PERFORMING THE ROLE OF MICHAUD IN THE PLAY
THE DIVINE: A PLAY FOR SARAH BERNHARDT
BY MICHEL MARC BOUCHARD
TRANSLATED BY LINDA GABORIAU

By
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A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF
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Dedication

In loving memory:

Anton E. Lesh Jr.
&
Geraldine P. Schubert

Two individuals who, much like Sarah Bernhardt, were enamored by the absolute truth and beauty of life.

“Life begets life. Energy creates energy. It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich.”

- Sarah Bernhardt

“Failure is unimportant. It takes real courage to make a fool of yourself.”

- Charlie Chaplin
Acknowledgments

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Chair: Michael Pinkney
Major: Theatre

The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt was written by Michel Marc Bouchard and made 
its world Premiere at the George Bernard Shaw Festival in 2015. My project in lieu of thesis was 
performing the role of Michaud under the direction of Dr. David Young. Performances ran from 

This document is a thorough analysis of my work during this project and is divided into 
four sections: 1) Textual analysis of the play including a plot summary, information on the 
playwright, context, and a discussion of the production’s style; 2) The Acting process as seen 
through standard practice, technical, and dress rehearsals; 3) My performance for What is the 
Good Life, a required general education course for UF students, and public showings; 4) A 
Conclusion summarizing the discoveries and transformations I made as a creative artist.
Introduction

Prior to reading *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* I had no familiarity with the script other than having extensive knowledge on the famous actress. As I sat in an outdoor café, sipping on a beer while reading the script, I slowly found myself becoming immersed into the world of Bouchard’s language. His comments on the juxtaposition between heightened drama and the gritty realism of the starving world left me speechless. In no time I was a blubbering mess, shedding tears as I flipped through the pages of the script, having grown attached to the characters and their circumstances. The connection between the hypocritical Catholic Church, the ungodly working conditions of the industrial world, and the flamboyant acting style of 1905 ignited a fire within me. I could not help but notice the uncanny parallel between Bouchard’s play and the current backwardness of art and politics in modern day North America. This inspiration drove me to one conclusion: I had to be a part of this play. I wanted to be part of a project that promoted healthy rebellion in a world of corruption and greed; I wanted to spread the message that each individual has the power to become a source of light in the most dark and desperate of times. *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* could be the catalyst in achieving these goals. Without hesitation I approached Dr. David Young, since I knew he would be directing the play, and I expressed my deepest interest in becoming a part of his project. To my surprise he cast me in the role of Michaud and my work immediately began.
Textual Analysis

Plot Summary -

*The Divine* is a story surrounding the life of Michaud, a young Catholic seminarian who, in spite of his strict religion, is obsessed with Sarah Bernhardt. The action of the play takes place in four different locales: a dormitory in the Grand Seminario de Quebec, a shoe factory, Sarah Bernhardt’s dressing room, and the set of the play *Adrienne Lecouvreur* by Edmund Rostand, at the Atelier Theatre in Quebec, Canada. Each scene is titled with an appropriate name as indicated throughout the summary.

The beginning of the play opens with “The Dormitory” scene. Michaud starts the dramatic action by looking out a window with a pair of binoculars; he attempts to see Sarah Bernhardt exiting her railway car at the train station. Shortly after this setting has been established, Talbot and his mother Mrs. Talbot enter. She rejoices that her son will start his training as a Seminarian despite their low financial standing. After establishing the Seminary’s ground rules through a series of curt introductions, Michaud changes the subject and expresses his obsession for Sarah Bernhardt. He explains to the Talbots that Sarah is a renowned actress known for her flamboyant acting style (which he appropriately demonstrates) and dramatic tenacity. The following evening she is to perform the story of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and the group anticipates that her performance will spark controversy because of the plays suggestive material. Leo, Talbot’s kid brother, enters the scene in a huff. He describes the poor conditions of the factory that he works in, but wishes Talbot well during his future endeavors. With much gratitude, Talbot presents his family with an expensive set of silverware as a parting gift. Leo scolds his older brother and explains that Talbot stole the silverware during a physical altercation he had with a priest. Mrs. Talbot and Leo exit in duress while Michaud interrogates Talbot,
asking him various questions regarding the circumstances of the silverware. In a rage of fury 
Talbot chokes Michaud and warns him to mind his own business. Brother Casgrain, an 
established priest in the Grand Seminary, enters just in time to end the fight between the young 
men. Casgrain charges both of them with the imperious task of serving at the archbishop’s mass. 
Not only that, but he orders Michaud to deliver a letter to Sarah Bernhardt in person, forbidding 
er her to perform per the request of the archbishop. Barely able to contain his excitement of 
meeting Sarah Bernhardt, Michaud exits to prepare for the Archbishop’s mass. Casgrain and 
Talbot are left alone on stage and their following conversation is deliberately coy. Casgrain urges 
Talbot to remain quiet about the truth of what actually happened during his altercation with the 
priest from his previous institution. If Talbot remains quiet about the true events, Casgrain will 
ensure a beautiful future for both Talbot and his entire family. They exit and Michaud sneaks 
back onstage without their notice. He intends to write a play about poverty and chooses Talbot to 
be the inspiration for the lead character. Michaud rehearses how he will greet Sarah Bernhardt as 
the lights fade.

“The Factory” scene follows with Talbot visiting his family. He is followed by Michaud, 
who explains that he is doing research for his play on poverty. In order to accurately write about 
the life of the poor Michaud needs to feel what it is like in such an environment. With minor 
reluctance Mrs. Talbot answers the questions of the ignorant Michaud. Talbot interrupts their 
conversation and explains his future plans to his mother; after establishing himself as a priest, 
Talbot will open his own business and collect extra money on the side. Worried that her son will 
become distracted during his studies, Mrs. Talbot slaps him in utter confusion. She exits in 
embarrassment as Michaud unsuccessfully tries to comfort Talbot. Both men exit. Their next 
stop is the Atelier Theatre to see Sarah Bernhardt.
The next scene, titled “A Play for Sarah,” starts with the Divine Sarah Bernhardt herself, commenting on the ridiculous nature of Quebec’s residents. In a hurried frenzy, Madeline, a young actress in Bernhardt’s troupe, and Meyer, the troupe’s business manager, both appease the dramatic demands of their leading lady. After many unsuccessful attempts Madeline steps outside to get some air while Meyer consoles Bernhardt, who admits that she is feeling uninspired artistically and “doesn’t feel wanted anymore” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 55). During her flamboyant response, Meyer reveals that a manufacturer from a local shoe factory has sent a pair of beautiful boots as a gift. Meyer insists that Bernhardt write him a thank you note despite her temperament. While he exits, Michaud nervously enters followed by Talbot. Michaud expresses his sincere devotion to “the Divine Sarah” while Talbot reminds the party that the Archbishop forbids her to perform in Québec City. Talbot exits while Michaud and Bernhardt participate in an interesting discussion surrounding the current style of theatre being presented on the modern stage. With much determination Michaud states that he is going to write a play about poverty. Bernhardt matches his enthusiasm and expresses that she will play the leading male role in his play. However, she indicates that Michaud has only three days to finish writing the play before she leaves town. Meyer abruptly enters shouting that a pack of journalists have arrived to ask questions in regard to the archbishop’s request. Michaud hides while the reporters stampede into the dressing room. They are met with Sarah Bernhardt’s usual flamboyant manner, declaring that she will answer the archbishop on stage after the performance. After Meyer rushes the journalists out, Michaud emerges from his hiding place to be met with Bernhardt’s reiteration: he has only three days to finish his play.

Act II begins with the “Sandalwood” scene, and we find Madeline outside of the theatre. She stumbles upon Talbot who is anxiously waiting for Michaud to finish his meeting with Sarah
Bernhardt. During a few awkward exchanges, Madeline attempts to seduce Talbot and she succeeds. While the newly formed couple becomes intimate, Michaud enters in excitement. He desperately tries to catch the attention of Talbot, stating they only have three days to finish his play and that, “Sarah wants to play your life” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 77). Talbot shows his disinterest by ignoring Michaud. Instead of cooperating, Talbot takes Madeline to the opium den and a gambling house. Michaud is left alone as the lovers exit.

The next scene, titled “Piece by Piece,” begins with Bernhardt dressed as Talbot. As she walks through the audience she recites a section of text from Michaud’s play. Michaud enters scribbling in his notebook. We learn that this appearance of Bernhardt is actually a manifestation of Michaud’s mind as he fantasizes what her performance would be like. While he continues to write, Brother Casgrain enters and berates Michaud for his wild and overactive imagination. He confesses that he has an undying love for Michaud that extends towards romantic desire. Michaud is in utter disbelief due to their station of being priests and seminarians. Finding himself in a vulnerable state, Casgrain quickly changes the subject and prods Michaud into telling him where Talbot has gone. Being the true friend that he is, Michaud refuses to reveal the whereabouts of Talbot. Casgrain threatens Michaud and is saved by the entrance of Talbot. With no shame, Talbot reveals that he had sexual relations with Madeline while they were at the opium den. He then dives into a descriptive narrative about how he was sexual abused by a priest over the span of five years. We learn that this was the subject of Casgrain and Talbot’s deliberately vague conversation surrounding the fight Talbot had with the priest from his previous institution. Casgrain again threatens the downfall of Talbot’s family if he testifies against the church, and quickly exits. Michaud and Talbot are left alone onstage. In ritualistic fashion, the boys prepare for bed and attend to their usual evening prayers. Talbot states that the
abusive priest actually stole the silverware from the church and intended to give it to Talbot’s mother as a gift. The priest stated that Talbot had to earn back this present “piece by piece” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 89). Michaud’s innocence is now shattered. However, Michaud attempts to console Talbot only to be met with resistance. Talbot informs Michaud that they will never be friends. Both of them lie in their respective beds as Bernhardt reenters. Bernhardt, as a figment of Michaud’s imagination, continues to recite more of Michaud’s play. They begin to fall asleep as the lights fade.

