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EVOLUTION INTO MADNESS:
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE DUKE OF CORNWALL

by

Kyle V. Broussard

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Theatre Arts

Under the Supervision of Professor Harris Smith

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EVOLUTION INTO MADNESS

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE DUKE OF CORNWALL

Kyle Vincent Broussard, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Harris Smith

The Duke of Cornwall, created by the world's most popular and influential playwright in history, William Shakespeare, is a complex, compelling, and controversial character brought forth to life in the pages of *King Lear*. In accordance to guidelines established by the University of Nebraska, the following graduate thesis will provide a basic outline of my journey through the challenges of understanding, developing, and ultimately performing the role of Cornwall in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The Duke of Cornwall was a challenging and often difficult role to embody and understand due to several factors, such as interpreting his motivations, understanding his part in context to the entire play, and finding a successful way to combine my essence as a person and a performer with a character who embodies pure malice, mayhem, and madness. I will also provide personal insight into the process that I discovered and used, mainly through trial and error, to bring the Duke of Cornwall to life on *King Lear*'s opening night.

DEDICATION

*I WOULD LIKE TO DEDICATE MY THESIS TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER
WITHOUT YOUR LOVE AND SUPPORT, THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.*

AND TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND AND MFA CLASSMATE,

JASON FRANCIS.

I MISS YOUR SMILING FACE, BUT I KNOW YOU ARE WATCHING ME FROM UP

ABOVE. I LOVE YOU!

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part One: Research.....	1
William Shakespeare.....	2
The Script: <i>King Lear</i>	5
Major Characters.....	6
Summary.....	9
Themes.....	10
Performance History.....	12
Part Two: Process.....	14
Research.....	14
Rehearsal.....	15
Performance.....	15
Character Analysis.....	16
Motivations.....	17
Scene Breakdown.....	18
Part Three: Physicality.....	21
Physical Characteristics.....	21
Movement.....	21
Animal Essence.....	22
Vocal Abilities.....	22
Appendix A.....	23
The Plays of William Shakespeare.....	23
Appendix B.....	25
<i>King Lear</i> Journal.....	25
Appendix C.....	50
Virginia Smith Interview.....	50
Harris Smith Interview.....	52
Stan Brown Interview.....	54
Works Cited.....	55

Introduction

I will never forget the day I found out that I would be playing the Duke of Cornwall in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film's production of William Shakespeare's King Lear. The production was to be directed by Virginia Smith and premiere on Howell Stage in November of 2009. My thesis will take you on that journey. Enjoy!

Part One: Research

The Playwright: William Shakespeare

'Suspect I may, yet not directly tell

I guess one angel in another's hell'

Sonnet 144

Considered the greatest playwright in history, William Shakespeare's legacy began with his birth on April 23, 1564. John Shakespeare and Mary Arden baptized their son a few days after his birth in the city of Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Although originally not from Stratford-upon-Avon, John Shakespeare decided to build a home and life in this city after his wife received land and money from her father and grandfather. Stratford was a small city with a population of 800 located within a large Parish. At the time of Shakespeare's birth, Stratford-upon-Avon suffered 1/3 population loss due to the bubonic plague. Developing from *Yersinia pestis* bacterium, the bubonic plague infects the lymphatic system and is spread by fleas and rats. At the height of the epidemic in 1340 & 50's, the plague was responsible for killing millions of people throughout Europe thus causing fear, panic, burglary, vandalism, malnutrition, and high unemployment. According to Stephen Greenblatt, chief editor of The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition, the "plague had a direct and immediate impact on Shakespeare's own life and profession, city officials kept records of the weekly number of plague deaths: when these surpassed a certain number, the theatres were peremptorily closed." Details of Shakespeare's childhood remain speculative and inconclusive. Besides two official city records, there were no written accounts detailing much of his early life in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare was raised in a well-to-do family. His father John started a glove making company around 1556. In A Short Life of Shakespeare, Charles Williams explains that "we are told by Rowe, presumably on the authority of Thomas Betterton at Stratford, that John Shakespeare educated his son at a free school, but withdrew him owing to 'the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home'. After being taken out of school, William helped his father with the family's new

butchery. In 1582, at the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. She was with child before her marriage to Shakespeare. The pregnancy resulted in a speedy marriage and the birth of a daughter in 1583 named Susanna. Two years later in 1585, Anne Hathaway gave birth to a set of twin, which she and her husband named Hamnet and Judith.

The next stage in Shakespeare's life is equally as mysterious and debatable as his childhood. Shakespearean historian and author Leslie Dunton-Downer says the "undocumented period of Shakespeare's life, from 1582 to 1592, is known as the 'lost years'. Historians and scholars agree that during this ten-year period, Shakespeare moved his family to London and began a career as a writer and actor. According to Pauline Kiernan, writer of Filthy Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Most Outrageous Sexual Puns, "in 1593, when eleven thousand people died of the plague the playwright would have walked streets where the stench of putrefied corpses piled up was as horrific as the site of the black skin stretched over skeletal bodies, rats and maggots eating their eyes, beetles and flies nesting in their open mouths behind blue, blotched lips." Life in London was extremely hard and life expectancy for men was only about 35-40 years old. Almost half of the city's population lived in poverty. London was a city of extremes. Pauline Kiernan describes that "almost everyday, you would have been able to watch a form of public execution at one of several London sites. Traitors would be strung up till only half dead, have their bowels ripped out, their legs hacked off, and their bodies licked by flames, a human bonfire, slowly burning to death." It's hard to imagine the deplorable conditions Shakespeare and his family lived through during this period of his life. In the 1590's, London ballooned to a population of over 200,000 residents. The city was walled which provided a breeding ground for the plague. Starvation and unemployment ravished the city and caused economic and political unrest.

Around 1590, Shakespeare began writing his first play, Henry VI. He also became a founding member of an acting company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Shakespeare's acting company, under the patronage of Lord Chamberlain, performed at the Rose Theatre. London's theatre district was located on the south side of the city in its prostitution area. Pauline Kiernan states "the theatres were built in the district of the warehouses and Molly-houses (male brothels) on the south bank of the Thames, which

were licensed by the Bishop of Winchester who made a fortune from them and who was satirized by Shakespeare for his hypocrisy of growing fat on the sins of the flesh.” Along with the Rose, the Swan, Globe, and Hope theatres provided the citizens of London with ample opportunities to see live performances of plays from Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Built in 1599, the Globe became London’s premier playhouse. This roofless theatre was 20-sided, and had three levels with the capacity to house 3,000 spectators. While the plays of Shakespeare were being performed on stage, audience members could buy food and drink. Audience members were often drunk and rowdy. Shakespeare wrote many of his plays on the basis of trying to keep an audience’s attention for three plus hours.

Shakespeare wrote thirty-six plays in his lifetime. According to Leslie Dunton-Downer in her book, Essential Shakespearean Handbook, “Shakespeare might never have taken his place as the greatest writer in the English language if the First Folio had not been published in 1623. Of the 36 plays attributed to him at his death, 18 existed in quarto editions of varying reliability and the rest had not been published.” John Hemminge and Henry Condell, members of the King’s men, were instrumental in collecting all of Shakespeare’s plays. Three additional folios were printed in 1632, 1663, and 1685.

Shakespeare also wrote a collection of poems detailing an intense love affair between the “dark lady” and a “fair youth” in the Sonnets. In A Short Life of Shakespeare by Charles Williams, the Shakespearean historian says “the Sonnets were issued in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe: there was another edition by John Benson in 1640, which contains minor poems by Shakespeare and others interspersed. The 1609 text is not a very good one. It may rest upon a fairly authoritative manuscript, but there are sufficient misprints of punctuation not explicable upon any theory of rhetorical punctuation.”

