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Watson, Samantha

Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Collaborative Evolution:
Finding my role in the production process

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Samantha Watson

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair
Professor Patricia Rincon
Professor Manuel Rotenberg
Professor Kim Rubinstein

2011

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

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to Lisa Porter. Thank you for seeing my potential, being my person, and teaching me how to unpack. I will never stop being grateful.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the stage management tribe for your never-ending friendship, inspiration and support. I hope we are working together again soon.

Erin Gioia Albrecht, Kristi Clarida, Deirdre Rose Holland, Kevin Robert Fitzpatrick, Hannah Wichmann, Leighann Enos, Emily C. Hayes, Lauren Juengel, Miso Wei, Laura Zingle and Zach Kennedy

Especially my classmates, Cate O'Brien and Evangeline Rose Whitlock

Thank you to my stage management step-parents; your presence, guidance and mentorship have truly enhanced my education.

David O'Brien, Matt Stern, Patti Saraniero, Leila Knox, Dana DePaul

Thank you to my collaborators; I learned so much working with you.

Tom Dugdale, Kim Rubinstein, Pat Rincon, Charlie Oates and Anthony Luciano.

Lastly, thank you to my parents for always supporting me, even when I decided to go into theatre.

Victor and Diane Watson

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Collaborative Evolution:
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by

Samantha Watson

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

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair

When I started graduate school, I was searching for new experiences. Having mastered the straight play, I wanted to plug my passion for stage management into a new outlet. When I stage managed *Sexual Selection*, I stepped into the world of non-traditional theatre. With the trust of the two directors, I became an integral member of the collaborative team, developing a strong emotional connection to the work. That production was a transformative experience and I discovered a love for working in highly collaborative environments, allowing me to broaden the scope of my involvement as a stage manager.

Over the course of my studies, I had the opportunity to work on dance and an international project. I deepened my understanding of the importance of communication, embracing the language of choreographers and connecting with

dancers who did not speak English. I opened myself to new ways of creating theatre and expanded my collaborative vocabulary.

With this new approach, I returned to the straight play for my thesis production. The skills I developed in my non-traditional theatre experiences translated into my work on *Hedda Gabler*. The strong role I assumed helped me to truly evolve my voice as a stage manager. I positioned myself at the center of the collaboration and was embraced by the company as a steady force throughout the process. My journey through diverse methods of performance has led me to find myself and discover the joy of being an integral collaborator in the performance process.

TESMAN

All right. I was only—now that you belong to the family—

HEDDA

Hm—I don't know— *(She crosses the room to the doorway.)*

TESMAN

(after a pause). Is something the matter, Hedda? Uh?

HEDDA

I'm just looking at my old piano. It doesn't fit here. With all these other things.

TESMAN

When I start working we can see about trading it in for a new one.

HEDDA

No, not—I don't want to part with it! We can put it...and then get another for in here. When there's a chance, I mean.

TESMAN

(slightly cast down). Yes, we could do that, of course.

HEDDA

(picks up the bouquet from the piano). These weren't here when we got in last night. *(Taking out the card and reading it)* "Will stop back later today." Guess who this is from?

TESMAN

Who? Hm?

HEDDA

"Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN

Really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife. Miss Rysing, she used to be.

HEDDA

Exactly. The one with the irritating red hair she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've heard.

TESMAN

(laughing). Oh, that, wasn't for long. And before I knew you, Hedda. But imagine—she's here in town.

HEDDA

It's odd that she calls on us. I've haven't seen her since high school.

DR↑B

TESMAN

Yes, I haven't seen her either since... How she can stand living so far out in the country?

DR↓

HEDDA

(thinks a moment, then bursts out). But doesn't he, uh—Eilert Lovborg live up there?

TESMAN

Yeah, someplace around there.

DR↑ ME

BERTA

She's back again, ma'am—that lady who left those flowers an hour ago.

HEDDA

Oh? Good. Ask her to come in.

DR↓
(B on 2nd Step)

HEDDA

(going to greet her warmly). Good morning, my dear Mrs. Elvsted. How lovely to see you again!

MRS. ELVSTED

(nervously; struggling to control herself). Yes, it's been a long time.

TESMAN

(gives her his hand). Us too, uh?

HEDDA

Thank you for your beautiful flowers—

MRS. ELVSTED

Oh, that's nothing—I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon, but I heard you weren't at home.

TESMAN

Have you just now come to town? Uh?

Warning L129

MRS. ELVSTED

I got in yesterday around noon. Oh, I was—desperate—when I heard you weren't here.

HEDDA

Desperate! Why?

TESMAN

But Miss Rysing—Mrs. Elvsted, I mean—

HEDDA

You're not in some kind of trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED

I don't know another soul I can turn to.

HEDDA

Come—let's sit here on the sofa—

L 129

MRS. ELVSTED

I can't sit down. I'm really too much on edge!

HEDDA

Why, of course you can. Come here.

TESMAN

Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted?

HEDDA

Has something happened at home?

MRS. ELVSTED

Yes, that's it and...not it. Oh, I don't want you to misunderstand me.

HEDDA

Then the best thing, Mrs. Elvsted, is simply to speak your mind.

TESMAN

Because that's why you've come. Hm?

MRS. ELVSTED

Yes. Then, I have to tell you—if you don't, already know—that Eilert Lovborg's also in town.

HEDDA

Eilert—!

TESMAN

What! Is Eilert Lovborg back! Just think, Hedda!

LOVBORG

I know what Thea's been telling you.

HEDDA

And perhaps you've—been telling her all about us?

LOVBORG

Not a word. She's too stupid for that sort of thing.

Warning L237
& S59

HEDDA

Stupid?

LOVBORG

When it comes to those things, she's stupid.