The “Just One Page” scene begins the following day in Sarah Bernhardt’s dressing room. Michaud comes in and is met by the strict demands of his beloved actresses: Bernhardt orders him to reveal how much of the play he has finished. With much reluctance he reveals that he has completed only one page. The Divine is outraged with the little amount of progress that he has made. However, Michaud expresses that he has lost faith in the world and that his innocence has been shattered by unspeakable deeds. After briefly consoling him, Bernhardt reads a section of text from Michaud’s play: “He casts his shadow over me. I’ve never felt so small. His hands, his lips burn my body” (Bouchard 99). Bernhardt is surprised by the realistic nature of the lead’s circumstances. Through a long stretch of feuds, Michaud and Bernhardt argue about the conditions of life. He describes his inability to handle the harsh reality of the world while Bernhardt urges him on to rebel and show audiences the truth of their modern day. After their riotous exchange, Michaud admits that he went to an infirmary to visit the priest that abused Talbot in order to find inspiration. Bernhardt congratulates him on his bravery, but is met by another flock of noisy journalists who wish to interview her. With much determination Bernhardt comments on the artistic and political backwardness of the country. The reporters leave in
disbelief while Michaud remains speechless. She informs them that they will go to the factory to find more information in creating Michaud’s play.

The set changes to the shoe factory and “The Trap Door” scene begins. The Boss begins by rehearsing the women in an organized chant they will recite upon the arrival of “la Bernhardt.” Remembering that child labor is strictly prohibited, The Boss orders Leo to hide in the trap door before anyone sees him. Fearing for his life, Leo slowly walks down the trap door, reminding the workers to let him out if he knocks. Brother Casgrain enters requesting to see Leo Talbot, saying that Leo will be enrolled at the Seminary. The Boss refutes his demands only to be met with the arrival of Bernhardt, Madeline, Meyer, and Michaud. During their tour of the factory, Bernhardt learns of the death of Emma Francuer’s nieces and the fate of numerous children who also died in their harsh working conditions. Casgrain finally demands to see Leo Talbot and promises his mother that he will be enrolled as a student in the Grand Seminary at no cost. Emma, a seamstress at the shoe factory, quickly opens the trap door and much to their horror the ensemble discovers that Leo Talbot is dead.

The next scene titled “Three Choices,” begins with Talbot laying flat on the ground giving his vow of obedience towards the church. Michaud enters in street clothing and asks if he can help Talbot in regards to Leo’s funeral arrangements. Talbot refuses his help and prepares for his ordainment. In complete shock Michaud questions Talbot’s need to become a priest despite his history of sexual abuse. The boys continue to argue and are interrupted by Casgrain, saying that a visitor has come to see Talbot. Mrs. Talbot enters and describes her pain in relation to Leo’s death. She continues by scolding Talbot, stating that if he never stole the silverware this would have never happened. Talbot confesses to stealing the silverware even though Michaud knows the truth. Casgrain states that he will cover the finances of Leo’s funeral and Mrs. Talbot
exits. Michaud quickly reveals a letter. It is, in fact, a confession from the priest who abused Talbot. Michaud then states the outcome of these events can happen in three ways: Talbot can deliver the letter to the police and bring justice to the church, he can give the letter to his mother so she can finally know the truth, or he can destroy the letter and keep his secret forever. With little hesitation Talbot tears up the letter and exits. Casgrain and Michaud are now left alone on stage. Michaud states that he will wear his clerical clothing one last time, tonight during Sarah’s production of Adrienne Lecouvreur. Before he can leave Casgrain launches into a full winded monologue forbidding Michaud to perform and states that Michaud will be excommunicated from the church. Instead of wanting to rebel, Casgrain suggests that Michaud should submit to Casgrain. Michaud rejects his proposal and reveals that the letter he gave to Talbot was a copy. Michaud reveals that he knows Casgrain was abused as a child due to the priest’s confession. The original letter was sent to the police. Justice will be served.

“The Epilogue” takes place on the set of Adrienne Lecouvreur at the Atelier theatre. Madeline and Sarah act the final scene and much to the audience’s surprise Michaud comes on stage playing the role of a priest. Bernhardt launches into an unscripted monologue, stating the importance of art and rebellion. The actors take their final bows while Michaud describes the play’s resolution. Despite her standing ovation, the city’s population gathers outside of the theatre and attempt to harm Bernhardt and her troupe. As a result, she and her troupe leave immediately before Michaud has a chance to give her the finished play. Talbot enters and as a parting gift Michaud offers him the finished script. They both lock in a final embrace; the boys have finally become friends. As Michaud exits, Sarah Bernhardt enters in Talbot’s clothing. Together they recite a monologue from Michaud’s play as the lights slowly fade.
The Playwright -

Michel Marc Bouchard is a Canadian playwright, dramaturge, director, and actor. He is a graduate of the Université d’Ottawa and received his degree in Theatre Studies. Since receiving his education, Bouchard has taken the theatrical circuit of Canada by storm. His most major success took place in 1988 when his play *Les Fluettes* was translated to *Lillies*. The same play would win the Floyd S. Chlamers Award for Best Canadian Play in 1991. Since winning this award critics have proclaimed *Lillies* as one of the most revolutionary dramatic works on the Canadian stage; Bouchard’s name has been immortalized in the world of theatre due to this grand achievement. Now the author of more than twenty plays, his works have continued to inspire North American audiences. His writing generally focuses on themes concerning homosexuality and how it is viewed through the narrow lens of religious leaders in Canada. *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* comes as no exception with this familiar theme. Bouchard’s sense of dramatic realism and blunt authenticity continues to inspire those who watch his plays (“Michel Marc Bouchard,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*).

Bouchard’s work has received numerous awards of excellence and prestige. He was the recipient of the Order of Canada in 2005, and in 2012 he was awarded the National Order of Quebec for recognizing the city’s culture across the globe. Other awards include the Governor General’s Performing Arts Award, the Dora Moore Award, the Prix du Cercle des critiques de l’Outaouais, and the le Prix Litteraire du Journal de Montreal. Since producing the majority of his plays, Bouchard’s visionary work has been translated into nine different languages. The English translation of *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* was made possible due to his collaboration with translator Linda Gaboriau (Bouchard and Gaboriau 145).
Since producing *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* at the George Bernard Shaw Festival, Bouchard received a significant amount of complimentary press. *The Globe and Mail* wrote:

“Michel Marc Bouchard, one of the country’s finest playwrights, was specially commissioned to write a play in that style for the Shaw company and its audiences – and he’s come up with a wonderful wrestling match between art, religion and business set in 1910 Quebec City, but full of relevance to 2015 Canada… through clever structuring, Bouchard draws attention to the hypocrisy of an audience paying sharp attention to a theatrical debate over the fictionalized abuse of children in Canada’s past by church or business, while largely uncurious about who in foreign countries is making the shoes they are wearing – or the smartphones they turned off before the show began – “*La Divine Illusion* – The Divine).

With no surprise Bouchard was also complimented on his ability to delight audiences with his incredible sense of realism. *Shalow Life* stated:

“Bouchard has captured and reveals our moral dilemma in what appears to be a single event, a specific time and place. He exposes the infected entrails of a powerful goliath who has enchanted and blinded us. Like the Divine, Sarah Bernhardt, we want and need to believe that our choices matter and change is possible, and for some that is true. But for most, the choices are not even visible anymore, hidden behind a veil of manipulation, secrecy, and lies….” *La Divine Illusion* – The Divine).

While *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* may not be Bouchard’s most recognized work, the play certainly holds plenty of relevance toward a myriad of themes addressed in
today’s theatre. Much like a Shakespearean drama, his play focuses on the human condition and how it is reflected through the harsh realities of our time.

**Style & Genre -**

Bouchard’s writing style in *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* creates a delightful distinction between the harsh reality of the working class and grandiose acting styles of 1905. His story can also be viewed as a commentary on social injustice, which is exemplified through the hypocritical members of the clergy and social backwardness of political leaders. The play is deeply rooted in Realism, suggesting that the action features a nuanced subtly in many of the characters. One of the primary characteristics of the Realism genre can be described in the following way:

“…the nature of Realism’s focus upon life tended to make it a more closed form than the wider, more metaphysical sweep of tragedy and Romantic drama. With its focus on the average human individual (what used to be called the common man), the social structure of the plays tended to be private and familiar rather than public and universal. Relationships operated within the concerns of the family unit rather than within palace halls or atop Mount Olympus” (Harrop and Epstein 171).

The above mentioned characteristics of Realism are evident in Bouchard’s script. Talbot and his mother are the exemplar of the “common man,” dealing with the struggles of their environment and being products of poverty. While Michaud can be categorized on the opposite spectrum as a wealthy seminarian, his language is realistic as representative of his class peppered
with realistic pauses and hesitations written into his speeches. An example can be seen towards the end of the play’s text when Michaud confronts Casgrain because of his indiscretions,

“Who was it? The person you knew who had my insolence? And who was curious? (silence). He was imaginative. He believed in justice. (beat) That person was you, wasn’t it? (beat) Your name is on the list. The first name on his list. (beat) He said he abused you for three years. I’m sorry” (Bouchard and Gaoriau 136-137).