In the last years of his life, Shakespeare moved his family back to his childhood home in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare died on April 23rd, 1616. His wife and two daughters received the bulk of his estate. Hamnet, Shakespeare’s only son, died at the age of eleven. Shakespeare is the most performed playwright in history. During his life, he was a respected playwright but was not admired and praised until after his death,

especially during the last two hundred years. His influence on theatre is profound and ever present. Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright and creator of Epic Theatre, based much of his work and ideas around the plays of Shakespeare. High schools, universities, regional theatres, and professional stages around the world, continue to perform Shakespeare's canon. In closing, Shakespeare was extremely superstitious. On his grave in Stratford-upon-Avon, he wrote the following words to discourage anyone from moving his remains:

*'Good friend for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here:
Blest be the man that spars these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones'*

The Script -- *King Lear*

King Lear was written over a two-year period from 1605-1606. Shakespeare borrowed the story from *The Chronicle History of King Leir* and the *Chronicles of Holinshed*. Historians also debate whether or not Shakespeare used Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* as a source for his version of the King Lear story. Geoffrey of Monmouth's book, according to Shakespearean editor Andrew Hadfield, "tells the story of the kings of Britain from the arrival of Brutus, a descendent of Aeneas, founder of Rome, to the flight of the Britons to Brittany when the Saxons overwhelm them. One of Geoffrey's principle achievements was to provide the first serious account of the reign of King Arthur, one of the central attractions of the book and something we should consider when thinking about the reasons for interest in stories such as that of King Lear." In *The Chronicle History of King Lear*, the story of Lear is engulfed with Christian ideals and values. Shakespeare's version of the story however, is set in a Pagan world. He alters the story even further with the death of Lear and Cordelia and the addition of Kent and the Fool. He also borrowed the Gloucester subplot from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. Two different versions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* can be found in quarto one published in 1608, and the First Folio published in 1623.

King Lear contains many spiritual values and principles within its pages. According to Leslie Dunton-Downer, "Shakespeare purposely set *King Lear* in a pre-

Christian word. A Christian setting would have allowed characters to attribute to their tragic searches and sufferings an untimely redemptive spiritual meaning.” She believes that “characters in *King Lear* have nowhere to turn for answers but to themselves and their earthly world.” In 16th century England, the Bible was the center of Shakespeare’s world. The *Bishop’s Bible* was read in English churches and Shakespeare alludes to its pages more than any other book. Leslie Dunton-Downer believes that “poets and scholars have asserted over the centuries, and some still do, that *King Lear* is principally a literary achievement—one that ranks alongside Sophocles’ *Antigone* and even the *Book of Job*.” Shakespeare, the world’s most famous and influential playwright, was able to borrow certain elements and ideas from previous published works of the pagan King circulating in Europe and create his own unique spin on the story. His version of *King Lear* is much darker in tone and incorporates many more Christian ideals and themes than previous versions on the story.

Major Characters

King Lear

Protagonist of the play. His power is absolute and unchallenged until he decides to divide his Kingdom up between his three daughters. After the banishment of his daughter Cordelia, the pagan King battles his two eldest daughters for control, respect, and power. King Lear, along with Gloucester, is doomed for failure because of his heroic flaw. Both of these major characters in the play put trust and power in the hands of their children. King Lear banishes his youngest daughter from his Kingdom and hands over power and control to his power hungry and ever controlling two eldest daughters, thus sealing his fate. By the end of Shakespeare’s tragic play, the ill-fated king dies of a broken heart.

Cordelia

The youngest daughter of King Lear. She refuses to profess her love to her father and that is the one major trigger to his downfall. Cordelia, unlike her two older sisters, respects her father and has his best interests at heart. Like her father, Cordelia’s fate is

sealed within the first scene of the play. She, like Kent, Albany & Gloucester, is loyal to her father throughout the entire sordid affair. Cordelia lacks the thirst for power and control that her two older sisters have and prefers to follow a righteous path filled with loyalty and undying devotion towards her father.

Regan

King Lear's middle child. She is married to the Duke of Cornwall. Unlike Cordelia, she is cruel, conspiring, and willing to destroy her father for power and control of his former empire. Cornwall and Regan have a marriage built around the principles of greed, pride, lust, and anger. Regan might have true and noble feelings towards her father at the beginning of the play, but as the story unfolds, her true intentions are made evident and her path towards destruction is quickly laid out by the playwright.

Goneril

King Lear's oldest child. She is married to the Duke of Albany. She is as evil as her sister Regan. She becomes infatuated with Edmund and plots to kill her husband and younger sister. She poisons her sister Regan in the final act of the play with the intention of securing her relationship with Edmund and ruling her father's Kingdom with Edmund and Edmund alone! Like her younger sister Regan, Goneril's ill treatment of her father and his associates leads to her committing suicide to avoid persecution from the Duke of Albany.

Gloucester

Loyal servant to the King. His mistrust in one of his sons leads to him being blinded and banished by Cornwall and Regan. Gloucester's storyline is a sub-plot to Lear's. They both make the mistake of trusting the wrong children. Edmund and Edgar are his two sons. Like King Lear, Gloucester's fate is sealed when he chooses to believe his bastard son Edmund over his legitimate son, Edgar. Edmund fakes a letter from his older brother and convinces his father that Edgar is plotting to take the old man's life.

Edgar

Gloucester's oldest son. He is loyal to his father and must take on the role of Tom, a homeless madman, to evade capture. At the end of the play, he faces his brother in a fight and ultimately takes control of Lear's Kingdom. Unlike his younger brother, Edgar is motivated by righteousness, and the thirst for a chance at redemption. By the end of the play, Edgar exposes his brother's traitorous plot and becomes King of Lear's empire.

Edmund

Gloucester's bastard son. He is evil, conniving, cunning, and thirsty for power, control, and respect. He turns on his father and brother by consorting with Cornwall, Regan, & Goneril. Edmund's downfall is partially due to his obsession with being "legit" and his trust being given to individuals who are as disturbed and misguided as himself. By the end of the play, Edmund does have a change of heart and tries to undo some of his treachery by warning his older brother of his order to kill Cordelia and King Lear.

Kent

Loyal servant to King Lear. He takes on the disguise of Caius to help watch his downward falling king. Kent embodies age, wisdom, determination, piety, and self control. His love and undying devotion to King Lear is apparent throughout the play climaxing in the final scene when he is given the crown by Albany, but refuses the offer and instead remains by the dead king's body.

Cornwall

He is married to Regan. The duke is cruel, controlling and seeks to destroy anyone and anything that may stop him and his wife from taking control of Lear's kingdom. Though his time in the play is limited to the first act, Cornwall manages to wreak havoc within the very fibers of King Lear's empire. Cornwall befriends Edmund early on within the play and they conspire together to remove Gloucester, Lear, and Edgar as threats from their ambitious plan of taking control off the aging king's land. His thirst for power and control culminates in horrific blinding of Edmund's father, Gloucester. The Duke of Cornwall is mortally wounded at the end of Act III.

Albany

The duke is married to Goneril. Unlike Cornwall, he is kind, but indecisive. For the most part, his actions within the play are guided by good intentions. By the final act of the play, the Duke of Albany is driven to foil his wife's evil plans and restore the aging king back to his throne. The Duke of Albany is offered the kingdom by the play's end, but refuses it and recommends that Edgar take control and restores some sort of normalcy and order within the empire.

Fool

He is the court's clown. Through the use of song and wit, he is able to comment on his master's many wrong decisions. He is King Lear's conscience throughout the play. The Fool tells his sharp tongued and irrational king of the many flaws within his recent decisions. He remains loyal to Lear until the very end of his journey within the play. His fate is sealed by Lear's descent into madness, ultimately caused by the banishment of his youngest daughter, Cordelia, and the cruelty of Goneril and Regan.