DR ↑ ME

HEDDA

And I'm, a coward. *(Leans closer, without looking him in the eyes, and speaks softly).*
But there is something now that I can tell you.

LOVBORG

(intently). What?

HEDDA

When I didn't dare shoot you—

LOVBORG

Yes?

L 237

HEDDA

That wasn't my worst cowardice that night.

DR ↓

LOVBORG

(looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately). Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I see it, the hidden reason we've been so close! You and I—! It was the hunger for life in you—

HEDDA

(quietly, with a sharp glance). No! Don't think that!

S 59
(ME on stage)
Bump

HEDDA

(turning the album off and calling out with a smile). There she is! Thea dear—please come in!

HEDDA

(on the sofa, stretching her arms out toward her). Thea, my sweet—I began to think you wouldn't make it!

Warning L239

MRS. ELVSTED

Perhaps I'll go and talk with your husband?

HEDDA

Oh, no. Let them be. They're leaving soon.

MRS. ELVSTED

Leaving?

HEDDA

Yes, the boys are going drinking.

MRS. ELVSTED

-- *(to Loveborg)*

LOVBORG

Not me.

HEDDA

Mr. Lovborg is staying—with us.

MRS. ELVSTED

(about to sit down beside him). Oh, it's so good to be here!

L 239

HEDDA

Uh-uh-uh, Thea dear! Not there! ~~You~~ come over here by me. I want to be in the middle.

MRS. ELVSTED

Oh, of course.

LOVBORG

(after a brief pause, to, HEDDA). Isn't she lovely to look at?

HEDDA

(lightly stroking her hair). Only to look at?

LOVBORG

Yes. Because we two—she and I—we really are true companions. We trust each other completely. We can talk things out together without any reservations.

HEDDA

Never anything devious, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG

--!

Warning S65

MRS. ELVSTED

(quietly, leaning close to HEDDA). Oh, Hedda, you don't know how happy I am! Just think—he says I've inspired him.

HEDDA

(regarding her with a smile). Really, dear; did he say that?

LOVBORG

And the courage she has, Mrs. Tesman, especially when put to the test.

MRS. ELVSTED

Me! Courage!

LOVBORG

Enormous courage.

HEDDA

Yes, courage—yes! If one only had that.

LOVBORG

Then what?

S 65

HEDDA

Then life might still be bearable. *(Suddenly changing her tone.)* But now, Thea you must have a nice glass of champagne.

MRS. ELVSTED

No, thank you. Never for me.

Warning S67

HEDDA

Then you, Mr. Lovborg.

LOVBORG

Thanks, not for me either.

ACT FOUR

MISS TESMAN

Well, Hedda, ~~here~~ I am, all dressed in mourning. My poor sister's ordeal is finally over.

L 401 & S 147
(AJ on stage)

HEDDA

As you see, I've already heard. Tesman called.

Warning L 403

MISS TESMAN

Yes, he promised he would. But all the same I, thought that—here in the house of life—I ought to bear the news of death myself.

HEDDA

That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN

This is no time for grief in Hedda's house.

HEDDA

(changing the subject). She had a peaceful death, then, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN

Oh, she went so calmly, so beautifully. And so inexpressibly happy that she could see George once again. He's still not home?

HEDDA

No, won't you sit down?

L 403

MISS TESMAN

No, thank you, my dear—blessed Hedda. I'd love to, but I have so little time. I want to see her dressed and made ready. She should go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA

Can't I help you with something?

DR↑ T

MISS TESMAN

Oh, you mustn't think of it. This is nothing for Hedda Tesman to put her hands to. Or let her thoughts dwell on, either. Not at a time like this, no.

HEDDA

Ah, thoughts—they're not so easy to control—

DR↓

MISS TESMAN

(continuing). Well, there's life for you. At my house now we'll be sewing a shroud for Rina. And here, too, there'll be sewing soon, I imagine. But a far different kind, praise God!

HEDDA

Well, at last! It's about time.

TESMAN

Are you here, Aunt Julie? With Hedda? Think of that!

MISS TESMAN

I was just this minute leaving, dear boy. Well, did you get done all you promised you would?

TESMAN

No. I'm really afraid I've forgotten half. I'll have to run over and see you tomorrow. My brain's completely—. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN

George, you should rejoice in your grief. Rejoice in everything that's happened, as I do.

TESMAN

Oh yes, of course. You're thinking of Auntie Rina.

HEDDA

It's going to be lonely for you, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN

For the first few days, yes. But not for long, I hope. There's always some poor invalid in need of care and attention.

HEDDA

Would you really take another burden like that on yourself?

MISS TESMAN

Burden! Mercy on you, child—it's been no burden for me. And I do so much need someone to live for—I, too. Well, thank God, in this house as well, there soon ought to be work that an old aunt can turn her hand to.

HEDDA

Oh, forget about us—

TESMAN

Yes, think how pleasant it could be for the three of us if—

HEDDA

Warning L 405

If—?

TESMAN

(uneasily). Oh, nothing. It'll all take care of itself.

MISS TESMAN

Ah, yes. Well, I expect you two have things to talk about. *(Smiles.)* And perhaps Hedda has something to tell you, George. Good-bye. I'll have to get home now to Rina.

HEDDA

(follows TESMAN with a cold, probing look). I almost think you feel this death more than she.

TESMAN

Oh, it's not just Auntie Rina's death, It's Eilert.

HEDDA

(quickly). Any news about him?

TESMAN

I stopped up at his place this afternoon.

L 405

HEDDA

Did you see him?

TESMAN

No, he wasn't home. But I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she said he'd been here early this morning.

HEDDA

Yes, right after you left.

TESMAN

And he said he'd torn up his manuscript. Uh?

HEDDA

Yes.

TESMAN

He must have been completely demented! You didn't dare give it back to him, Hedda, did you?