The breaks in his speech pattern, primarily seen in the use of pauses and even the use of silence, suggest a vocal variety that is a common trait in Realism (Harrop and Epstein).

While the play deals with the working class members of society, we do get a flavor of heightened acting styles. After all, Sarah Bernhardt is considered to be “Divine” in presence and demeanor. Wax cylinder recordings of her voice in performance of La Samaritime showcase a vocal quality with intense projection and wavering vibrato ((Rare!) Sarah Bernhardt – Excerpts from ‘La Samaritaine (1903)). Critiques on her performances show a similar trend in regards to her flamboyant characterizations, “Her entrances, especially before a new audience, betrayed a tiny figure with a disappointingly thin voice. However, flower-like she would unfold as the play progressed, the gestures becoming ever more expansive and the voice swelling to grand crescendos that made her justly famous” (Emboden 105). It is important to take note of this heightened style since several of the characters engage in this behavior. Michaud, Talbot, Madeline, and Sarah at some point or another portray this declamatory style.

In order to judicially classify Bouchard’s text to a particular genre, one must take into consideration the two styles as described above. Yes, it is a piece of Realism commenting on
social injustice, but it is also a play that requires actors to portray a specific acting style from the late 1880s. It is a period piece with a foundation of Realism.

**Context –**

When describing the importance of context in relation to *The Divine*, I can only relate a personal experience that held deep resonance with not only myself but other members of the cast as well. Our first read-through took place on November 7th, 2016. During our investigation of the text, I pointed out a passage included in the preface of Bouchard’s play:

> “Today, lacking in culture and curiosity, most of our elite produce joylessness and bland comfort. Servants of anonymous shareholder’s they sabotage hope. Anger and vulgarity dominate our culture as people become deaf to messages of change and idealism, and art gradually abandons the sublime for acceptable… Are we entering a new dark age? Despite my propensity to see everything that is wrong in the world, I still manage to see, every day, examples of social solidarity or human compassion… Yes, I still manage to see blazes of light, and these moments of hope are divine and motivate me to carry on (Gaboriau and Bouchard ix-x).

The cast could not help notice the parallels between our playwright’s message and the Clinton vs. Trump presidential campaign which was nearing their conclusion during our rehearsal process. Election Day was only twenty-four hours away from our first rehearsal and the entire creative team was anxious to say the least. November 8th, Election Day rolled around and our entire rehearsal process had changed. Upon returning to rehearsal the entire energy and tenor of the room had changed. The actors sifted through the script during a second read-through and the power of Bouchard’s language resonated with us even more; the delivery of Sarah Bernhardt’s monologue during the “Just One Page” scene had me in tears:
“Since I arrived here, I have met members of your elite, your prominent citizens, your politicians. And I have had the occasion to observe that… this country is retarded… History has left you behind. You submit to the yoke of the clergy who dictate your actions, your thoughts, and your words. They are responsible for the lack of progress that characterizes the most backward of countries. Don’t you wonder why you have no real painters, no sculptors, no writers, no real poets?! You don’t dare act. You don’t dare rebel. It will take decades, centuries, to repair the damage done to your country, men who don’t take a stand. You are a country without men (Gaboriau and Bouchard 107).

It was ingenious, almost comical that a statement written in this play that represented activities from 1905 so closely parallels the current climate of the United States. This is not a political campaign on my part, but an observation indicating that our country was in the process of creating a society that wanted to rebel. As we continued forward with rehearsal, I could not help but find significance in a statement made by revolutionary theatre artist Anne Bogart who wrote in her book And Then, You Act, “Art re-imagines time and space, and its success can be measured by the extent to which an audience can not only access the world but becomes engaged to the point where they understand something about themselves that they did not know before” (Bogart 12). This was our charge. It was our job as artists to hold the mirror up to nature. We needed to inform the audience that it is okay to rebel; it is okay to stand up to injustice.
The Process

Scene Study & Acting Approach –

My initial approach in discovering characterization for the role of Michaud was to honor the text. Before committing myself to memorization, it was important to classify what the character’s purpose was in regard to the structure of the story. Bouchard’s writing is heavily tied to a variety of classical themes as seen in heightened language; most noted is how each character personifies a theme or a motif to engage the audience. After reading the script several times I came to the conclusion that Michaud represented the disillusion of innocence and that it is corrupted after witnessing the realities of the world. In terms of logistics, Michaud provides a fair amount of exposition in describing Sarah Bernhardt and her acting style. Not only that, but Michaud relates multiple literary sources to the audience. These texts include sections from Edmund Rostand’s *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and *L’Aiglon*, as well as biblical scripture, and portions of Michaud’s own play.

The first step in honoring the language of Michaud was to highlight all punctuation marks. By doing this I could visually ingrain particular moments of telling the story. For example, each comma suggested a moment where I could breathe when speaking the text; a period allowed me to complete a thought so the audience could register what the playwright wanted to communicate; when honoring a question mark I used upward inflection in my voice so my co-actor knew I was interrogating him. By honoring each mark my sense of the character’s urgency became more apparent. In “The Dormitory” scene Michaud shares a story of when he first saw Sarah Bernhardt perform. My first attempt at this monologue went horribly awry as I sped through the language. After taking mental notes of the punctuation I became more comfortable with the speech. The commas allowed me to breath and enabled me to color
particular phrases which made Michaud’s text more dynamic. I was no longer out of breath, but rather I was in control of Bouchard’s language.

After utilizing punctuation to my advantage, the next step was to honor the blocking that was provided within the dialogue of the play. This is not to be confused with stage directions taken from a previous production. Instead I made it my task to carefully review the lines of not only my character, but other characters so it could inform my physical action playing Michaud. One of the most common mistakes I made during the rehearsal process was not honoring the action of the language. In the “One Page” scene, Sarah Bernhardt requests that I sit down. To my embarrassment I had already made the choice to sit before she made this statement, which was a clear indication that I was not paying attention to the needs of the script. My mistake reminded me of a passage in Wesley Van Tassel’s *Clues to Acting Shakespeare*: “What is the language doing and what is the action implied?” (Van Tassel 5). By honoring the physical needs of the story I started to become a better listener, so much that it lead to a disagreement with my director. During “The Dormitory” scene Michaud makes several remarks on how seminarians are not allowed to sit on the beds, almost to the point of painstaking nausea. The director requested one rehearsal that I sit on my bed to solidify a stage picture he was trying to make. I quickly retorted, “…the text suggests that we are not allowed to do that. Michaud can’t since he’s made such a big deal of it. It depletes the power of when he asks Mrs. Talbot to sit on the bed after her son has died.” He met me with reluctance, “Oh you Stanislavski actors! You always have to over think.” My job was to honor the language of the play but at the same time I needed to respect my director’s wishes. I eventually acquiesced to what he wanted.

Creating the character’s essential action was the next step in my approach towards bringing Michaud to life. We were at the point of rehearsal where the cast was just doing endless
run-throughs of the show. No scene work was scheduled (despite our request) and the crafting of intricate moments was overshadowed by the director’s need to quantify the process. It felt as if I was sprinting in circles with no clear intentions as to what my character wanted to accomplish for the duration of the play. I decided to create a unique action for each scene that kept me engaged throughout the tedium of our rehearsal process. The importance of a strong essential action is outlined in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*; “By getting to the essential action of what the character is doing, the actor has stripped away the emotional connotations that might be suggested by the given circumstances of the play” (Bruder 21). Instead of playing toward an emotion my character became immersed in trying to achieve a goal that was obtainable in the immediate situation. During the scene “Piece by Piece,” Talbot relates his history of sexual abuse to Michaud. Initially I approached the scene by “acting sad” and trying to show condolence for my fellow actor. In time this would fall flat and create no spark of interest in what Michaud wanted from Talbot. After investigating the language I came to the conclusion that Michaud was “trying to win an ally.” By expressing my immediate need to become Talbot’s friend, the stakes rose and ultimately created a greater conflict for both characters. Toward the end of the scene Talbot rejects Michaud’s proposed friendship, and for the first time I felt tears streaming down my face when keeping this essential action in mind. All I wanted to do was to win his trust and his rejection felt like an act of ultimate betrayal. I no longer felt like I was forcing a pre-supposed condition. Rather, I was living in the essential action which allowed me to become immersed in the given circumstances of the play.

While I had solidified a playable action for each scene, my need to “play an emotion” had not completely dissolved during the rehearsal process. The need to emote clouded my character’s objectives and was starting to create a disconnection between myself and co-actors. One example
of this was during “A Play for Sarah,” when Michaud meets The Divine face to face for the first time. My immediate approach was to show everyone that I was so flabbergasted by the presence of my greatest idol. This led to arbitrary choices such as sitting up and down multiple times and making fidgety movements with my hands, indicating that I could barely contain my excitement. The director barked at me, “Stop acting. You don’t need to show me that you are in shock. Complete your objective and I’ll believe you.” I took a moment to collect myself. He was absolutely right; what I was doing was superfluous and did not serve the play by any means. His statement lead me back to a section from David Mamet’s True and False:

“Let’s learn this lesson: it is not the actor’s job to portray… The work of characterization has or has not been done by the author. It’s not your job, and it’s not your look-out. You don’t have to portray the hero or the villain. That’s been done for you by the script” (Mamet 144).

I then had to remind myself of the character’s essential action. Michaud was trying to “sell an idea” to Sarah. By proving that I was her most adoring fan through my extensive knowledge of her plays and reviews, Michaud could convince Sarah to take on his play as her new project. We did the scene again and to no avail it became more dynamic. The stakes were higher and the ultimate need of her approval charged our relationship with specific intent.