Summary

At the beginning of the play, King Lear decides to divide his kingdom between his three daughters. He asks each of them to express how much they love him and after his favorite daughter Cordelia refuses to give him the answer that he was expecting, Lear banishes her from the kingdom. The sympathetic King of France brings Cordelia back to his country where they plot to overthrow her two older sisters and restore order in her father's kingdom. Lear's sanity and power come into question after he is confronted and tested by his two eldest daughters. This treachery causes Lear to go insane and curse the gods for his misfortune, despite all of his problems resulting from his banishment of Cordelia and putting his faith and trust in his two other daughters. King Lear flees to the woods after being locked out of Gloucester's home. The Pagan King slowly slips into a state of madness while wondering through the wilderness. Gloucester realizes that Goneril and Regan are not faithful to their father and with great risk, he conspires with the King of France to help restore Lear's kingdom. When Edmund finds out about this plot, he tells the Duke of Cornwall and Regan of the conspiracy which results in

Gloucester's being blinded and banished from his home. Edgar, disguised as poor Tom, finds his father in the woods and leads him to Dover to meet Lear. Kent, disguised as a peasant named "Caius" for the majority of the play, watches over Lear and eventually helps the king reunite with Cordelia. Edmund defeats an invasion of French forces and imprisons Cordelia and Lear. In the meantime, the evil sisters have begun fighting over Edmund. In the final scenes of the play, we learn of Gloucester's death and that Goneril, out of a jealous rage over Edmund, poisons her sister and eventually kills herself to escape prosecution from her husband. Edgar confronts his traitor brother Edmund and kills him. The final moments of Edmund's life are spent trying to diminish some of the trouble he caused for his family and King Lear. Cordelia is needlessly hung in the final moments of the play. Lear carries her body from the jail cell then dies from a broken heart. Edgar, Albany, and Kent are left to sort through the mess created by Lear's madness, his ungrateful daughters, and the chaos caused by Edmund. By the final moments of Shakespeare's tragedy, Edgar accepts the crown from Albany and promises to restore order and civility within King Lear's former kingdom.

Themes

Blindness

The idea of blindness is perhaps the most important and major theme in *King Lear*. Shakespeare built his story around its major characters, especially King Lear, Gloucester, and Albany, possessing the trait of making bad decisions which ultimately comes back to haunt them by the end of the play. Blindness can normally be defined as the inability to see. But according to the website, www.field-of-themes.com, "in Shakespearean terms, blindness is not a physical quality, but a mental flaw some people possess". The blindest character within the pages of the playwright's tragedy undoubtedly is the title character, King Lear. During the very first scene of the play, King Lear displays a knack for failing to see people for who they really are and laying trust and authority to those who do not have the aging King's best intentions at heart. King Lear banishes his youngest and most loyal daughter Cordelia and "blindly" hands power over to his two eldest daughters, Regan and Goneril. Another major character of the play that lacks an ability to see the true nature of people is Gloucester. This old companion and trusted advisor to the King

is physically blinded by the Duke of Cornwall after Gloucester repeatedly refuses to see the deception of his bastard son Edmond that is unfolding before his very eyes. The last major character of the play that displays the unfavorable flaw of not being able to see the truth and motivation of individuals they associate with is the Duke of Albany. The major difference between Albany's fate and King Lear's and Gloucester's is that he is the only one of the three to realize his flaws in time to right most of the wrongs he created, thus preventing him from suffering a tragic fate experienced by King Lear and Gloucester. The Duke of Albany was able to decipher and navigate through Goneril's lies and deceptions and redeem his actions by the final scene of the play.

Loyalty

The virtue of being loyal and faithful to yourself and people you associate with is a theme found within the pages of *King Lear*. No other character in the play displays such undying devotion and loyalty, especially to King Lear himself, than Kent. Despite being banished from the court after he publicly scolded the King for his treatment of Cordelia, Kent remains loyal to Lear and cleverly disguises himself to continue to serve and protect his master. King Lear's youngest daughter, Cordelia, despite being banished by him, remains loyal and committed to her father and his reinstatement into his kingship. Edgar, despite being hunted down by order's from his father, remains loyal to Gloucester and manages to unmask and release some of the chaos caused by his younger brother, Edmund.

Treatment of Women

Throughout the play, the cruel and one-sided treatment of women by several male characters, especially King Lear, Gloucester & Edmund, is prevalent and often noted as being a catalyst for the downfall of each of these men. In the very first scene of the play, Gloucester unfavorably describes Edmund's mother to Kent, and King Lear belittles and banishes his youngest daughter Cordelia from his kingdom. King Lear ultimately turns against his two eldest daughters and curses them in the infamous "storm" scene.

According to Harold Bloom in his critically acclaimed book, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, "Lear has expressed disappointment and anger vividly in previous scenes. However by now, his anger has overcome his language to a mere spondee where he

repeats the word kill: "And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,/Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!" Edmund, like King and Gloucester, displays dominance and control over Lear's elder daughters. This becomes apparent to audience with Edmund's "To both these sisters" aside to the audience in the final act of *King Lear*. Edmund takes pleasure in debating over which one of Lear's eldest two daughters will be his prize.

Christian Ideas in a Pagan World

William Shakespeare brilliantly created a pagan world infused with Christian ideals in *King Lear*. The pagan King Lear rules a kingdom whose people live in a world infused with polytheism, nature worship, and the power and influence of the Gods. In "*King Lear*" from *The Vision of Tragedy* by Richard Sewall, the author states, "the temptation with *King Lear*, as with many tragedies written in the Christian era which inevitably include Christian modes, patterns, and terms, is to give the picture a too-Christian hue: to read the play as reconciling the inferno and purgatory in the perfect goodness of Kent's loyalty, Cordelia's Christ like love, Lear's humility, and (some have even suggested) the reunion of father and daughter after death in a Christian Heaven." Christian elements, including the ideals of Sin and Salvation, are infused throughout the story of an aging ruler from a pagan Britain. Shakespeare was able to give social and religious commentary to the public on a mass level with numerous of his plays including, *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar* & *The Tempest*. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare was a well enough established and respected playwright in London to use his genius of wordplay to legally bring the public a way to contemplate and discuss subjects such as role of church in government, the abuse of those in power.

Performance History

According to Essential Shakespeare, "the only recorded performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* during his lifetime was on December 26, 1606, when it was given at court. But its publication in quarto editions as early as 1608 and its reprinting in the *First Folio* of 1623 suggest that the play was popular with theatre audiences." Historians believe that *King Lear* was performed at the Globe sometime in 1605, and that Richard Burbage, the King's Men's most famous actor, played the title role in *King*

Lear. According to Andrew Hadfield, “no further records of performance exist until after the Restoration in 1660. This absence might indicate that *King Lear* was not a particularly popular play, especially if we consider that it did not enjoy great public acclaim even after the theatres, which had been closed in 1642, reopened in 1660.”

Part Two: Process

Research

The journey of my role in *King Lear* began in the spring of 2009. Virginia Smith, director of my thesis show, informed the MFA acting students of her casting choices for the play. In all honesty, I totally expected to be cast as the Duke of Cornwall and was thrilled and grateful that my assumption was correct. I remember the first time I read *King Lear*. I was in undergraduate school at Hofstra University, and still can recount my reaction to the brutality of Cornwall's blinding of Gloucester. What was that reaction? Well, after digging through old notebooks of mine that I used at Hofstra, I came across notes given to me by my professor regarding the "eye gouging" scene in *King Lear*. He believed that this particular point in the play was the "cruellest and most brutal scene" in all of Shakespeare's plays. I believe that his assumption was correct. I felt that same way that he did after I read and reread the play. Cornwall commits a brutal and disturbing act of rage and anger towards Gloucester. I was excited to begin my research on *King Lear*, especially discovering anything pertaining to the Duke of Cornwall. After returning home to Louisiana for the summer, I dedicated at least an hour everyday researching all the required elements of my thesis role. I began by reading numerous articles and books about *King Lear's* playwright, William Shakespeare. I wanted not only to learn as much as I could about him, but also to find interesting facts and information that would make my research fun, entertaining, and educational. *King Lear* is a massive and tragic play that has remained popular in society for the last 400 plus years. Over the next few months, I was amazed with all of the information that I found about Shakespeare and his play, *King Lear*. I found a massive amount of books, internet articles, online references, and scholarly journals that helped guide me through the life of William Shakespeare, his importance in today's society, and the significance and influence that *King Lear* had since it's premiere several centuries ago in England. The biggest problem I had with my research was finding credible information about the Duke of Cornwall. I found several articles and book references giving insight about Cornwall's role in *King Lear*, but found it difficult to locate information about the historical references Shakespeare used to create the Duke of Cornwall in his play. By the time summer break had come to an end, I was pleased with the research I collected during my three-month stay back home in south Louisiana.

