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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Dorn's Buttons

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Ronald Kirk Washington

Committee in charge:

Kyle Donnelly, Chair
Ursula Meyer
Charles Oates
Manuel Rotenberg

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

- File 1. JUNE MOON Surprise!
- File 2. OTHELLOMAN Ambition and humility
- File 3. IN THE RED & BROWN WATER Oya seduction
- File 4. IN THE RED & BROWN WATER Shango deployment
- File 5. TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE Wait your turn
- File 6. TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE Longing
- File 7. LITTLE CHILDREN DREAM OF GOD Baby Touissant
- File 8. LITTLE CHILDREN DREAM OF GOD Voodoo dance
- File 9. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Casey and Tom
- File 10. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Righteous
- File 11. THE GRAPES OF WRATH Goodbye Ma
- File 12. A DOLL'S HOUSE Unrequited
- File 13. A DOLL'S HOUSE Up in smoke

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dorn's Buttons

by

Ronald Kirk Washington

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of Southern California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Kyle Donnelly, Chair

In Process during spring quarter of first-year, there was a small moment involving an unbuttoned shirt—a small moment involving smaller buttons. Chekhov's *The Seagull*: paramours Dorn and Paulina sit together at a table in Sorin's garden, engaged in Chekhovian chitchat. Prior to there was a dance, a kiss, a caress. Having noticed Dorn's unbuttoned shirt, Paulina begins to button it. Successful at the sternum, she starts for another. But instead of letting her finish this quiet act, a casual kindness extended a familiar lover, I deemed it dull and reached for what I thought the more exciting choice: Paulina. Before this

touch, the scene is stopped. “That was such a beautiful moment,” said the instructor, “Why not let her finish?”

* * *

Ask not “What am I doing to her?” but rather “How do I want to make her feel?” The former’s a jar filled with marbles and trinkets. The latter’s that same jar filled with marbles, trinkets, and precious sand.

* * *

The difference in severity of a simple head tilt can be the difference between curious and despondent. An external approach is merely an internal one unjustified.

* * *

If the thought is clear trust that the breath needed to convey it will be right-sized, the text audible and truthful. Provided I’ve warmed-up. Consonants and vowels are emotive.

* * *

Who knew singing’s a lot like shooting a jump shot? First, a clean grab, then jump, free and long release in rhythm—don’t overthink it. Got a beautiful jumper. It took me twenty years to develop it.