Now that the frame work of Michaud was in place, my next step was to create the nuance of living within the sensory environment of the play. The language was being honored, my playable actions were outlined, and the need to display emotions had finally dissolved. However, I felt as if I was not fully invested in the world the cast had created. My sense of nuance needed to be stronger. I went back to the source material and investigated sections that would give me a
better sense of what it would be like to live in the specific environments the playwright created. In “The Cigar” scene Michaud states, “All this leather. The spools of thread! The smell! So this is where shoes come from” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 46). The text was suggesting the sensory overload that Michaud was experiencing at that particular moment. It was my job to bring this language to life by believing in the conditions the playwright had described. Michaud’s sight, smell, taste, and touch are all utilized when experiencing the stimulation he describes. The importance of honoring the actor’s five senses brought me back to a statement made in Uta Hagen’s *Respect for Acting*:

> “The discovery of the sensations and how they influence you is there to condition your actions truthfully in the scene, and with sensory accuracy and faith, but it is not the final aim just to be cold or have a headache on stage. Furthermore, you are dictating the sensations – they are not dictating you” (Hagen 59).

While committing to my essential actions, the sensory environment “flavored” the attempt to reach my goal, as opposed to taking ultimate control on how I was playing the scene. By investigating the texture of sawdust on the tip of my finger, analyzing the mechanics of a sewing machine, and gently pursuing my lips due to the bitterness of the cold tea that was served to me, I was able to give more of a life-like interpretation of Michaud’s awareness. It was important that I did not let these nuances control me, but instead help inform my character’s language in pursuit of the essential action.

Technical rehearsals were approaching and I was still meeting my director with contention due to his requests. After trying so hard to eliminate qualities and implement playable
actions in my work, he kept giving me notes that suggested playing emotions. Some of my direction included; “He needs to look more innocent,” “He should have a sense of Hollywood Glamour,” “try to be sexy with her,” and “I want him to be masculine. You are playing him too feminine.” While I am always open to taking notes as an actor, I found it hard to take these statements seriously as they had no justification within the given circumstances of the text. The director suggested that I look at the character Tony Lumpkin from Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer*, as well as the work of black and white film actor Dick Powell. Having acted in a previous production of *She Stoops*, I knew for a fact that Tony Lumpkin and Michaud had almost nothing in common. Lumpkin is known to be a lewd drunk, often cast as an overbearing obnoxious character with no morals. Despite my want to rebel, I took the director’s note and tried to apply some of Lumpkin’s qualities into my creation of Michaud. The only logical way I could think of was comparing Michaud’s blissful ignorance to Lumpkin’s abrasive neglence. Combining these two attributes did not do much for me, but I allowed it to color some sections of Michaud’s language. As for Dick Powell, there was nothing I could do. Video recordings of Powell’s work supported my director’s observation; he was quite handsome, but he held no similarities with what I was trying to do with Michaud. While Powell is a Hollywood dream boat who had no problem seducing women, Bouchard’s text suggested that Michaud is ignorant and slightly neurotic, having little to no experience with the opposite sex let alone his own sense of curiosity. The only connection I made with Powell was his use of ease, which I implemented in Michaud’s physicality after he learns the truth of Talbot’s sexual history.

Perhaps the biggest disagreement I had with the director was how Michaud would execute the acting style of 1905. Sarah Bernhardt was renowned for her unique characterizations, which would include a wild style of vocal technique and grand gestures. Her voice was often
compared to the quality of “a gold bell” and even “silvery as a flute” (Nagler). As the text indicates that Michaud is an avid fan and is familiar with her technique, I thought it was important to imitate the same sense of style correctly. Not only that, but I was charged with the task of being the first actor to introduce this style to the audience, since Michaud recites speeches from *Adrienne Lecouvreur* in front of the Talbots. If the audience did not get a clear indication of what type of world we lived in, their perception would be questionable as to the right technique. My director was not a fan of this approach, as he thought it “wasn’t masculine enough.” I took the note and dropped the pitch of my voice to a lower register, but still maintained the same physical actions in a grand nature. The director was still displeased and mentioned, “You look too good executing the technique. Like an MFA student who knows what he’s doing. He should be an amateur at this sort of thing.” While being professional I expressed my concerns in doing this. As already mentioned, this was the first time the audience would hear this type of heightened language, and it would accustom them to the highly dramatic style of acting. The director again insisted that Michaud should not be too good at doing it because it would be funnier. In order to appease the director’s wishes I made a compromise. While giving in to lowering my pitch, I still maintained the same declamatory gesticulation that suggested a grand range of emotions for the period.

**Vocal Explorations -**

The vocal quality of Michaud was a hard task to master. While it was important to maintain a fine timbre, I made it my goal to utilize different pitch variations in order to illustrate Michaud’s transformation. For the entirety of Act I my voice rested in the mid to upper third of my register to help signify Michaud’s unbalanced persona and aloof nature. After acknowledging Talbot’s sexual history in Act II, Michaud becomes scathingly aware of the realities of the
outside world. In order to manifest this maturity in my vocal work I dropped my pitch. This allowed my voice to live in the lower third of my instrument providing a great contrast to my earlier work at the beginning of the play. My basic outline would undergo a variety of strategies in trying to discover Michaud’s authentic voice.

Articulation was by far one of the biggest challenges in overcoming Bouchard’s language. Michaud has a fair amount of text throughout the entirety of the play, so it was important to make sure that all operatives and sustainable opportunities were polished. It had been a while since tackling a tremendous role and my enunciation and articulation were not strong. Since The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt took place during the beginning of the second semester, I was able to utilize the majority of my winter break to do extensive vocal work in terms of articulation. Specifically, my training focused on using Edith Skinner’s phrases focusing on consonants, vowels, and mixtures of both. Each day was comprised of doing forty-five minutes of articulation work in the following manner: The first portion focused on perfecting plosive and non-plosive consonants, the middle portion concentrating on finding sustainable opportunities with vowels, and the last fifteen minutes included a blending of the previous areas. A worksheet of the particular phrases I used during this process can be seen in Appendix B of this document. When returning to the rehearsal process I made note of the work I had done over the break. My vocal clarity had greatly improved, and as a result it aided the process of controlling my breath. I was no longer gasping for air at the end of the first monologue when Michaud describes his first meeting with Sarah Bernhardt. Instead my enunciation was quite clean which allowed me to use the playwright’s punctuation to my benefit. As we approached tech and dress rehearsals (and even performances) I would return to this worksheet to ensure vocal clarity and dexterity.
Probably the most challenging transition of the entire process was moving from our rehearsal room to Constans theatre. We spent a large portion of rehearsal in the studio crafting specific moments with great intimacy and nuance. Learning Talbot’s confession and meeting Sarah face to face were two instances that showcased the intimate power of our voices. We did not need to focus on projection during our time in the rehearsal studio. However, this became quite a different scenario when performing on the much larger main stage theatre space. All of a sudden our intimacy was no longer valuable as we could not be heard in the large performance venue. Our sound was becoming swallowed by the enormity of the space, and we knew that our voices would be absorbed even further when adding audience members in the seats. My entire first monologue is executed facing the farthest upstage point possible while standing on a ladder. In an attempt to be heard I was throwing my voice and practically shouting so that the creative team could hear me while they sat in the audience. Due to my overexertion, my characterization sounded forced and the authenticity we created in the rehearsal room dissipated. This led me to an important question: “At what point do actor’s sacrifice authenticity in order to be heard?” I expressed this same question to various cast members who had similar concerns. After much discussion and debate, my mind recalled a certain section of text in Arthur Lessac’s *The Use and Training of the Human Voice: A Bio-Dynamic Approach to Vocal Life*:

“...a non-organic instruction to the body might be to throw your voice to the farthest row of the theatre. Nevertheless, that image and instruction demands of the body something it should not be asked to do. The voice cannot be thrown out of the body. The voice can only resonate and vibrate within the body. The proper sensory instruction in this case would be to search for the ‘bone-conducted’ feel...”
of your voice as an inside-the-body experience and not treat it as if it were a baseball being thrown through the air!” (Lessac 6).

I was going against Lessac’s wishes. At this point I needed to develop my tonal quality in order to achieve the desired effect as mentioned above. Extensive work was done in trying to produce a “bone conducted” resonance through the use of the Y-Buzz. Another cast member led us through a series of vocal warm-ups that utilized this approach. While engaging in these vocal exercises, my resonance became richer and I did not need to rely on shouting my voice across the theatre. Instead, the vibrations within my body enabled my voice to be heard from the back row while still maintaining a quality of authentic intimacy. A copy of the Y-Buzz exercises can be seen in Appendix B.

While the Y-Buzz exercises were a constant group exploration for the entire cast, I took it upon myself to further this investigation outside of the rehearsal hall: The director had assigned each cast member to select a song that captured the essence of our respective characters by the time we came to our first rehearsal. After plenty of digging I selected the song “Cries and Whispers” from the foreign film Oldboy. In order to disassociate myself from the work done by the actors in the film, my selection came from an adaptation of the original soundtrack. Specifically, I chose the instrumental version of “Cries and Whispers” from composer Lee Ji Soo’s album, At First. His composition features a variety of instruments in a harmonic blend that I thought perfectly captured the essence of Michaud. The use of melodic violins resembled the innocence and blind ignorance of Michaud while the structure of cellos reflected the deep realities of the 1900s. Before every tech/dress rehearsal and performance I would play this selection during my car ride to the theatre. While I made it my goal not to imitate the pitch of the particular song, it was my desire to capture the sense of organic ease as indicated in the
composition. My Y-Buzz reflected the flowing aura as depicted in the use of the stringed instruments, almost to the point where I described it as “riding the wave of the song.” I also used this strategy to utilize the “O” and “AY” vowel sustentions as indicated in Lessac’s technique. As a result, the pitch variation and variety of projection coming from my voice produced a desirable resonance that fit my characterization of Michaud.