Rehearsal

So it began. After two years of intense actor training I received at UNL, it was time to utilize everything I learned, discovered, and experienced through trial and error in order to help create an entertaining and honest Duke of Cornwall. Rehearsal for *King Lear* started at the beginning of October and ended six weeks later with opening night in Howell Theatre. I was confident enough in my acting skills and preparation over the weeks leading to the first rehearsal, that I happily welcomed and embraced the challenges of acting in a massive and epic story like *King Lear*. I knew that the show's director, Virginia Smith, would help guide my character development through the rehearsal process in a way that was beneficial to myself and the entire cast and crew. Even though I knew Virginia had high expectations, I remained confident that our director would help me grow into my role with positive and insightful direction. I also set certain standards for myself, which included the use of proper diction, staying in the moment, and sharpening my listening skills. The last two years of training at UNL helped me discover and ultimately improve all three of those skills, that at times, hindered me from being a good and entertaining actor on stage. Virginia Smith was well aware of my strengths and weaknesses as an actor. She constantly steered me in the right direction, through insightful notes, ideas, exercises, and non-confrontational direction. Over the next six weeks, I threw away all of my insecurities and embraced every single rehearsal with an open mind, and especially, an open heart. I learned how to be venerable. I learned how to embrace my physicality. Most importantly, I learned how vital it was to make choices and experiment during rehearsal, in order to create a character that I would be proud of come opening night. Was I successful? Did I positively reach Virginia's expectations she set for me when I first was cast in the show? Did I live up to the ambitious standards that I set for myself at the beginning of October?

Performance

This section of my thesis answers all of those questions I put forth with one simple word. Yes! I believe that my portrayal of the Duke of Cornwall was successful, honest, entertaining, and met the goals and expectations of our director, and most importantly, of myself. I challenged myself to continue to explore and improve my performance in *King Lear* each and every night. I strongly believe that an actor never

stops learning and improving their skills. An actor that chooses to remain on a plateau and not strive to climb higher, is an actor that is setting themselves up for complacency. An actor being complacent is boring and an injustice to themselves and the people they work with while on stage. I never wanted to be that kind of actor. I believed too much in myself and my training I received over the last few years not to grow each and every night we performed *King Lear* for the public. Every single performance was a platform for me to continue to improve the role and challenge the rest of the cast to do the same. Listening and reacting to everything that was happening while I was on stage helped ground me and make me as “present” and “in the moment” as possible during this stage of my career. Virginia Smith knew my weaknesses as an actor. She also knew that I was going to give her what she was looking for by being focused and relaxed every night in Howell Theatre. Virginia, along with encouragement from my peers and high expectations I set for myself, helped create an entertaining Duke of Cornwall. My experience in *King Lear* will be something that I will never forget. It marked the first time in my professional and academic career that I was able to successfully integrate my heart and mind to create art that helped Kyle Broussard grow as an actor, but most importantly, as a human being!

Character Analysis

Duke of Cornwall

**Note- the following character analysis of the Duke of Cornwall contains several of my own ideas and choices.*

The Duke of Cornwall is an evil, sadistic, power hungry man who lacks a righteous soul and any sort of conscience. He lives for the chase. The Duke of Cornwall does love his wife Regan and is determined to protect her at all times. He and Regan, along with the strong willed and ambitious Goneril, uses King Lear’s foolish decisions as a means to gain power, wealth, and ultimate control of the kingdom. Cornwall married Regan for her wealth and eventual inheritance of land and control over the lands of the aging King of Britain. He is known to use people for his own gain. The deep-voiced Duke is a master of manipulation and after coming into power with his wife, is constantly planning his next move with tyrannical insight and ferocious precision. He does not care about being feared by many and being disliked by a growing number throughout the

play. He cares about gaining Edmund's trust and loyalty from the moment he meets the bastard son of Gloucester. Cornwall takes his role in the play as noble man of authority and listens long enough to get what he wants out the situation. He is pure, unbridled, uncensored, unfathomable rage but with the ability to control his inner demons and continue on his quest for sole power of the crown. He was a delight to play onstage. As Cornwall, I only appeared onstage for six scenes and I was the first major character to die. In fact, I was not even in the second half of *King Lear*. My time on stage was precious, entertaining, disturbing, purposeful, driven, focused, and unpredictable. A major key to the success of my portrayal of Cornwall in my thesis show, was that I needed to be as present as possible, and made sure my listening skills were engaged and constantly being improved throughout the rehearsal and run of *King Lear*. I approached this role with enthusiasm, confidence, and the ability to take direction, thus shaping Cornwall into a figure that radiated control, dominance and fear into everyone he encountered onstage. Cornwall's love for his wife needed to be effectively created and performed by Tiffany Baker and myself from our first scene of the play. Another major goal of mine while creating an interesting and truthful Duke of Cornwall, was the need to embrace my size and physical presence. Throughout the run of *King Lear*, I beneficially discovered the importance of having confidence as an actor, and using that confidence to create an exciting and interesting character.

Motivations

What motivated Cornwall to be such a power hungry hyena? What made him commit such foul acts on stage? What made him think that he could gouge out the eyes of King Lear's trusted servant, Gloucester? What made him think that he would not have to answer for his evil crimes? Answering those questions was a great way for me the actor to get inside the Cornwall I envisioned. After contemplating those questions for a good portion of the summer and first few weeks of rehearsal, I decided that Cornwall was dictated by one major thing. Power! Cornwall lived for power. Power equaled control. He did almost anything to get as much power and control as possible. Cornwall's motivation for everything he did in the play was driven by his thirst for power. He cared nothing for anyone except for his wife Regan and Edmund. He was pure, unfiltered evil, fueled by the fear he caused from such acts as the ordering of Kent to be put in the stocks

and the gouging of Gloucester's eyes in Act 3, Scene 7. In closing, the Duke of Cornwall played a small but pivotal role in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. My main goal as Cornwall was to effectively find a way to justify all of my actions to the audience, which helped them understand what triggered and motivated my character to do all the cruel and evil things that he did throughout the first half of the play.

Scene Breakdowns

Act One: Scene One

Cornwall, along with his wife Regan, is introduced to the court. My objective in this scene is to have Cornwall soak up all of the information that he possible can and use that information to start plotting the eventual total destruction of King Lear. The aging king's death would be the ultimate prize because as long as the aging king is still breathing, Cornwall can never truly have total and complete control over Lear's kingdom. The Duke of Cornwall obviously loves the turmoil at court and instantly jumps on the opportunity to advance he and his wife's role in the newly divided empire. He also begins feeling tension between he and the Duke of Albany and this struggle between the two dukes is what motivates Cornwall to step up his game and climb himself into sole wearer of King Lear's former crown.

Act Two: Scene One

Cornwall's motivation is simple in this scene. He must form a bond with Edmund. Cornwall knows that Edmund is up to something and he begins contemplating how Edmund might be useful and beneficial to him and Regan. What is he up too? How can Cornwall build that trust between him and Edmund? I think that the answer is simple and easy to understand because Shakespeare's greatest gift was his ability to create interesting and various characters whose motivations and place in the story is told through the playwright's brilliant and descriptive dialogue. The follow speech from Cornwall to Edmund gives the audience a taste of what is to come from these two men who are obviously beginning to plan some sort of take-over within the court. The Duke of Cornwall is obviously taking advantage of the turmoil caused by Lear's banishment of Cordelia and the misguided authority he gives to Goneril and Regan.

