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\$100: Remembering my Worth

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### Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

\$100: Remembering my Worth

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Ellen Nikbakht

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair  
Professor Marco Alexander Barricelli  
Professor Stephen W Buescher  
Professor Shahrokh D Yadegari

2024

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The Thesis of Ellen Nikbakht is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2024

## DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to my parents Jamshid Nikbakht and Stephanie Horn Nikbakht, who have supported and loved me through the thick and thin and have done everything possible to guide me to the path of success.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

\$100: Remembering my Worth

by

Ellen Nikbakht

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

I came to grad school with a particle of confidence in myself and after almost 3 years, I can confidently say that a \$100 bill is a \$100 bill. It was not one event: it was a sum of memorable and prolonged moments, but I'll mention one moment of a growing pain that left me feet taller.

Before the last performance of *Machinal*, I was already exhausted. What was physically expected of me as an actor was unlike any thing I had ever done. It was a gift to be tossed into a play; no room to "cut myself off at the belt", per Stephen. Before every show, I was filled with a sense of dread, but the lights would fade, I would hear the sound cue, and begin the journey. By the end, I was shocked that I was bowing, and left feeling more self-assured than I was before. Today, whenever I do anything that scares me, I laugh and say "I have done really hard things"

and every time, I see myself sprinting into Machinal. Nothing has made me trust more in my ability than knowing that I am capable doing one singular show of Machinal. Ursula, Marco, and Stephen were my mirrors, reflecting my potential when I couldn't see it for myself. Ursula taught me to trust my voice, Marco, the power of stillness, and Stephen, that I am way more worthy than what I give myself credit for.