Logistics of the theatre became another issue in regard to how my voice was carried. My physical interpretation of Michaud included some rolling on the floor and ground work. As a result, I would inhale the dust off the floor since the scenic designers were finishing the construction of the set. Due to my physical exploration I became sick and my voice suffered great fatigue. However, an important discovery was made during this portion of the rehearsal process. My vocal quality, though hard to understand, develop a sense of ease and relaxation due to my low energy. Michaud was starting to take human form. He was no longer being played by an actor playing a character. He became authentic. It was now my task to incorporate this same sense of ease into further exploration of my voice. Little did I know that my vocal fatigue would lead to great physical discoveries as well.

**Physical Explorations –**

Much like Michaud’s vocal quality, the character’s physicality was dependant on creating a stark contrast before and after hearing Talbot’s confession. During the rehearsal process I experimented with a variety of movement explorations that would aid the transition from becoming an ignorant boy to a matured man. Before I could engage in experimenting with Michaud’s walk and physical nuance, I needed to experience specific movement styles of the play’s time period. In order to achieve this I wore a full suit to almost every rehearsal. Much to my surprise the cast looked at me in disbelief, questioning why I found it important to “look so
fancy” for every rehearsal. Since my previous training came from doing a variety of Shakespearean and English Restoration texts, I could not stress enough the significance of embodying the character while wearing specific clothing. Throughout the play Michaud undergoes multiple costume changes, which included the following: A collarless union shirt with black dress pants and suspenders, a full cassock, bed clothing, and a well-tailored suit with an outdoor coat and derby hat. By wearing my own custom suit I was able to anticipate how certain period clothing would restrict my modern physicality by the time we got to dress rehearsals. For example, I could not just sit in a chair the way I would in my normal street clothing from the twenty-first century. Instead, I had to flip my tail coat out in order to achieve the physical needs of wearing certain garments in 1905. As Michaud’s physical journey expanded during the entire rehearsal process, my exploration would include tools used from the following areas: An animal movement study, Michael Chekhov’s use of focal points and sensations, Rudolph Laban’s Effort Actions, and F.M. Alexander’s Law of Human Movement.

The director’s first request was that we select an animal that reflected our character. While the majority of the cast brought in only one example I took it upon myself to bring two animals that embodied Michaud. As mentioned earlier it was important to find not only Michaud’s vocal transformation, but to discover what his physicality looked like before and after Talbot’s confession. Before selecting which animals to experiment with I investigated Michaud’s vocal rhythms in order to manifest his speech in a physical manner. His thought process is sporadic throughout the entirety of Act I, which is exemplified in one of his earlier passages:

“Where did you come from? How come you’ve shown up so late at the end of the semester? And what’s your mother doing here? Don’t you know that’s forbidden? What did you do to deserve special treatment? And why is there a bandage on your forehead?
Did you get in a fight? Over what? And why are you so bitter? That’s what the audience has been wondering since you made your entrance” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 11).

While his thought process bounces in a myriad of directions in Act I he takes on a more linear form of thinking after his enlightenment:

“Last night I realized why my religion describes all of our impurities in such detail. I realize it’s because we are all bound to become impure. I also realized why Voltaire has Candide discover that we are born neither victims nor tormentors, but a bit of both. Last night I understood that there is no point in believing in a better world. I realized my ideals will not emerge from life’s struggles intact” (Bouchard and Gaboriau 98-99).

After comparing his sporadic nature with his linear thought process my animal selection was narrowed down to the Red Ruffed Lemur and the Red Wolf respectively. Studying the lemur’s skeleton gave insight to their scattered physical structure through the use of their limbs and downward curvature of their spine, which is shown in Appendix C. I incorporated this physical quality into Michaud’s movements. My hands dangled lightly in front of my torso while there was a slight hunch in my back, pushing my skull forward to illustrate his inquisitive nature. Lemurs also have a tendency to use sharp yet light movements of the head when stimulated by different sensations. This was the perfect segue in adopting Michaud’s receptive nature. As I scribbled notes in my journal, my head mimicked the intricate movements of the lemur’s skull and my eyes copied the lemur’s wide gaze, as illustrated in the Appendix C. When a particular object catches the lemur’s sight they sprint in a contralateral fashion, having the back foot touch the leading foot as they “gallop” to their destination. While I did not adopt the lemur’s
contralateral sprint, Michaud’s sense of urgency and tempo in approaching certain stimuli held a strong resemblance.

In juxtaposition to the Red Ruffed Lemur, the Red Wolf was a perfect way to embody Michaud’s metamorphosis. While the lemur is sporadic in regards to head movement and sense of direction, the wolf exhibits a calmer sensibility when investigating objects. A wolf will not exert unneeded amounts of energy unless it is absolutely necessary (most likely in the form of an attack). The skeleton of the Red Wolf inspires a sense of great poise and strong grounding (Appendix C). In order to capture the grace of the wolf my head movements became softer and more controlled. The tempo of my skull became slower when reacting to various stimuli and my walk became more centered. The homolateral movements of the Red Wolf allowed me to sway my arms with a great sense of ease. As the left foot moved forward, so would my left hand, and respectively the same on my right. Michaud suddenly does not find the need to race over to investigate an object or approach another character in dialogue. Instead, he moves slower with both his feet shoulder-width apart. Michaud is finally in control of his life as his ignorance dissolves more and more throughout the play.

During tech and dress rehearsal I committed to discovering more options in Michaud’s physical quality; specifically with tools used by Chekov. Michaud is a character that spends a large amount of stage time actively listening. Whether it is jotting notes about Talbot’s personality, undergoing an acting lesson from Sarah, or absorbing the environment of the shoe factory, he is constantly reacting to the given circumstances. Chekov’s Focal Points gave me certain areas of concentration when taking in any type of information. As described by the National Michael Chekhov Association (NMCA):
“Focal points are a means of creating power in how we relate to other 
characters, as well as a means of organizing our lives. Anytime we don’t know 
where to focus, we can check with our objective and ask, Which Focal Point will 
move me closer to achieving my objective? At all times, we can choose on what 
we want to focus. There are five basic options of where we can physically “Look” 
with our eyes. We call these Circles of Concentration” (Dalton 82).

As indicated by the NMCA, Chekhov’s Focal Points are defined in five areas of 
concentration: 1) Self, 2) Partner, 3) Immediate Sensory Environment, 4) Non-Present Specific 
Object, 5) Unified Energy Field. This tool enables an actor to concentrate energy by engaging in 
a physical shift from one Focal Point to the next. There were moments as an actor where I would
 drift off into space, not giving proper attention to my co-actor’s by listening to their dialogue. 
For example, Brother Casgrain’s monologue at the end of the show gave me multiple
 opportunities to take advantage of this technique. Casgrain states, “If you go to the theatre 
tonight, you will never set foot here again. And no other institution will admit you. I will see to 
that personally. Do you hear me? A flash in the pan. Your actress’s visit is just a flash in the pan” 
(Bouchard and Gaboriau 135). My initial blocking was to cross stage right (to gather my 
belongings) and head for a false exit. Originally I just stare at Casgrain blankly during this
 section, giving almost no variety in my interpretation of his language. However, my 
experimentation with the Focal Points gave me a more active form of listening in the following 
way: At the beginning of his text I crossed stage right and maintained a Focal Point of 3, 
“Immediate Sensory Environment,” to illustrate my rebellion. Michaud was not even going to 
look at Casgrain but instead maintain focus on the bed where my belongings were stationed. 
After his line “Do you hear me?” I slowly turned and changed my point of focus to Focal Point
2, “Partner.” This exploration propelled not only my ability to listen, but it fueled my co-actor’s approach to his next section of dialogue. When he stated, “Your actress’s visit was just a flash in the pan,” I made the choice to flip my tail coat and sit on the bed with a Focal Point of 1, “Self” to exemplify my rebellion and sense of disgust. Later in Casgrain’s monologue he questions the authority of God and the power of the church, giving me the chance to utilize Focal Point 5, “Unified Energy Field.” All in all, the focal points encouraged a wider spectrum of physical exploration when listening to other characters.

Michaud’s physicality was also influenced by Chekov’s Three Sisters of Equilibrium. The NMCA defines the Three Sisters in the following way:

“The Three Sister Sensations of Falling, Balancing, and Floating can create almost any emotional state, physical or psychological condition. Mastering these techniques… can be a rapid and reliable way to connect feelings and to radiate the sense of a deep connection” (Dalton 45).

Earlier in the play Michaud embodies the characteristics of naiveté and child-like ignorance. I decided that it was important to physicalize this quality through the use of “balancing” in relation to the Three Sisters of Equilibrium. This is exemplified at the top of the play, when Michaud delivers the majority of his speeches while standing on top of a ladder and looking through a pair of binoculars. During this section I would stand on the tips of my toes, trying to maintain a solid footing but could not due to the lack of balance. Ultimately this approach influenced my vocal delivery with a higher register. The balancing image would also come in handy before my entrance with the “Sandlewood” scene. Michaud interrupts Talbot and Madeline during a moment of great intimacy. Before making my appearance I would spend time
off stage “on point” trying to maintain a strong physical balance, but failing to remain in that position for more than a few seconds. My physical exploration provided the foundation for an “off center” footing, upon awkward discovery of the other two characters.

