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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Establishing a Caring Community within the *Everybody* Process

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Stage Management)

by

Allison Bailey

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair
Professor Matthew Herbst
Professor Ursula Meyer
Professor Lora Powell

2022

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

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

To my grandmothers, LouAnn and Mary Ann, whose name I carry on proudly.
To my grandpas, Don and Walt, who were always in the audience.
To my parents, Milissa and Kent, who always supported their artsy kids.

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File 2. DANSE MACABRE CALLING PAGES, bailey_danse_macabre_calling_pages.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Lisa Porter and Lora Powell, whose mentorship and guidance have gotten me through this rollercoaster ride. Thank you to the *Everybody* stage management team – Stephanie, Hannah, and Angela. Thank you for your enthusiasm and participation with my weekly questions. You were all instrumental in making this show happen.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Establishing a Caring Community within the *Everybody* Process

by

Allison Bailey

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

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Lisa Porter, Chair

“Also, really listening to each other, and maybe being less judgmental and more forgiving but, also, owning up to our mistakes and being open to changing our own minds. Lead with our Understanding. You know: just being nice to each other. For once. And I’m talking about Everybody.”

USHER, *Everybody* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

I am drawn to theatre because I value the opportunity to create a culture of care within communities that create art. My thesis production, *Everybody*, was about the uncertainty of life and death, and what humans do with the opportunities and relationships that we have during our existence. My opportunity to lead in the collaborative creation of an embodied community was disrupted by COVID-19 and four quarters of virtual learning and production work. This led to frustration and angst when I was crafting my thesis

intentions. Still, I seized the opportunity that was offered, and committed to nurturing a community in which care and support are at the forefront of its shared values. I ultimately referred to the script to articulate my intentions around cultivating a supportive environment, and aligned my objectives with what I consider to be the necessary components of such a community.

Trust and camaraderie are essential for supportive and caring community building. These elements were built with the stage management team by creating a structure of feedback that held everyone accountable. Every week, I asked the team a question, and I shared a query I had been reflecting on for the week. By exchanging this data throughout the process, I received authentic feedback, and built upon the team's relationships to cultivate interdependence and accountability within the entire rehearsal process.

When there were moments of rising tensions in rehearsals, I had an empathetic overload - I was receiving and holding onto the negative emotions that others were feeling or bringing into the room. I felt that I had disappointed my community, and that I had failed to create a space where we could all be truly open and radically honest with each other.

This failure and emotional burden I was carrying led me to realize that I was struggling to embody the intentions I had been working on throughout the past year: I can only control my own experiences; I can feel empathy without overloading; I want to let go of the desire to eradicate conflicts that exist within collaboration and community. During a particularly difficult week, I wrote in my rehearsal notes: "why am I putting the well-being of everyone on my shoulders?"

I communicated how I was feeling to the stage management team, and they suggested that I check in with the creative team about their expectations. The stage

management team helped me realize that establishing a culture of care needed to extend to myself. I then encouraged self-advocacy to those who were struggling to communicate their authentic feelings, and I let go of the self-imposed obligation to smooth things over and foster a conflict-free environment.

This process clarified that, for me, being in community means that there is space for honesty and open communication, along with empowering everyone to self-advocate. Community also means growing a culture of support and accountability, especially when there is conflict. As one team member described the process during our final check-in: “It was never a lonely show. There was always support, somewhere in some capacity. We never had to figure it out on our own.” While it wasn’t easy to accomplish, this is the culture of care that I strive to establish as I approach each production process.