

Summary of Performance Option in Lieu of Thesis
Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Arts

STARTING FROM SCRATCH: ORIGINATING THE CHARACTER KYLE WALKER IN
THE NEW PLAY AMERICAN WESTERN

By

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Chair: Kevin Marshall
Major: Theatre

American Western, a new play by University of Florida alum Neal Utterback, premiered in the Constans Theatre on February 2nd, 2007. Set in present-day Indiana concurrent with an unspecified foreign war, the play investigates a wide array of current themes, ranging from homosexuality in the military to explorations of self-identity, as well as the issue of land-rights versus the concept of “home.” Although the scope of the play was extremely large and audience response to the effort was mixed, each of Utterback’s characters was three-dimensional and rich, providing a terrific vehicle for advanced actor training.

The thesis role investigated in this report was that of Kyle Walker, a married Indiana schoolteacher struggling to cope with his sexuality, his fears of becoming a father, and his confusion discerning longing from lust. The character was unique to the script in that he alone made a distinguishable change through the course of the play: growing from childlike and irresponsible to the one character who can, and does, take action. Evolving both physically and vocally, this character development gave the actor a strong platform to utilize his skill set, and to breathe life into a play for its first time.