After Michaud’s transformation I started to identify with “Molding” as described in Chekov’s Qualities of Movement. The NMCA identifies four Qualities of Movement as Molding, Flowing, Flying, and Radiating. NMCA pedagogy associates the quality of Molding with earth as its primary element. It was crucial that Michaud find a sense of grounding after becoming aware of the real world. For the entirety of the first Act, I committed to finding balance in Michaud’s movements and included turning my toes inward as part of his physicality. After the confession scene the tips of my toes were no longer facing inwards but they were parallel and shoulder width apart. Instead of fighting to create a steady sense of balance, my feet were planted. The foundation of Michaud’s strength continued to develop for the remainder of the performance, getting closer and closer to the quality of Molding. During the “Just One Page” scene I felt myself moving at a slower tempo and feeling the literal connection to the earth. Michaud established a stronger point of view as he gained more knowledge of the injustice that surrounded him. The strength in his commitment to do what he felt was right was reflected by a steady sense of balance in complete contrast to his struggle to maintain balance at earlier points in the play.

The incorporation of Rudolph Laban’s Effort Actions proved to be effective in terms of Michaud’s writing style. Rudolf Laban identified four Effort Factors: Weight, Time Space, and Flow. Each Effort Factor is defined by acknowledging qualities that can be considered as polar opposites. For example, the Effort Factor of Weight is described using Light or Strong, the Effort Factor of Time is described as Sudden or Sustained, the Effort Factor of Space is described as
Direct or Indirect, and the Effort Factor of Flow is described as Bound or Free. During Michaud’s first encounter with Talbot I handled the pen with a frivolous sense of style; my fingers grasped the tip of the writing utensil. While using the pen my Effort Qualities were Light, Sudden, and Direct. This would be classified as the Effort Action of Dab in Laban’s Movement Analysis (LMA). In juxtaposition to my writing technique, the overall movement of Michaud’s character was slightly different. While I maintained the same Qualities of Weight and sense of Time, Michaud was more Indirect when moving on stage, thus categorizing his movement as Flick in LMA terminology. All of the Effort Actions would change after his transformation. My writing style suddenly adopted a sense of grace, still remaining Light and Direct, but my sense of time was now Sustained when holding the pen: This Laban Effort Action would be identified as Glide. All of a sudden, my fingers were lightly holding the middle of the pen, and I felt like an artist entrusted with a paint brush, employing soft strokes on a canvas. Michaud’s overall physicality adopted a change as well. He became stronger with his grounding with a Sustained use of Time Effort and Direct Weight Effort, classifying him with Laban’s overall Effort Action of Press. Each Laban Effort Action encouraged a stronger sense of full body awareness when exploring a variety of physical choices.

As we approached dress rehearsals I was constantly reminding myself to maintain a sense of ease when playing Michaud. This idea led me back to a statement made in Barbara Conable’s *How to Learn the Alexander Technique: A Manuel for Students*. Conable states, “Law of Human Movement I: Habitual tensing of the muscles of the neck results in a predictable and inevitable tensing of the whole body. Release out of the tensing in the whole begins with release in the muscles in the neck” (Conable 4). It was clear that Michaud adopted a strong sense of tension during Act I, and to be completely honest it did not bother me that much. Michaud had not
engaged in his transformation yet. His wide-eyed innocence and blissful ignorance were preventing him from becoming an authentic version of his own true self. However, it was crucial that a sense of ease and grace be evident in the physical work of Michaud for the majority of Act II. While facing old habits, such as locking my hip joints, jutting my chin forward, and so on, I was constantly reminding myself that my tension would dissolve if the muscles in my neck released. Engaging in this idea by thinking of sending direction up through my spine gave Michaud a better sense of ease and fluidity in his movements. He was no longer a ridged and inquisitive boy. Rather, he adopted a sense of maturity and was aware of the cruelties that surrounded him. Michaud’s metamorphosis was complete.
The Performance

What Is The Good Life Performances -

In lieu of their course work, it was a requirement for undergraduates enrolled in a course entitled What is the Good Life, to attend The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt. Surprisingly, the students attending the Good Life performances seemed to have a positive reaction to the show. This particular slot in the UF SoTD season has a notorious reputation for audience members providing a gamut of responses; individuals leaving at intermission, students using their cell phones during the performance, and so forth. However, it seemed as if The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt enticed the majority of viewers to become engaged in the world we created. Of note during this process was the amount of students who stayed for the talkback sessions after each performance. It was shocking to hear the eloquent questions that some of the audience members asked. In particular, one undergraduate acknowledged the potency of the play and how it paralleled the current times. I could not help but find astonishment in the connection one student made with our story. It was indeed a play set in 1905, but her analysis of our text held powerful observations towards such events as the “Million Woman March” against President Donald Trump, and even the appearance of a Neo-Nazi demonstrating his right to freedom of speech on campus. My response to her question initiated a unique investigation of self for this student and her peers. I pointed out that each individual has the power to rebel, and it is our task as America’s youth to influence how our country will be shaped in the future.

Some students found it necessary to question the super-objective of each character. For example, one audience member challenged my choice to show emotion during Talbot’s confession in regards to his sexual history. He interpreted that Michaud also underwent the same type of abuse as a child, and wanted to know my reasoning behind it. This student’s question
launched me into an honest analysis of my own characterization of Michaud. Despite the
debatable authenticity within my character rendering, it was clear to me that my choice was
supported by the text that the playwright provided for us. Various characters throughout the play
comment on Michaud’s sense of child-like innocence and his general ignorance towards the
realities of the outside world. When supporting my choice it was important to explain David
Mamet’s “as-if” principle and how I utilized this technique multiple times throughout the show.
In short, my objective was to play the scene “as-if” Michaud was an eight-year-old boy and was
discovering the horrors of sexual molestation for the first time in his life, and how his innocence
was shattered as a result. The probability of such an act was completely foreign and almost
impossible to comprehend for Michaud, so much that it evoked an emotional reaction (including
tears). Again, it was important to inform this individual that showcasing emotion was not the
ulterior motive, but that pursuing an essential action through the incorporation of the “as-if” was
extremely vital. Not only that, but his interpretation of Michaud’s questionable sexuality was
powerful and a truly unique analysis of the action seen on stage unlike any other audience
member. Indeed, each audience member will have a personalized response to witnessing
Michaud’s response in that scene. That is the power of theatre.

Probably the most apparent trend in the Good Life performances was witnessing which
Act resonated greater. Depending on the tenor and energy of each audience, the reactions would
be more apparent in either Act I or Act II. By and large, the first half of the show held a more
comedic energy with light tone and quick pacing. There were times though that some of the
performers overindulged in this regard. Milking particular scenes not only destroyed the rhythm
of these nuanced moments, but interrupted the pulse of the production’s through-line. Having the
majority of the lines in the play, I took it upon myself to increase the tempo of my dialogue so
that points would be made clear without diffusing the power of Bouchard’s text by elongating or overindulging in moments. Most of the audience members found great joy through Act I, especially when actors picked up their cues and delivery, evidenced by the audience’s incredible reactions throughout the first half of the performance. However, there were some nights that the viewers had a greater audible response to the second Act. Unlike the first half, Act II shows a complete transformation through the majority of the play’s characters; Michaud and Talbot’s journey come full circle since both of their perspectives have changed. Depending on timing and the authentic pursuit within our respective essential actions, we would be met with a standing ovation at curtain call.

Regardless of the audience’s reaction, one aspect of my performance always needed careful attention: articulation and diction. As performances for the Good Life spanned over the course of three weeks I could feel my voice getting tired. This was an odd sensation for me since I had never encountered this problem before while performing. My initial reaction was that it had to do with the amount of text Michaud has, especially in “The Dormitory” scene. As already mentioned, Michaud’s function is to relate a substantial amount of exposition during this scene and it was important that my voice was prepared to relay this information. During the run of the production my voice and articulators faced major fatigue. Specifically, my nasal mask seemed languid and lethargic. In order to tackle this obstacle, it was important to slow Michaud’s train of thought down. This did not necessarily mean that the tempo or rhythm of his speech should decrease, but rather the ideas and thoughts should become clearer. There were two main ways in which I approached correcting this problem. My first objective was to reexamine the punctuation for all of Michaud’s speeches. By honoring the punctuation as structured by the playwright, Michaud’s thoughts became clearer, and the tempo of my speech did not supersede landing the
specific ideas of the dialogue. Secondly, I reviewed my diction and tonal sheets thoroughly before each performance (Appendix B). Honoring these exercises allowed a more specific dexterity and deeper sense of authenticity within the voice.

**Public Performances -**

Public performances for *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* surpassed the positive reactions we received from the *Good Life* audiences. My interpretation of Michaud continued to shape from the myriad of reactions coming from this particular group of patrons, a group who, in most cases, voluntarily attended the performances rather than attending as a requirement for class. For the most part I noticed that my vocal ease had developed and did not seem to be forced (which was a habit of mine earlier in my graduate experience). One specific example was seen during the ending monologue when Michaud participates in a direct address to the audience. Due to the enthusiastic nature coming from the majority of the viewers, my openness to actively listen become stronger; intonation and inflection would change depending on my relationship with the audience from one night to the next. It was important to note that my performance was not for my own egotistical pleasure, but instead a platform for the message that Bouchard was trying to relate to individuals around the world. This play was meant for the public and not the indulgence of the actors.