Act Two: Scene Two

In this scene, Cornwall's true nature becomes tangible. This is the first time in the play that Cornwall actually takes control of the scene by ordering Kent to be put in stocks. Cornwall, along with his wife, understands that their actions will further alienate them from King Lear. He knows that he will have to answer for his actions. Does he care? Not at all! Not in the least bit. He wants the challenge. He wants to test King Lear. Cornwall continuously challenges authority throughout this scene and throughout the rest of his time on stage. In the following conversation between the Duke and his wife, Cornwall, despite hearing a passionate plea of objection from Gloucester, defiantly stocks up one of King Lear's messengers. Cornwall knows that his actions will cause trouble and tension between he and the King. This particular scene is important to Cornwall and Regan because it is the first time in *King Lear* that they are able to publicly challenge King Lear's authority. The audience must instantly recognize the threat Cornwall and Regan are to anyone who poses a threat to him or her throughout the play.

Act Two: Scene Four

Cornwall must answer for his actions regarding his treatment of Kent. Does he care? Is he afraid of Lear? Absolutely not! He wants the confrontation. He lives for the confrontation. Cornwall eventually dismisses Lear by locking him out of Gloucester's home, thus forcing the King to sink deeper into a state of madness. This scene is important to the rest of the show because it is the final act that sends Lear into madness and helps justify Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril's motivation for their treatment of king and his crew.

Act Three: Scene Five

Cornwall establishes control over Edmund by telling him that he will be a father figure to him. Cornwall's motivation is simple and direct. He must connect with Edmund. He knows that Edmund's ambition will cause problems if he does not align himself with the bastard son of Gloucester. This scene is like the signing of a contract between two rogue nations on a quest for world domination. The dialogue between Cornwall and Edmond is short, direct, and foreshadows violent events to come before intermission. Shakespeare

brilliantly wrote this short scene between Cornwall and Edmund to solidify their bond and hopefully express to the audience that their actions are justified and with merit. Daniel and I must be able to “seal” the deal effectively within a mere page of dialogue.

Act Three: Scene Seven

The Duke of Cornwall gouges out the eyes of Gloucester. This scene is brutal, gross, dirty, and at times, exciting and pleasurable to Cornwall. I believe that he gets off on causing someone so much pain. His motivation in the scene is to punish Gloucester for his traitorous aligning with Lear and the King of France. After researching the significance of this particular scene in context to the entire play and the impact it has had since premiering in Elizabethan Britain, I have come up with conclusion, along with numerous scholars and literary critics, that this scene is one of the most violent in all of Shakespeare’s plays. Harold Bloom, perhaps the most respected Shakespearean critic of the last hundred years, believes that audiences would have been enthralled by the brutality of Cornwall’s actions. As an actor, being given the opportunity and privilege to tackle this role and explore the dark side of the Duke of Cornwall, is both scary and exciting. Discovering what motivates him to perform this macabre act will be a major goal of mine through the rehearsal process.

Part Three: Physicality

Cornwall is a tall, strong, and intimidating man of around 33 years of age. He is at the prime of his life. He towers over everyone onstage because of his height and broad shoulders. He makes everyone onstage look small and weak. Cornwall uses his size to control and influence everyone around him, especially Edmund, Regan, Lear, and Gloucester.

Physical Characteristics

Height- Cornwall is 6 foot 3.

Weight- Cornwall weighs between 220-230lbs.

Broad Shoulders- Cornwall has very broad shoulders.

Long Stride- Cornwall's stride commands attention. It is long, confident, and direct. His stride will be at least five inches longer than my natural stride.

Erect Posture- Cornwall's always stands erect. He believes that he is royal. He pretends that he is wearing a crown. He imagines that he is wearing Lear's crown.

Intense Eyes- Cornwall uses his penetrating eyes to stare down his friends and enemies. He is a man of few words. He prefers to let his actions speak for himself.

Long Hair and Beard- Cornwall's hair is long and flowing. It's thick and strong.

Big Hands and Feet- Cornwall's appendages are huge. They ooze violation.

Movement

Cornwall always moves with intense purpose and agenda. He is a man who knows what he wants and never takes the easy way out. He is direct, intense, and fearful with his stride. His strong and heroic stride is legendary in the world of *King Lear*. His gait is forceful and demands attention from everyone, especially from his wife and their servants. Cornwall's arms are powerful and strong and are used to help him command and influence everyone he interacts with onstage. When Cornwall feels threatened or challenged by anyone in the play, he gestures to the knife hanging around his belt. Every gesture in his arsenal is used with purpose and intent. Cornwall simply has to raise his hand to silence a crowd and command attention.

Animal Essence

Cornwall is a hyena. He is always on the hunt. His sense of smell, sight, and hearing are acute and strong. Cornwall, like the hyena, is never afraid of his enemies. He will bite, scratch, gouge, and destroy any and everything that comes in his path. He is a smooth talker. He can always smell fear. He attacks his prey with precision and unbridled passion. He is a pack leader. Cornwall is the ultimate Alpha male.

Vocal Abilities

Cornwall has a resonate and booming baritone voice. The Duke of Cornwall's voice is grounded within his body. He never hesitates with his speech. He is direct and always to the point. His words are like poison. He can intoxicate you with his voice. In closing, I decided not to be very descriptive about of the mechanics of Cornwall's vocal instrument. Through exploration within rehearsal and private coaching with Stan Brown, I look forward to organically discovering Cornwall's voice and the effect it will have on the audience and fellow cast members. So, the journey begins! I am confident that all of the training I received over the last two years in the MFA program at UNL will be utilized effectively, thus helping me create a believable, entertaining, and unforgettable Duke of Cornwall.

Appendix A

The Plays of William Shakespeare

1. *Henry VI (2)* (1590-1591)
Henry VI (3) (1590-1591)
Henry VI (1) (1591-1592)
2. *Richard III* (1592-1593)
3. *Comedy of Errors* (1592-1593)
4. *Titus Andronicus* (1593-1594)
5. *Taming of the Shrew* (1593-1594)
6. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1594-1595)
7. *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594-1595)
8. *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-1595)
9. *Richard II* (1595-1596)
10. *Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1595-1596)
11. *King John* (1596-1597)
12. *Merchant of Venice* (1596-1597)
13. *Henry IV (1)* (1597-1598)
14. *Henry IV (2)* (1597-1598)
15. *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598-1599)
16. *Henry V* (1598-1599)
17. *Julius Caesar* (1599-1600)
18. *As You Like it* (1599-1600)
19. *Twelfth Night* (1599-1600)

20. *Hamlet* (1600-1601)
21. *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1600-1601)
22. *Troilus and Cressida* (1601-1602)
23. *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602-1603)
24. *Measure for Measure* (1604-1605)
25. *Othello* (1604-1605)
26. *King Lear* (1605-1606)
27. *Macbeth* (1605-1606)
28. *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606-1607)
29. *Coriolanus* (1607-1608)
30. *Timon of Athens* (1607-1608)
31. *Pericles* (1608-1609)
32. *Cymbeline* (1609-1610)
33. *Winter's Tale* (1610-1611)
34. *Tempest* (1611-1612)
35. *Henry VIII* (1612-1613)
36. *Two Noble Kinsmen* (1612-1613)

Appendix B

King Lear Journal

Thursday, Oct. 8th

It begins. The entire cast and crew met at Temple in room 301. Upon entering, I was taken back by the sheer number of people involved with *King Lear*. Virginia, the show's director and mastermind, greeted me with a smile and at once my nervousness and anxiety level vanished and I was ready to meet the cast and crew. At the beginning of the night's activities, the director wanted us to introduce ourselves to each other and announce our individual roles in the play. I was ecstatic to announce to everyone that I would be playing the evil, vindictive, power hungry Duke of Cornwall. Tiffany and I sat next to each other in order to begin creating a distinct and disturbing bond between the two of us. The Duke of Cornwall, and his cruel & sharp-tongue wife Regan, began a journey built around power, control, and cruelty. After hearing from all the tech and design crew, we began our first read-through of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. It was great and somewhat comforting to hear everyone's own initial interpretation of their role, especially when Steven Patterson uttered his first lines as the show's protagonist and lead character, King Lear. My initial feeling of the first run-through was that the script was long. I knew Virginia was thinking about cuts and hoping that cast members would give up some of their lines in order to cut this mammoth of a play down to a reasonable time. I could tell right away that Steven was not keen on having much of his lines removed from the script. Virginia is going to have to somehow convince Steve that everyone in the cast, including myself, has to sacrifice some lines for the greater good of the play. I am anxious to see how successful she will be at that task. I know personally, I have had a lot of my lines removed from the show and I won't complain if more of my lines are cut as long as it helps shorten the production and aids in telling a complete, honest, and understandable version of the play. At the end of the night, Virginia told the cast and crew that the script is entirely too long and that cuts must and will be made and that we would have another read-through at the next rehearsal.

