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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Drums in the Night: A Collaborative Process

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

Melanie Chen

Committee in charge:

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Manuel Rotenberg

2014

The thesis of Melanie Chen is approved and it is acceptable
in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION

To my family.

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I am extremely grateful to everyone I have had the great opportunity to work with during my graduate studies. The dedication, hard work, and passion will continue to inspire me long after graduation.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Drums in the Night: A Collaborative Process

by

Melanie Chen

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Shahrokh Yadegari, Chair

The concept for *Drums in the Night* started with a painting by George Grosz as an inspiration for the last act of the play. It was important to create a soundscape that captured the chaos and brightness that was represented in the painting. Mixing voices that traveled with music that had been heard in previous acts, I experimented bringing the audience into Kragler's mind.

With this expressionistic final act in mind, we explored other moments of suspended realism. During the engagement celebration in Act 2, Anna screams in disbelief as Kragler stumbles into the bar. In this moment of confusion, the drunk partygoers become rowdy. The chaos melts away into the background as the lovers become lost in each other. The bar atmosphere transforms into Charles Gounod's Ave Maria.

Anna recounts her nightmares when she believed that Kragler was dead. Kragler asks her to marry him. Before she can make a decision, they are abruptly interrupted. Ave Maria disappears and the noise of the bar returns.

We added a prologue based on Brecht's *Ballad of the Dead Soldier*. It tells the story of a soldier who died early in the war. The government decides to dig up the body and re-enlist him to get their full worth of a soldier. I collaborated with the singing actor to create our own version. The soundscape had sounds of destruction layered with deep tones to suggest an ominous environment while the sad melody of the music was sung on top.