Perhaps one of the most beneficial exercises the cast utilized as a whole was Michael Chekhov’s “The Golden Hoop.” Our sense of ensemble within *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* was particularly strong due to this tool. Before every show the actors assembled in one of the studios and would start the exercise by holding hands. Either Samuel one of the other actors or myself would lead the ritual with a step-by-step set of instructions. First, the entire group starts by holding hands and feels the energy pulsating from one performer to the next.
Then, the leader instructs the participants to imagine a golden hoop lining the circumference of the group by the tips of their toes. On the count of three, each actor lowers themselves to pick up the hoop and bring it to their waists. After this is accomplished, the leader asks the performers to lift the hoop to their shoulders, and then on another three count requests that the hoop be pushed up into the air above of them. For the purposes of our Golden Hoop ritual, I would always remind the cast that the hoop would hover above the playing space in the Constans theatre, protecting us from any harm and ensuring that we would have a great performance. Not only did Chekhov’s tool help calm our nerves before a show, but it enabled a sense of comraderie between the entire cast. There was one performance in particular in which the exercise became extremely beneficial in regards to my personal affairs. During one performance a family member of mine was lying on her deathbed, and the Golden Hoop provided a sense of comfort and security for me. It was a great reminder that no matter what personal atrocities were happening in my life, I always had the partnership of my cast to help support Michaud’s intrepid journey.
Conclusion

Upon completing the role of Michaud during the final performance of *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt*, I experienced an emotional release. It was no longer an egocentric platform of my own abilities as a performer, but rather a direct connection to the playwright’s message:

As individuals we all have the power to rebel, whether it is constructive or achieved in a monstrous way. The journey of Michaud held a strong resemblance to that of my own as a graduate student at the University of Florida. Here we have two adolescents, both unaware of their surroundings and the true potential that they inhabit. Michaud, a young seminarian, finds the power to rebel against the Catholic Church and realizes the innate power of his actions despite the harsh realities of his time; Jake Lesh, a novice actor, discovers his own authentic voice by honoring the playwright’s language and allowing himself to be immersed in the recognizable parallel this production has with the modern world. Both individuals yield a direct connection in terms of maturity and the sense of self-discovery. I am eternally grateful for Bouchard’s text. Without his words, it would not have been possible to evolve into the true authentic version of my own self. As actors, each performer strives to find the deepest truth in terms of their overall character objectives and intentions. I would like to think that *The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt* was the perfect conduit in achieving this feat. Michaud required my entire being, and ultimately it felt like I was performing as myself within a crafted set of given circumstances. Truth cannot exist without the authentic essence of who we are as individuals. Bouchard’s play helped me discover who I am, both as a performer and as a human being.
Appendices

Appendix A - Production Photos

“The Dormitory:” Jake Lesh

“A Play for Sarah:” Christie Robinson and Jake Lesh
“Just One Page:” Jake Lesh and Diego Zozaya

“The Epilogue:” Diego Zozaya and Jake Lesh
Appendix B – Vocal Exercises

Voice and Speech Acting Workshop

Professor: Yanci Bukovee

Lessac: #21 (diphthong) O       IPA: OV       Webster: O

Call phrases

No! Go! Woe!
Go home!
Joe, go home!
Hold those ropes!
Close those roads!
Fold those coats!
Load those old boats!
Joe’s old toad rolled home!

Iambic pentameter call phrases on the stress: Lessac #21; IPA OV; Webster O

Behold the golden crow that broke the mold!
The old man rose and spoke with hopeful tones!
The colt had grown so bold it bolted home!
I don’t just know, I know he told him so!

Copyright, Yanci
Diction Exercises & Tongue-Twisters

Exercises for Consonants
- I need a box of biscuits, a box of mixed biscuits, and a biscuit mixer.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
  A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.
  If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
  Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?
- He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts.
- Friday's Five Fresh Fish Specials.
- Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager imagining managing an imaginary
  menagerie.
- The Leith police dismisseth us.
- Twixt this and six thick thistle sticks.
- Red leather, yellow leather.
- She sells seashells by the seashore, and the shells she sells are seashells.
- Three free thugs set three thugs free.
- Gwen gawered and grimaced at Glen's gleaming greens.

Exercises for Vowels
- Fancy! That fascinating character Harry McCann married Anne Hammond.
  *(Be sure you are pronouncing all the "short a" sounds identically.)*
- Lot lost his hot chocolate at the loft.
- Snoring Norris was marring the aria.

Exercises for Everything
- Eleven benevolent elephants.
- Girl gargoyles, guy gargoyles. Guy gargoyles, girl gargoyles.
- She stood on the balcony inexplicably mimicking him hiccupping and amicably
  welcoming him in.
- Six sick slick slim sycamore saplings.

Repeaters
These tongue twisters become more challenging the more you say them. So if you don't
find each one "hard to say" at first, just keep repeating it until you do!

- You know you need unique New York.
- Toy boat.
- Three free throws.
- Blue black bugs blood.
- Red lorry, yellow lorry.
- Giggle gaggle gurgle.
Appendix C - Animal Inspirations

Animal Study: Red Ruffed Lemur

Animal Study: Red Wolf
Appendix D - Production Program (Good Life)
The Divine:
A Play for Sarah Bernhardt
by Michel Marc Bouchard

Director: DAVID YOUNG

Scenic Designer: TIM CASTELLUCCI
Costume Designer: ANANDA MOORE
Lighting Designer: ANDREW W. LISEE
Sound Designer: TISA GARLAND
Stage Manager: MATTHEW RENAO

Theatre Enquiries:
Backpacks and personal belongings are not permitted in the theatre. 
Any item larger than a purse must be checked at the box office. 
The Costume Theatre is not responsible for damaged or missing property. 
Food and drink are not permitted in the theatre. 
No talking or eating during the performance. 
Use of electronic devices, phones, cameras, and camcorders is strictly prohibited. 
Phones must be turned off. In the "Do Not Disturb" mode. Failure to comply will result in your removal from the theatre.

Notes from the Preface of The Divine
"What would life be without art? 
Eating, drinking, sleeping, praying and dying... Why go on living?"
— Sarah Bernhardt

In December 1905 in Quebec City, Michael, a young seminarian training for the ministry of the theatre, dedicates his first play to his idol, the Demon Sarah Bernhardt, who—like a sudden storm of light—has appeared in his somber life.

The Divine is a fable about the meeting between this brilliant, mythical artist and a young man whose innocence is shattered by her growing awareness of the terrors of his times.

Sarah teaches Michael that our ability to express our tribulations resides in the source of light within us.

— David Young, Ph.D. 
Director

Special Thanks
Carus Colle
Kathy Sarra

Florida Theatrical Association
Dr. Andrew Webster and the Good Life Steering Committee

Gainesville 49

Production Team

Production Manager
Jenny K. Faust

Stage Manager
Liz Kowalski

Technical Director
B.J. Hartman

Properties Manager
Randy Tipton

Scenic Shop Manager
Brian Hargrove

Paint Charge
Erik Sheeler

Costume Shop Manager
Michael L. Bouchard

Costume Charge
Liz Kowalski

Lighting Designer
Jill Kowalski

Light Board Operator
Cory Shearer

Sound Board Operator
Brendan Donohoe

Sound Engineer
Brian Hargrove

Mystery Addres

Production Assistant
Cory Shearer

Stage Manager
Liz Kowalski

Stage Manager
Jill Kowalski

Stage Manager
Brian Hargrove

Props Manager
B.J. Hartman

Lighting Designer
Jill Kowalski

Lighting Designer
Brian Hargrove

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman

Sound Engineer
B.J. Hartman
The Divine Study Guide
by Michèle Hamilton

Summary

In December 1885, Quebec City innocently awaited the arrival of the influenza, and other concerns. Henri Bertrand, anticipating its performance in a new play of questionable morality. At the curtain rises the Divine, a play of the sacred drama, written by Michel Bertrand with translation by Charles Gallant, we meet Michael, a young Charlevois farmer from a wealthy family and perhaps the Divine's main character. After Tallon, a new, mysterious arrival to the Grand Seminary, whose temerity has strained in a life of poverty. Tallon's widowed mother and younger brother have been forced to work in a shoe factory that80's under hazardous working conditions and poor labor laws. When Tallon arrives, he discovers he has been in a huff with an older priest, is presented as a third, in saving souls, his mentor in the Grand Seminary, who tells Tallon that he will offer anIOUS to the church, a stage. The stage is set for Michael between Religion and Theatre, as the young man is forever changed on their path to the discovery of truth and justice.

National Post review by Robert Coho, August 9, 2015

"The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bertrand" review

The most exciting new Canadian play in years.

"The little known is worth a couple oflaughs. It is more often interesting in Mr. Bertrand's writing, and he's a good director. The play, but here the idea is actually subsidiary to that of two young boys, both famous persons in the church. The idea is simple: the two young men have been in love with a woman who has died, and they are in love with her, but they have died, and they are in love with her, but they have died.

Meet the Playwright

Michel Marc Bouchard, a Canadian playwright, was born in 1964 and studied at Laval University, Quebec. Since his debut in 1989, he has written over 20 plays, six of which have been written or adapted for film. He has written plays in English, Italian, and is now considered a major work in the Canadian canon, and has received recent critical acclaim for "A Far Away" and "family business" his work with homosexuality, the church, and questions surrounding moral and faith. In 2012, he was honored by the National Order of Quebec.

The Divine Study Guide

The Divine: a play performed by two choristers, the famous actors, both of whom were present in the church, and the other about the importance of art in society.

Michel Marc Bouchard

For more on Michel Marc Bouchard, please see References page.

The Divine Production Notes

The Divine was commissioned for the 2015 Shaw Festival in honour of George Bernard Shaw and everyone who loves the theater, and in memory of Sarah Bertrand. The woman who has done so much for the arts and the theater. A play that is a celebration of love, and a play that is a celebration of the arts. The play is a play about love, and a play about the arts. Michael, one of the two choristers, is a single father, Bouchard states, and he's writing just such a play: it may even be in the play we're working on.