Friday, Oct. 9th

After rehearsal last night, I was worried about the massive undertaking the department has asked of its faculty and students, especially me and the rest of my fellow MFA actors. This show is a monster. It is, according to numerous directors and critics, the absolute hardest of Shakespeare's plays to stage and that most productions fail miserably. Why is that? I must confess that during my research, I came across this opinion many times, especially from my favorite Shakespeare author and critic, Harold Bloom. Bloom believes that *King Lear* is next to impossible to successfully stage because of the plays demand for outstanding and brilliant actors, especially the roles of Lear, Edgar, and Edmond. Well my answer to Harold Bloom and all the other nonbelievers out in the world is that our director knew what she was doing when she cast each and every single role and that when the cast begins working as a true ensemble, our *King Lear* will be understandable and entertaining to all those who attend the show in Howell Theatre. What can I do to help make it happen? What will be my major contribution to the show? I am not ready to answer that question because I am not sure what the answer is. I have a lot of ideas but nothing concrete and tangible enough to hold on too and share with the cast and crew. My plan of attack during the second read-through is to slow down and savor each and every word that comes out of my mouth. The first step in making my performance honest and real is by making sure that everyone understands what I am saying. It is also import for me to understand what I am saying and why I am saying it. After the read-through, I was a little more optimistic that cuts and helpful direction are beginning to happen and will improve the overall arc of the show. I still think more cuts are needed and I am sure Virginia is ready to do just that because she did tell the cast and crew tonight that Paul wants the show cut down as much as possible. It is a necessity. It is a must. I want my thesis show to entertain and capture every 112 student, every theatre patron, and every single person that comes to see *King Lear*.

Monday, Oct. 12th

Tonight was a blast. It was the first designated "fight night" of our rehearsal process. Going into tonight's scheduled activities, I knew things would run smoothly because Harris Smith would be choreographing all of the fights in *King Lear*. I have had

over two years of fight experience with Harris and he always knows how to calmly and effectively relate combative blocking and instruction to me and the rest of the MFA class. I worked with Harris on *As You Like It*, my first Shakespearean experience in Lincoln, in the main fight scene of Shakespeare's popular and enduring comedy. My role was portraying Charles the court wrestler who had to fight the play's leading man, Orlando. It was a physically demanding role. The well choreographed fight scene between Daniel and I required a lot of discipline, strength, and control. I was happy with both of our performances and was ready to work with Harris on another main stage production. The best part of tonight's rehearsal process was the way Harris approached Jessica, Tiffany, and me. He called my name at the beginning of the night and said, "Kyle, you and your crew go into the next room and figure out a fight to show me in an hour because you are all certified Actor Combatants and can handle it." It was such a good feeling to have so much confidence behind our group because I knew Harris would never put anyone in danger if he did not completely feel confident in his students. After about half an hour, we came up with a simple but highly entertaining fight that worked well with the script and integrity of the scene. The "gouging" of Gloucester's eyes is the climax of the play and end of the first half of the show. What makes me nervous is that I really don't know my own strength. I am a big, strong, massive individual who at times, do not realize that I can physically harm someone if I do not remain focused and in control. Harris has always told me about the advantages and disadvantages of my size and that I must embrace my body and always stay in control. After we showed him the fight, he tweaked a few things but was satisfied with our work. Overall, it was a great night and I am anxious to show our fight to Virginia.

Tuesday, October 13th

Tonight's rehearsal was focused on movement work. I knew what to expect because of having previously working with Virginia Smith on my first main stage show, *An American Daughter*. On the second day of rehearsal, Virginia made us do various movement exercises, which helped the cast begin to create some kind of physicality for our characters. I remember how beneficial those exercises were because it sparked several ideas about how I could connect my character with my body and what would be the most effective way to do that. I went into tonight's rehearsal with a personal item and

an open mind and body because I knew the only way for me to discover my character's physicality is by surrendering to the exercise, my cast members, the director, and to myself. My personal item was a glass ball containing a vicious looking and ready to strike desert scorpion. Why did I choose a scorpion as my personal object? It was actually a simple choice. What things do scorpions do best? Scorpions are known for their stealth and lethal sting. The Duke of Cornwall and a scorpion have a lot in common. I want my Cornwall to be as sneaky and vile as a scorpion. He must radiate fear and pain! My Cornwall must always be on the hunt and everyone around him has to be aware of his sting. I think Virginia really liked my object, even though it was more symbolic than most of the other objects brought to rehearsal. We did all sorts of exercises. My favorite exercise was when we built relationships based on class. It was invigorating to have Regan on my right side and my servant on the left. Everyone bowed to me. I loved the power. I need to channel this confidence and control into my performance. I know it was baby steps on my journey through my thesis show, but those steps really helped me find character traits, both physically and mentally, that I know will help me truthfully portray the Duke of Cornwall.

Wednesday, October 14th

Tonight's rehearsal was all about blocking the first two acts of *King Lear*. It is important that I pay attention to everything that Virginia throws at me during the early stages of rehearsal. I know that she has a certain idea of the pictures she wants to develop in the show. What I really enjoy and respect about our director is that she is open to discovery and is always willing to entertain different ideas from her actors. Her blocking was pretty basic and easy to follow which really helped relax my fellow actors and me. I think we all realized that Virginia is not a Nazi and that she wants to help guide us through our development of our characters. What I liked about Virginia's directing style is that she is not just about telling you where to stand and when to exit, but rather incorporating blocking with your character's objective. She let's you know of her expectations of how the scene is to progress and what she is expecting from her actors. Tonight was an icebreaker. It was a good start to a very long journey. What did I learn from tonight's rehearsal? I learned that I must come up with ideas each and every night. It is better to go to far in my choices than not far enough. Rehearsal is the time to make

bold and varied choices. I am ready to bring something new and unexpected into tomorrow night's rehearsal.

Thursday, Oct. 15th

Going into tonight's rehearsal, I was nervous but very excited because I knew that we would be blocking my two major scenes of the show. If I am going to leave a lasting impression on the audience, 3.5 & 3.7 are the two scenes that give me my chance. The first of the two scenes is short and simple and is really just an introduction for the final scene of the first half of the show. I was surprised how a scene with less than one page of dialogue, especially between just two people, could have so much blocking. Daniel and I are all over the stage. It was a little confusing at first but then after we ran it a few times, I understood what Virginia was trying to do. By having us walk and retreat several times to each other, it helped establish the strong and important bond and relationship that Cornwall and Edmond must develop. Cornwall blinds Edmond's father. Daniel and I must establish a connection strong enough to validate our actions. I know we made progress. We have a lot of work to do and this was a good first start. So now we proceed to my biggest and final scene in *King Lear*. I have seen three versions of *King Lear* onstage and in each performance; the "gouging" of the eyes scene had the most impact, both with the audience and me. It is absolutely brutal and uncomfortable to watch. In fact, I think it is the most violent and disturbing scene in all of Shakespeare. The problem with this is that there is a fine line between violent and silly. I would hate for the audience to burst out in laughter. After we performed the scene for Virginia, I was pretty satisfied with myself. In fact, she told us that she liked what we have done so far and that it was disturbing. Virginia did tell me that I needed to be careful with my enjoyment of the scene because at times it was too much. I think she wants me to be less physical and more in control. Cornwall's actions must be taken serious and absolute and not blinded by overacting.

