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Building the Machine

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2012

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Building the Machine

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Zachary D. Martens

Committee in charge:

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair
Professor Charlie Oates
Professor Jim Winker
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2012

The thesis of Zachary D. Martens is approved and it is acceptable
in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

DEDICATION

To my family and friends, without whom I would have never have found my spark. All my love.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my high school teacher, Todd Avery, for my first experience in theatre. Without him, my spiral into the artistic world would not be possible.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Building the Machine

by

Zachary D. Martens

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair

I have always approached life like a head first dive off a waterfall. That unabashed spring into the unknown is what I believe drew me into the arts and placed me in the audition room for UCSD's Graduate Acting program.

Catching my breath from the expulsion of several aerobic monologues, Kyle Donnelly asked why grad school would be a good fit. I responded with, "I've got a nice set of skills, but I would like to craft and hone them, becoming an acting machine that can sustain a long life in theatre." At that time the picture in my mind was much like a Terminator of acting, crushing and molding the world of the play into something beautiful to experience.

Once in the program, my inner Peter Pan took flight, exploring the physical and emotional depths of a drag queen, an adolescent searching for love, a man sacrificing life and limb for family, and more. Along the way I waited for this Terminator to appear and replace the boyish, earnest glee with which I approach work and life. He never appeared. This frustrated me until, finally, I realized the image of this “machine” was all wrong. Little did I know my inner free spirit had been acquiring bits of armor, piece by piece, in the way of movement, voice, speech, text analysis and personal process in the work. My once exposed person is now shielded with technique and a stronger sense of self. The joyously unrestrained coupled with an impenetrable defense. I now am about to embark into a career where one must be simultaneously emotionally available and tough as nails. I am ready.