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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Playing with Fire

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Chaz Shermil Hodges

Committee in charge:

Kyle Donnelly, Chair
Ursula Meyer
Charles Oates
Manuel Rotenberg

2014

The thesis of Chaz Shermil Hodges is approved and it is acceptable
in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to everyone who fostered a hunger and drive in my belly. To those who believed wholeheartedly that artists inspire the world and through inspiration springs change. Thank you.

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File 8. Grapes of Wrath as Grandma Joad

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File 10. A Lie of the Mind as Beth

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First and foremost I would like to thank the Creator. I would not be here in this position without divine guidance. I feel very full and blessed.

Next, I would like to thank my Mom. There has never been a moment you were not in my corner – loving me through fantastic ups and extreme downs. I belong to such a beautiful, intelligent, gentle, and compassionate woman. Although, I come from humble beginnings you made it your life’s mission to give me all that you could. For that, I am eternally grateful. It’s you and me forever babe.

I must also thank Steve Traylor, who was the first person to tell me that I could be an enchanting woman and phenomenal actress. Without his love, support, and mentorship over the years, I would have never dreamed that I could have accomplished any of this.

Additionally, I must thank my graduate mentors, two of the most amazing people I have ever had the privilege to study under, Gregory Wallace and Kyle Donnelly. Their constant consultation has allowed me to learn in ways I did not think possible. Their rigor and demand excited and disciplined me to not only be a dynamic actress, but a well-rounded person. Thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank my classmates, Vi Flaten, Michael Hammond, Gerard Joseph, Ronald Kirk, Tom Patterson, and Danvir Singh – I love you all so much, thank you for being six of the best mirrors a girl could ever hope to have. A very special thanks goes out to Jasmine St.Clair. You are my sister, and my best friend. You taught me how to love in a new way. You sparkle. I couldn’t have made it through the madness

of Graduate school without you by my side. How did Kyle know? I love you from the bottom of my heart.

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Classes of 2015 and 2016, you guys are some of the loveliest people and I am glad I got the chance to play with many of you before my departure. I know that it will not be the end. I'll see you guys out there in the world, and we'll set the stage on fire. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you all.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Playing with Fire

by

Chaz Shermil Hodges

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair

All my life I've had a heart like a broken levee. It has the reputation of being sensitive and full, crackling with an undeniable depth. However, I never knew how to access my well. At a young age, I learned that silence can be deafening, darkness can be illuminating, and sadness can be invaluable. As a first generation college student, attending UCSD was a life altering experience.

Professors like Kyle Donnelly and Gregory Wallace, put me face-to-face with myself. I met me time and time again in the regality of characters like Titania, the sadness of sweet Oya, and the indomitable spirit of battered Beth. Through these women I found a voice – gone was the hesitancy of girlhood.

When I found theatre - I found a prism, a kaleidoscope of all the ideas that I needed to convey. A colorful way to explore the inequalities of the world. Needless to say, it has been frightfully rewarding. Never has there been a time where I have felt the most at ease and trusting of human coexistence.

Flourishing among many like-minded artists not only taught me how to be active but also encouraged it. A small flame burns bright within my belly so much so, it amazes me that a once shy, fearful, reserved actress – now thrives on uncertainty. I used to live life with my eyes closed, anxiously approaching the next moment with held breath and extreme doubt. Now, well now I sizzle and I long to play with fire. Thanks to my training, I am only interested in art that will set the world ablaze.