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Novotny, Alina Rose

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

The Role of Boundaries in Mitigating Perfectionism

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Alina Rose Novotny

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa Porter, Co-Chair
Professor Lora Powell, Co-Chair
Professor Karen Dobkins
Professor Lamar Perry

2025

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University of California San Diego

2025

DEDICATION

To Rosie and Steve Novotny, who never missed a performance and showed me what it means to be a lifelong learner.

And to Jacob de Heer, for always answering the phone and for cheering me on through this experience from far away.

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. Novotny Calling Script pp. 83-84 (Novotny Calling Script pp 83-83.pdf)

File 2. Novotny Calling Script pp. 76-78 (Novotny Calling Script pp 76-78.pdf)

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VITA

- 2016 Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, Chapman University
- 2025 Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Stage Management), University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Role of Boundaries in Mitigating Perfectionism

by

Alina Rose Novotny

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

University of California San Diego, 2025

Professor Lisa Porter, Co-Chair

Professor Lora Powell, Co-Chair

Vinegar Tom toggles between the story of a witch hunt in rural 17th-century England and live punk rock interludes, which illustrate the internal turmoil of the characters. Going into this production, I knew it would be challenging, given the director's ambitious vision and the strained working history between some collaborators.

This process was far from perfect. Technical challenges, setbacks in the scenic build, and personality clashes created tension within the creative team. As a team member with formal authority, I knew it would be essential for me to foster a collaborative environment in the face of all this uncertainty.

This scenario would have sent a previous version of me, a former perfectionist, spiraling into people-pleasing, avoidance, and resentment. When I started moving through the process, I noticed a stark difference in my internal landscape from when I first started at UCSD. Before beginning graduate school, perfectionism was the chosen armor to get me through any tough situation. This default bred anxiety around change, a deep fear of making a mistake, and an inability to show up authentically in my life.

Because I was so focused on attempting to control everyone's perception of my leadership, I was unknowingly giving power to the approval of others. This conditioned a deep need for acceptance, affecting my leadership in uncertain terrain.

One of the most important skills I developed in graduate school was setting boundaries. This tool became a key component in dismantling my pervasive perfectionist mindset. My boundaries during *Vinegar Tom* ranged from clearly defined work hours to replacing negative self-talk with self-compassion. When I felt myself falling into old perfectionist habits, I would "name it," which would disrupt a toxic cycle of over-achievement in pursuit of validation. Taking accountability for my mistakes relieved my nervous system and contributed to self-regulation. I permitted myself to change my intentions and tactics when things didn't go according to plan. By creating a flexible acceptance of change, I released my rigid reverence for doing everything right. Setting these boundaries created an empowering distance between me

and perfectionism. This space allowed me to practice self-acceptance amidst mistakes and tolerance for the inevitable messiness of a production process.