation. That each of us is no more than six steps away from every other person on the earth. I can quote T.S. Eliot, the famous playwright / poet, "Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past". And by contrast, I will quote Yogi Berra who said, "The future ain't what it used to be".

The play itself is set in 1912 because the author, J.B. Priestley, loved that time period. The most famous production was a 1992 revival directed by the famous director, Stephen Daldry which ran in London almost continually for the next decade. It played at the Royal Theater on Broadway for an additional 454 performances where the play won several Tonys including Best Revival. The film version was released in 1954 starring Alastair Sim as the Inspector.

With Thanks to the Shaw Festival in Canada

MEET THE CAST

Andrew Balles (Inspector Goole) is a third-year MFA Acting candidate. Previous UF credits include *The Grapes of Wrath* (Pa Joad), *Noises Off* (Garry), *In the Blood* (Doctor), and *Streamers* (Billy). Having directed *BASH* for Florida Players last semester, he looks forward to directing *This is Our Youth* later this fall. He also directed and performed in *An Evening of Improv* this past summer. Prior to UF, Andrew was a Resident Actor and Teaching Artist at Florida Studio Theatre. He received his BA in English and Theatre Arts from Flagler College. Infinite love and thanks to Elle. This one is for the third-years.

Michelle Bellaver (Mrs. Birling) Recent: world premiere of *Olive Kitteridge* at ZSpace/Word for Word and West Coast premiere of Rajiv Joseph's *All This Intimacy* at Renegade Theatre Experiment. Los Angeles: *Circles* (NoHo Theatre Festival). San Francisco: *The Malpractice Heart* (Alcazar Theatre). Film: *The Selling* (SFIFF, SIFF) and *Final Remains*. SAG. EMC. AFTRA.

Jessamyn Fuller (Sheila Birling) is an MFA Acting candidate from Buffalo, NY. This is her third and final year in the program. Past UF Credits include: *Romeo and Juliet* (Lady Capulet); *A Melancholy Play* (Frances); *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Theresa); *Robots VS. Fake Robots* (War Propaganda); *The Mousetrap* (Molly Ralston); *Oedipus* (Greek Chorus); *The Women* (Mary Haines). Thanks to Dr. Young and the cast. Endless love to the MFA Class of 2012.

Rebecca Hamilton (Edna) a senior BA student, is proud to make her UF debut with *An Inspector Calls*. Thanks to my friends and family for their support (because they're awesome like that), and to Dr. Young for giving me this amazing opportunity. No power in the 'verse can stop me!

Michael Martinez-Hamilton (Mr. Birling) Previous roles include: Eddie in *Lost in Yonkers*, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing*, King Alonso in *The Tempest*, Dalton in *Equus*, and every role in the West Coast premiere of *Eat the Runt*.

Paul Sabayrac (Gerald Croft) considers himself incredibly fortunate to have a family that supports his pursuits both on the stage and the water. He would like to thank his parents, Bill and Laura, whose love can never be appreciated enough. Will, his brother, for keeping him strong. The cast and crew for their friendship and guidance. Lastly, Paul thanks Dr. Young for giving him the opportunity to end his career at UF with a much needed smile.

Linden Tailor (Eric Birling) is a 1st year MFA Acting candidate; Regional: *Eurydice* (Round House Theatre), *The Other Room* (The Kennedy Center), *A Christmas Carol* (Synetic Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (PA Shakespeare Festival), *Hip-Hop Anansi* (Imagination Stage), *If You Give a Cat a Cupcake* (Adventure Theatre), *Who Killed Captain Kirk?* (Capital Fringe Festival); Training: BFA Theatre Performance, Virginia Commonwealth University. Much love to God, my family and Nicholeta.

MEET THE CREW

Ali Akbarian (Properties Design) enjoys designing scenery and props for UF shows.

Adriana Fernandez (Costume Design). Adriana is BFA in the costume design program. Her past credits include Riverside Theatre Shakespeare Festival (Intern Stage Manager), *Floyd Collins* (Stage Manager), *GI Holiday Jukebox* (Costume Design) and *City of Angels* (Assistant Costume Design). Adriana would like to give a special thanks to her friends, family and mentors who have supported her throughout her time at the University of Florida and for the opportunity to work with such a talented design and production team. In the Spring, Adriana will be working with the Riverside Theatre in Iowa City in both stage management and costume design.

Tiffany McKenzie (Stage Manager) Tiffany would like to thank Dr. Young, her parents, friends (esp. Cariffany, Dani, Shaneka & Travis) and the cast & crew for making her life beautiful! Love you guys!

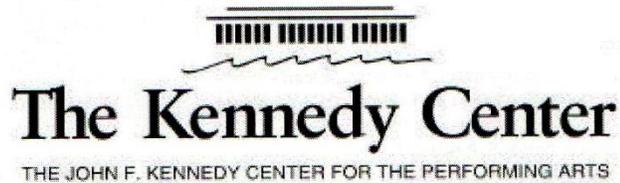
Mike McShane (Sound Design) is a third year MFA candidate in Lighting Design. His designs include: *Gem of the Ocean*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *The Elephant Man*, and *The Votive Pit*. His films *The Votive Pit* and *You are Not Frank Sinatra* have screened in film festivals internationally.

Joselyn Oliva (Assistant Stage Manager) is a first year BA theatre student. She has worked on over 30 productions in Miami and Boston, in both performance and technical theatre. Special thanks to her family and friends, the cast, Dr. Young, and Tiffany for making this a great experience.