Friday, Oct. 16th

After several consecutive nights of intense rehearsal, I was looking forward to our second "fight night". I was only called for thirty minutes and knew that with the time restraints upon us that we had to remain focused and show Virginia and Harris how scene

3.7 has progressed. I think that they both were pleased with what we did. Harris changed the blocking a little by altering the angle of the chair and the fight between Jessica and myself. After we adjusted and ran the scene again, I was really pumped about how everything was progressing. I still have to remember that I am a strong individual who must remain focused on the fight. I think I remained calm and played the scene safe. We were not even at half speed, which was fine with me because the fight is still not in my muscle memory. After tonight's rehearsal, I was proud of myself and my fellow actors and most importantly realized that we have a lot of work ahead of us.

Wednesday, Oct. 21st

Our first run-through of the first half of *King Lear*! I must admit that I was a little nervous going into tonight's rehearsal. Because of fall break, it had been almost a week since the cast has worked on the show. Would I remember my blocking? Would I remember my lines? Would the transition from Room 301 to Howell Stage throw everyone off, including myself? What effect will the news of Jason's illness have on the cast and crew? Virginia began rehearsal with a warm-up and then she asked everyone to sit down at the front of the stage so she could inform everyone about Jason's current medical situation. She had tears in her eyes and it was sad and very surreal to hear the horrible journey Jason is going through. She did comfort the cast and crew by remaining positive, strong, and relaxed. At this point in my journal, I am not ready to write about what I am feeling with having a real good friend of mine being so sick. I am not sure what to think at this point. Maybe I need more time to let the situation sink into my brain. In later journal entries, I will address this roadblock Jason is facing. On a much lighter note, the run through went pretty damn good. I remembered all of my blocking and it seemed that Virginia was pleased with our progress and the overall picture of the show. One thing that still is bothering me is that the first half of *King Lear* still seems so damn long. I know a lot of that has to do with all the stopping and starting that went on throughout the entire evening. What did I learn from tonight's rehearsal? I learned that my character must command the stage at all times. Cornwall has to establish a bond with Edmond that will be understandable to the audience. Over the next few days, I plan on getting off book and working on my lower register. Stan believes that sinking into my bowels with my voice will help me tremendously. He loves the size and power of my

voice but he and Virginia both agree that my enunciation of certain words is a problem. I know what I have to do to correct this and it is a process. I am looking forward to next rehearsal when we will run the entire show.

Tuesday, Oct. 27th

Today we had a full run-through of *King Lear*. Would I remember all of my lines tonight? Would I remember the blocking like the night before? Would I remember to keep my character's posture throughout the entire time I was on stage? Well, I did a pretty good job on my lines and I was nearly perfect with my blocking. Tonight, after this entry, I plan to take out my script and review all of the lines in Act III that I am still having trouble remembering. The biggest observation that I made tonight was that *King Lear* is a sweeping, larger-than-life epic Shakespearean play. The story is powerful. Many characters are complex and evil and everything in between. I did find some interesting things out during the run. It is most important to keep the pace of the show moving. It is also important to use the best possible diction. Virginia's main note was on how we are not using the best diction. Tomorrow, I plan on taking my time with my words and pronouncing everything correctly.

Wednesday, Oct. 28th

Tonight's rehearsal was focused on working out the "shakes" in Act I. It was a pretty easy night. It gave me a chance to listen on stage for hours at a time. Listening is the key to good and honest acting. My listening skills are not as sharp as they need to be, but it is something that I have been working on. In this Act, I am only in one scene. The opening scene is pivotal to the audience understanding the plot of the play. Virginia fixed some of Cornwall and Regan's blocking on the top of the steps and she urged the two of us to create and establish some kind of unique relationship. We decided to start being more affectionate to each other. I also focused on my posture, keeping it erect and chest-led. Overall, I am happy with tonight's rehearsal and I think that the whole cast made strides in developing their characters and understanding their motivations.

Thursday, Oct. 29th

I was honestly looking forward to tonight's rehearsal. Our mission was to work out any problems occurring in Act II. I have two big scenes in this Act and I was excited about showing my work to Virginia and rest of the cast. My scenes went perfect. The blocking changed a bit in the "stocks" scene but those changes were justified. Virginia reworked the blocking of Robie's transfer to the stocks. My note from Virginia tonight was that she wanted me to try to use more of my lower register. She says that I get hard to understand when I use my upper register, especially in Act II, scene II. I will have to make a note to remind myself to talk to Stan about Virginia's suggestion. I am not sure how to approach this note but I am looking forward to trying something new tomorrow night. Also, tonight I was perfect with my lines and blocking. I worked hard on both of those things today during my personal warm-ups on Howell Stage. I also need to make sure that I am creating some kind of story in my mind and face during Act II, scene IV. I only have a few lines during this scene and it is important that I stay engaged and hang on to every single word. It's coming along. I am finally starting to figure this Cornwall character out.

Friday, Oct. 30th

Tonight's game plan was to work ACT III and fix any problems. Tonight, also marked the first time that I had a line cut since the read-through. During the eye-gouging scene, I have a line that never flows out of my mouth with ease. I gave my suggestion to the director and she happily cut that problematic line. What did I think of my two scenes in this ACT? Well, the blocking for the eye gouging is bad. Virginia even admits that the blocking really does suck. I felt that there were too many people around Gloucester's chair. I had such trouble getting into position to stomp on Sam's face. I want to make sure that this scene is perfect. It is not. I think that I have not found the seriousness of my character's actions. This is horrible stuff. My actions are brutal and direct. I have not found my motivation yet. My note from Virginia tonight was that I needed to make my actions much more serious. Why was I justified in taking these brutal steps? Virginia also wanted Tiffany and I to work on my death scene. I will ask Justin or Harris to help us out tomorrow during fight-call. I believe that my posture and diction has improved so much in the last two weeks. Virginia keeps reminding me to keep my

posture and to make sure that I articulate every single consonance. After such a long week at school and rehearsal, I am looking forward to having tomorrow off.

Tuesday, Nov. 3rd

After being off for three days, I was looking forward to tonight's rehearsal. Virginia's goal was to run the entire show. She told us at the beginning of rehearsal that we need to pick up the pace and find the sweeping nature of this tragedy. How did it go? Well, the play is entirely too long. It is running almost three hours long. Virginia wants it to be at least a half and hour shorter. I hope that I do not get any more lines cut. This is my thesis show and I will fight for my remaining lines. Luckily, Virginia did not cut any of my lines by the end of the rehearsal. I thought that my performance tonight was pretty damn good. I really focused on my lower register. After rehearsal, I went up to Virginia and asked her about my voice. She said that it was much better and that she likes me using more of my deeper range. I felt "bigger" on stage. I think that when I "anchor" my voice, that it helps me settle into Cornwall. Being grounded helps out my physicality. It is a good thing! I was satisfied with tonight's performance.

Wednesday, Nov. 4th

Tonight's schedule of *Lear* rehearsals focused on Act I. My main goal going into tonight's rehearsal was to use my lower register the entire night. I also wanted to focus on my diction. Virginia told me that my diction was pretty good but that when I get up into my upper register, she says that it is hard to understand what's coming out of my mouth. I arrived at Temple a half an hour early in order to warm up my body and voice. I decided to use Stan's "Hiss & Hum" exercise to help me plant my body and use my lower voice. Rehearsal begins and we make some more cuts to the opening scene. I was glad when Virginia decided to cut some of Lear's lines, because the scene feels long and drawn out. Next, we proceed into the second Act and I used my lower register throughout the entire night and took my time pronouncing all of my lines. It went well. Daniel even noticed the difference and said that my lower voice fits my character very well. I asked Virginia at the end of rehearsal and she said that my voice was much better and to keep up the good work and also to keep exploring Cornwall's role in the play. I was again, as the night before, satisfied with my performance tonight during rehearsal of

our Act I.