The Grand Seminary: Dormitory

Who's Who: Historical and Theatrical References

Theatre

At the turn of the twentieth century, theatre was a major form of entertainment, with plays performed in front of lively audiences and backdrops, and giving way to motion pictures, which allowed the audience to be more involved in the play's unfolding through a screen that was located to the side of the stage. The Divine Study Guide

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The Catholic Church and Quebec City

Quebec City is the capital of the province of Quebec. It is located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and is a dominant port of entry and exit for overseas vessels, essential to commerce and industry. It is a major port of entry for travelers and immigrants to North America. This makes Quebec City a political, administrative, and cultural center.

More than any other denominating force, the church held the power to shape the values and attitudes of the people of Quebec. It helped organize and provide the necessary institutions and structures for the development of the region. The church also played a significant role in shaping the religious identity of the Quebecois people.

The Church and the State

The relationship between the Church and the State is a complex one. In Quebec, the church and the state have been intertwined throughout history. The church has often been used as a tool for the state to control the population and enforce its will.

The Church and the People

The church has been a source of comfort and support for the people. It has provided a sense of community and belonging, and has been a source of moral guidance and inspiration.

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Some people believe that the church is outdated and irrelevant in today's society. Others see it as a source of spiritual guidance and inspiration. Still others see it as a source of cultural and historical heritage.

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The Church and the Economy

The church has played a significant role in the development of the economy of Quebec. It has provided a source of employment and investment, and has been involved in the development of industries such as mining and forestry.

The Church and the Environment

The church has been a vocal advocate for environmental issues. It has been involved in the development of environmental policies and has been a source of inspiration for people to take action to protect the environment.

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The Church and the Arts

The church has been a source of inspiration for artists and musicians. It has been involved in the development of the arts and has been a source of spiritual and cultural enrichment.

The Church and the Sciences

The church has been involved in the development of the sciences. It has been a source of inspiration for scientists and has been involved in the development of scientific knowledge.

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The Church and the Future

The church has a role to play in the future of Quebec. It can be a source of inspiration for people to work together for the common good and can be a source of solidarity and community.

The Church and the Past

The church has a rich history and has been a source of inspiration for people throughout the ages. It has been involved in the development of Quebec and has been a source of cultural and historical heritage.

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The Divine Study Guide

special treatment as Michel becomes increasingly exposed to the secular nature of life, he is challenged as the main character and their consequences lead him to make his own choices despite the challenges.

The novel is set in a world where the balance between faith and reason is constantly shifting. The characters, particularly Michel, must navigate the complexities of their beliefs and the demands of the modern world.

References


The Good Life Performance of
The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt

About the Common Activity

- You are to create a story of your experience of the performance in Adobe Spark to receive credit.

- You will use images and written narrative to describe your experience, focusing on four components of the performance: spatial, social, cultural/intellectual, and emotional.

- Get written permission if you use anyone's image in your story.

What to do at the Consensus Theatre

- Before you enter the auditorium, take pictures of yourself outside of the theatre and/or the lobby to capture the moment.

- When you arrive at the theatre, take pictures of yourself and your friends as you wait in the lobby as long as you get their written permission to use their images in your story. You can also take pictures of or even video the lobby to give the viewer a sense of what the Consensus Theatre is like. Be creative!

- Watch the performance with your phone off or in the "do not disturb" mode. It is unlawful to take pictures of, tape, or record the performance, the set, or the stage. Anyone found taping or recording in the auditorium will be reported to the Dean of Students and asked to leave the theatre.

- When the performance is over, stay for the "talk back" with the actors to learn more about the production.

- As you leave the theatre, take pictures of yourself outside the theatre to encapsulate your experience at the Consensus Theatre.

What to do after the performance

Go to the "Good Life Performance" assignment in Canvas for instructions on how to create your story in Spark. Due by 8:00 a.m. on Feb. 6.
The Divine:
A Play for Sarah Bernhardt
By Michel Marc Bouchard

Notes from the Preface of The Divine

"What would life be without sex? Eating, drinking, sleeping, going and being...what are we on earth?"
— Sarah Bernhardt
Quebec City, December 1905

In December 1905 in Quebec City, Michael, a young seminarian longing for the ecstasy of the theater, dedicates his first play to his idol, The Divine Sarah Bernhardt, who—like a sudden burst of light—has appeared in his somber city.

The Divine is a tale about the meeting between this brilliant, mythical actress and this young man whose innocence is shattered by her growing awareness of the corruption of his times.

Sarah teaches Michael that our ability to express our rebellion resides in the sources of light within us.
— David Young, Ph.D., Director

Special Thanks
Carola Casta
Kathy Sarra

Florida Theatre Association

GAINESVILLE 49

Biographies

DAVID YOUNG, Ph.D. (Director) Dr. Young is currently Professor Emeritus and was, for the past twenty years, Graduate Research Professor in the School of Theatre + Dance at the University of Florida.

He has directed over 30 productions throughout the United States and internationally, including Toller's Airs in an Ancient Company, See Characters in Search of an Author; The Last Days of Salome; A Streetcar Named Desire; Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street; and The Tale of a Tub. He has directed productions at the Kennedy Center, the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, the Kennedy Center, the Kennedy Center, the Kennedy Center, the Kennedy Center, and the Kennedy Center.

In 2012, he received the Kennedy Center National Portrait Award for Lifetime Long Service to the Theater.

Dr. Young has worked with such talents as Colleen Dewhurst, Richard Thomas, Willaim Gillette, Anne Moore, Ringo Che Lee, and Marshall Mauro. He has taught a course in Lovers Letters with Dr. Judith Williams in London and Cambridge, England, and at the University of Toronto, and has taught at the University of Toronto, and at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Young was the recipient of the US Department of State and the Ford Foundation grants. While in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the U.S. Americas, he assisted in providing information for the rebuilding and development of audiences for many of their theater companies.

NADINA ALEA (Journaled) Nadina is a 3rd Year Student of Musical Theatre and is excited to be a part of The Divine. She has done many plays with STA including The Diva. She is in her last year and is excited to share her story with you all.

NICK BULITE (Journaled) Nick is a first-year NFA Acting student and a 3rd-year Scenic Design MFA student at the University of Florida School of Theatre + Dance. He has designed sets for Scene Fix, The Diva, The Class, and Dance 2016, and now, for his project in thesis, The Divine: A Play for Sarah Bernhardt! This work would like to congratulate and thank everyone in the design team, as well as Dr. David Young, for a wonderful production package. Enjoy The Divine!
Biographies

JAYE LEHR (Michael J. Jakes) is a third-year MFA acting student at the University of Florida. Recent regional productions include: Peter and the Starcatcher and Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? He has also acted in: Vincent and the Doctor, The Mystery of Love and Sex, and The Fifth Estate. Previous credits include the world premieres of Carbon, and The Collector. His stage work is supported by the Florida Educational Foundation and thememcmp Foundation.

ANDREW LEI (Kris Nissen) is a second-year MFA acting student at the University of Florida. He has also acted in: Peter and the Starcatcher, The Mystery of Love and Sex, and The Fifth Estate. Previous credits include the world premieres of Carbon, and The Collector. His stage work is supported by the Florida Educational Foundation and thememcmp Foundation.

AMANDA MOORE (Katie W., Katie S.) is a second-year MFA acting student at the University of Florida. Previous productions include: Peter Pan, The Mystery of Love and Sex, and The Collector. Her work is supported by the Florida Educational Foundation and thememcmp Foundation.

MICHAEL ORTEZ (Jenkins) is a second-year MFA acting student at the University of Florida. His stage work is supported by the Florida Educational Foundation and thememcmp Foundation.
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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The KCACTF is a national theater education program that recognizes and promotes excellence in college-level theater production. This production is eligible for a regional KCACTF recognition and regional awards are given for acting, directing, dramaturgy, playwriting, design, stage management and criticism at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered in the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 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 goal to recognize, reward and celebrate the extraordinary work produced in college and university theater across the nation.

University of Florida
Works Cited


Biographical Sketch

Jake Lesh received his BFA in 2013 from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. His most noted credits included working off-Broadway with Titan Theatre Company in Queens, New York. Such productions include acting in the ensemble of King Lear and originating the role of Edwin Booth in the world premiere of The Edwin Booth Company Presents. Jake has also acted in a multitude of regional theatre companies including The Hippodrome Theatre: Peter and the Star Catcher, Whatever Happened to Baby Jane, A Christmas Carol, Stage Kiss, The Toxic Avenger; Door Shakespeare: Macbeth, As You Like It, Love’s Labour’s Lost; Theatre Red: A Lady in Waiting, and The Pabst/Turner Hall: Tony n’ Tina’s Wedding; just to name a few.

Jake is a certified actor combatant and is associated with such organizations as Dueling Arts International and The Society of American Fight Directors. He is an educator, teaching period style movement/dance workshops in local communities. Jake also had the pleasure of making his directorial debut with Alexandre Duma’s The Three Musketeers in conjunction with The Hippodrome’s Summer SPEC youth program. His most recent collegiate productions include: The House of Atreus (Orestes), The Pillow Man (Tupolski), The Liar (Dorante), Metamorphoses (Orephus/Cyex), The Comedy of Errors (Antipholus of Sycuse), and Sweeney Todd (Ensemble). In 2009, Jake stage managed a production of Nor·Mal which made its European debut at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

Jake is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and finds his support from his mother, father, and sister. He is the proud godfather of his nephew Kobi Patrick Burch, who remains a constant inspiration and source of light in his life.