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Immersed in the Ensemble Mindset: "This is Our Song About Us!"

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Immersed in the Ensemble Mindset: “This is Our Song About Us!”

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Amber R. Dettmers

Committee in charge:

Lisa Porter, Chair  
Lora Powell  
Kim Rubinstein

2020

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The Thesis of Amber R. Dettmers is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

## DEDICATION

For Kim Rubinstein; I will treasure our partnership forever.

For the City of Chicago.

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## LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. BALM Calling Script, Dettmers\_BALM\_Calling Script.pdf

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chicago, the home of ensemble-based theatre, where I learned how to be who I am and love what I do. You are the city that does theatre best in the most understated way. May I always make you proud.

Finally, Michael Rathbun, my person, my partner, my puzzle piece. You are my favorite theater artist, conversationalist, comedian, adventurer and human. Your endless love and support could never be repaid, though I will try. I am yours and you are mine from now until the end of days.



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Immersed in the Ensemble Mindset: “This is Our Song About Us!”

by

Amber R. Dettmers

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

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair

*Balm in Gilead* requires a unique level of orchestration and scoring by the ensemble, similar to the specificity of reading and playing a piece of music. The play exemplifies the need for ensemble stage managers, who lead productions with an ensemble mindset, establishing themselves as one with the ensemble, demonstrating the same level of focus, attention to detail, and storytelling as the actors and director. I guided our production with this ensemble approach, earning the trust of the players as I embraced each artistic choice fully, voiced technical curiosities, and shared in the collective language of the storytelling.

As I engaged the sensibility of an ensemble stage manager, I successfully integrated myself into the show’s artistic scope. I referenced the spirit and culture of ensemble we had

pledged to uphold, regularly discussed character and story, and addressed issues while appealing to a sense of community. I used plural pronouns from day one. The play was ours, and I included myself and the stage management team when talking about the creative process. I stood and joined the ensemble for the opening and closing ritual of each rehearsal. I gave multiple lines when prompting, showing that I understood the actors' needs within the complex text. When calling the show, I was one with the action onstage, fully engaged. Surfacing a group purpose resulted in discipline, community, and communal responsibility in both process and product. This ensemble approach to stage management contributed to a production driven by the company's interconnected accountability.