Timothy Reed (Lighting/Chandelier Design) received his BA from Weber State University for Musical Theatre Performance and Design and is currently a second year MFA student in the Lighting Design area here at the University of Florida. He has designed lights over the past nine years in Maine, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, and California. Timothy spent this past summer as the Associate Artistic Director and resident lighting designer at The Arundel Barn Playhouse, and looks forward to a bright future.

Tim Watson (Scenic Design) is currently pursuing his MFA in Scenic Design.

Dr. David Young (Director) is currently, and for the past 18 years, a Graduate Research Professor in the School of Theatre and Dance at the University of Florida. He was, for 15 years, the Producing Director of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, a national education program whose network includes 450 colleges and universities. He has directed over 100 productions throughout the United States and internationally, including *Amadeus*, *Company*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Private Lives*, *Vincent in Brixton*, *Most Happy Fella*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Clean House*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, and *An Inspector Calls*. He is a Fellow of the American Theatre and has been Artistic Director for the Presidential Scholars in Washington D.C. His book *How to Direct a Musical*, is published by Routledge Books and available nationally and internationally. For many years, he was a professional stage and television actor in New York City. He has worked with such talents as Colleen Dewhurst, Richard Thomas, William Gibson, Anne Meara, Ming Cho Lee, and Marshall Mason. He toured in a production of *Love Letters* with Dr. Judith Williams to London and Winchester England, Edinburgh, Scotland, Moscow, Russia, the Salzburg Festival in Austria, and South Africa. Dr. Young was a consultant for the US Department of State and the Fund for Arts and Culture. While in Ekaterinburg, Russia in the Ural Mountains, he assisted in providing information for the rebuilding and development of many theatre companies.



The Kennedy Center

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival™

XLIII

The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education; Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation; The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; the Kennedy Center Corporate Fund; and the National Committee for the Performing Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturges, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2011.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.



2011

UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA 2012



You Can't Take It With You

written by moss hart & george s. kauffman
directed by charlie mitchell
constans theatre • september 23 - october 2

AN INSPECTOR CALLS

WRITTEN BY J. B. PRIESTLY
DIRECTED BY DAVID YOUNG
NADINE MCGUIRE BLACK BOX THEATRE
OCTOBER 21 - 30



CHICAGO

MUSIC BY JOHN KANDER • LYRICS BY FRED EBB
BOOK BY FRED EBB & BOB FOSSE
DIRECTED BY TONY MATA
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY ANTHONY OFFERLE
CHOREOGRAPHY BY ADAM DYER & JUDY SKINNER
CONSTANS THEATRE • NOVEMBER 11 - 20

A MUSICAL VAUDEVILLE

AGBEDIDI 2011

DIRECTED BY MOHAMED DACOSTA
CONSTANS THEATRE • DECEMBER 2 - 4



written by bernard-marie koltés / translated by martin crimp
directed by ralf remshardt

ROBERTO ZUCCO

nadine mcguire black box theatre
january 27 - february 12

SPRING DANCE SHOWCASE 2012

CONSTANS THEATRE
FEBRUARY 17 - 26



SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER



WRITTEN BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH
DIRECTED BY JUDITH WILLIAMS
CONSTANS THEATRE • MARCH 30 - APRIL 7



Sheila Birling (Jessamyn Fuller)

An Inspector Calls

October 21-30, 2011

University of Florida

Nadine McGuire Black Box



Left to Right: Eric Birling (Linden Taylor), Sybil Birling (Michelle Bellaver), Sheila Birling (Jessamyn Fuller), Gerald Croft (Paul Sabayrac), Arthur Birling (Michael Martinez-Hamilton)



Inspector Goole (Andrew Bailes) and Sheila Birling (Jessamyn Fuller)



Sheila Birling (Jessamyn Fuller) and Sybil Birling (Michelle Bellaver)



Left to Right: Paul Sabayrac, Linden Taylor, Jessamyn Fuller, Rebecca Hamilton, Andrew Bailes, Michael Martinez-Hamilton and Michelle Bellaver

Appendix C – Criticism

November 18, 2011

“When a character took center stage--even though it was not literally center stage it never felt to be a forced move. The shift of power from one character to another would suddenly present the character of power in a position of focus upon the stage.

Simply stated, everything and everyone was in the perfect place where they needed to be personally, naturally when they spoke or were silently listening intently. How marvelous to find actors truly listening to each other on stage...

Jessamyn Fuller leads this ensemble with the grace and charm she instills into Sheila Birling. Through Sheila, Fuller delivers a complete emotional range from her joyous delight upon becoming engaged, through her genuine despair over Eva's plight and her own shameful involvement, to the anger and disgust at her family's bourgeois blinded world view. Sheila went through the most life-altering change of all the characters and Jessamyn's full presence of being took me with her.”

Rae Randall
Kennedy Center Theatre Festival Respondent

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Biographical Sketch

Jessamyn Fuller is originally from Buffalo, NY. She completed her undergraduate work at American University in Washington, D.C., earning a B.A. in Political Science with a Minor in Performing Arts: Theatre. Some favorite roles at American University include Young Woman in Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*; Alice in Patrick Marber's *Closer*; and Mary in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*.

While completing her Master of Fine Arts in Acting at the University of Florida, Jessamyn performed Mary Haines in Clare Booth Luce's *The Women*; Molly Ralston in Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*; Lady Capulet in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; Frances in Sarah Ruhl's *A Melancholy Play*; and Greek Chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. She also had the opportunity to teach a number of courses to undergraduate students at UF, including: Theatre Appreciation, Oral Interpretation, Acting for Non-Majors, and Acting I.

After her thesis semester, Jessamyn moved to Chicago, IL where she completed her internship requirement as a Casting Intern for The Steppenwolf Theatre Company.