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Smith, Jordan C.

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The Risk of Living from Your Heart

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Jordan C. Smith

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair
Professor Marc Alexander Barricelli
Professor Stephen W Buescher
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2022

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University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

Lee Kenneth Richardson

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Risk of Living From Your Heart

By

Jordan C. Smith

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego 2022

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. A common phrase I heard growing up. As I've gotten older I've realized how ironic it is that I was conditioned to not take words to heart yet the heart is the very place they are born from. There is a magnetic power that words hold as saying a certain string of words produces a feeling like that of certain musical

chords evoking a feeling. In the world of theater one playwright is known for the 1700+ words they invented in the English language that is Sir William Shakespeare. In class with Marco we learned of the power of Shakespeare words through reading Hamlet and we were also introduced to a particular perspective of performing classical material. There are a myriad of ways to perform Shakespeare and I don't have an answer for one clear way to perform Shakespeare but there is a belief that Shakespeare wrote in correlation to a character's thoughts in most of his work. In the modern 21st century we've been conditioned to think before we speak and to not really express what you are really thinking in the moment so you won't be perceived as uncouth. But it is believed that Shakespeare wrote in relation to the subconscious thoughts of his characters. John Barton who inspired esteemed English Director Michael Langham, believed that Shakespeare's text was meant to be trusted and surrendered to. That if an actor and director allowed themselves to be guided by the text that there would be a freedom instead of a fear of the verse being a threat to throw the actor off. Living Thought is a concept that is notably known as a character grappling with the given circumstance of what's happening and finding the words in the moment. This is something that isn't foreign to your average person. When probed with a question our eyes look away or in the distance to search for the words that will answer that question accordingly. It's the same in Shakespeare the character searches for the words and when they find the words they spitball and spitball and what the character might have thought would be two sentences turns into a monologue similar to how our mind races. The character is living the thoughts out loud instead of keeping it in their head. There is a huge risk and fear of performing text with this concept. "What if I forget my lines?" "Maybe I should learn my lines in a pattern so that I don't throw myself or my cast mates off?" But what I've learned from this is that is exactly what the character feels. In embracing that fear and that risk it adds to the

discovery and wonder in living in the moment of finding the words to say just as the characters are in the moment of their circumstance. And in doing that feelings and emotions pour out not because you are enforcing a feeling but because an actor is surrendering to the words holding the weight of something stronger than sticks and stones, your heart.

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