Friday, Nov. 6th

Our agenda for tonight's rehearsal was to work Act I and try to speed up the pace as much as possible. The show is running almost a half an hour too long and Virginia said that more cuts should be expected. If it helps take time off the clock without compromising the story's integrity, I am all for more cuts, even to my character. I was well rested heading into the theatre because I was off from last night's rehearsal. I warmed up and went through a tedious fight call. Some of my soldiers were acting up and not listening to Calen's instructions and notes about our fight. After running the scene three times, we were dismissed and told to get ready for the running of Act I. Again, as last night, I felt the opening scene of the play is at least 5 minutes too long. I know Steven has a tendency not to let any of his lines get cut, but I believe Virginia needs to chop a lot of his dialogue. Virginia changed the blocking in the eye-gouging scene again tonight. She also cut some of me and Sam's lines. The eye-gouging scene will be short and not so sweet. She also has Tiffany's character moving quicker to Gloucester's chair. She also wanted me to be as serious as possible in this scene. I did my best. I was relaxed and played Cornwall with intensity and justified malice. Virginia told me that it is getting much better and to keep working on my relationship with Regan. Overall, tonight's rehearsal was productive and entertaining.

Monday, Nov. 9th

After having the entire weekend off, I was looking forward to tonight's run through of Act I. It is hard to believe that we open for an audience in a week and a half. My main focus for Cornwall tonight was to solidify my relationship with Regan and "own" the stage when I am performing. Harris came to see the show and he told me that I needed to increase my stride by four or five inches and that I need to rub Regan's back, not pat it. Virginia and Harris both want me to continue working in my lower register and keep exploring my movement onstage. Virginia is still not happy with the blocking in the eye-gouging scene and she said that she wanted to work out the problems tonight during rehearsal. Harris also wanted me to step right over Sam before I step to the side of his head. I am nervous about this scene because it can be really good and evil or it can be

really bad and humorous. I am doing my best to settle down into the moment and really try to justify to myself and to Regan why I must do this horrible act. After we cut a few more lines from the scene and changed the blocking for the 5th time in the last two weeks, I think that we might have a final product. Virginia cut out all the “bind him” lines which helped the scene flow so much better than before. I cannot wait until we get to run this scene for an audience because I think I am starting to really justify my actions and find the ebb and flow of the scene. This scene is so very important to the play. My death is the last thing the audience will experience before intermission. It is also my last scene in the play. I want it to be right. I know it will be by the time we open for the public. Overall, tonight’s rehearsal was productive and satisfying.

Wednesday, Nov. 11th

The game plan for tonight’s rehearsal is to run the entire show. Walking into Temple on this Wednesday evening, I had so many questions running around in my head. I was concerned about how long each Act has been running separately throughout the last week. The first half of the show is running way too long. Virginia has been stressing the importance of picking up our cues and being on top of our entrances and exits. She tried to explain what the overall feel and emotion of *King Lear* should feel like to the actors and the audience. Our director wants the play to continuously build and grown with intensity after each scene, especially in the first Act. She believes that we must find the “epic” and “sweeping” nature of this heavy Shakespearean tragedy. I contemplated everything that came out of her mouth and tried to make some sense of it all. The next major question that has been staying in my mind has to deal with how I am handling my relationship with Tiffany. Am I being specific enough with my character choices? How can I be more specific? Well, after tonight’s rehearsal, I feel like both Tiffany and I have made a lot of progress on building a truthful and interesting connection between each other. Virginia did not give Tiffany or me any specific notes on our work tonight. I have come to realize that “no news is good news”. Did the show still feel long? Absolutely! The first act is not moving fast enough. I fear that more cuts will be made to the script. I hope that my lines are safe because so many have been cut already.

Thursday, Nov. 12th

Tonight's rehearsal was a blast. Our goal was pretty much the same as last night. Virginia wanted to run the entire show with the goal of trying to stop as little as possible and to take off as much time as possible. I felt like I was on a roller coaster ride. I regurgitated my lines as quickly as possible and made sure that I was on top of all my entrances and exits. What a rush! The entire cast was doing their best to pick up the pace of the show. After my death scene, my shirt was soaked with sweat. I was exhausted. It felt like I had just ran a marathon and all I wanted to do was lay down and go to sleep. Did we take off any time? Amber informed Virginia that we took almost ten minutes off of the first Act and several minutes from the second Act. I think that moving at this pace has helped me realize and understand the nature of the play. *King Lear* is a massive story.

Friday, Nov. 13th

Tonight's rehearsal is particularly important because it is our last run-through before we tech on Sunday. I cannot believe that we open to the public in just a few days. Will we be ready? Will we be successful in our attempt to stage *King Lear*? Will everything come together? After this evening's run, I can happily and with confidence say that I know that it will! My main focus tonight was to combine everything that I learned, discovered, and rehearsed throughout the entire five-week rehearsal process. Virginia told me that I needed to let go of the script and just believe in my instincts and training. She encouraged all of us to trust each other and be confident with our work. I really was pleased with how well the "eye gouging" and fight in Act III, scene seven went tonight. Sam is getting more comfortable with his new role as Gloucester, and my captain and his crew get better and better each rehearsal with their handling of the chair. I am not sure why it took so long for this scene to click. Virginia changed the blocking and script several times over the last few days. She needed to do something because it was definitely lagging behind every other scene in the play. I like all the new adjustments. I was also happy with my overall performance because I was able to physically and emotionally connect and sustain Cornwall throughout the run. I am also pumped up with my fellow actor's work tonight. It seems that everyone is stepping up their game and delivering some of their finest work to date. The fight between Daniel

and Ryan is fantastic. It's physical, fast, and perfectly timed. Beth and Tiffany seemed to be really comfortable with their characters and Lucy and Robbie impress me every night with their character choices. It was a good night.

Sunday, Nov. 15th

Tech day for *King Lear* has finally arrived! Going into today's long and tedious process, I had to remind myself that most of the work done today was not about me, but was about everything else needed to complete our play. I packed my bag with my laptop and a bunch of 112 papers to occupy my time because I knew that I would have a lot of free time on my hands, especially when they would be working the second half of the show. I was pretty damn excited about running the show after we would get through all of the numerous cues. I know that the storm in ACT III had over a hundred cues alone and there was a good chance that we would not have enough time to run the entire show by 11 o'clock tonight. I was hoping that we would because it would be nice to solidify everything done today. Well, how did it go? Surprisingly, very smoothly. Virginia and her team were on top of their game with everything that needed to happen to get through all the numerous and tedious cues, especially the ones in the storm. We were completing an ACT in about an hour. Honestly, I was impressed with the speed and efficiency that took place. Amber, our stage manager, was cool, calm, and collected throughout the entire twelve-hour scheduled rehearsal. She has to be one of the best stage manager's that I have ever worked with in my academic and professional career. Amber never lost her cool one time during the entire eight weeks that we rehearsed and performed my thesis show. On that note, I would have to say the same thing about our director, Virginia Smith as well. The best thing about working with Virginia again is that I knew what to expect from her. She never gave line readings to any of her cast members. She never lost her cool and made us feel pressured and unworthy. She was able to plant a seed with her notes to help guide us through our character's development in the show. The most important quality of our director was that she always encouraged us to take chances and make interesting choices, even though those choices may not be appropriate for her vision of *King Lear*. Virginia gives us the freedom to explore and develop without any restrictions and negative attitude. I have worked with several directors who never gave me and the cast the chance to organically and honestly develop our character's role in the

production. Well, we finished the cue to cue around seven in the evening and that's when Virginia and Amber decided to run the show. How did it go? Honestly, the run went so well tonight. There is something very motivational with having all of the technical elements incorporated while the actor is onstage. From the lights to the different sounds, all of these things helped motivate and inspire myself and a majority of the cast to do our best and be confident in showing our work to the public on Wednesday.

Monday, Nov. 16th

Our first dress rehearsal is finally upon the cast and crew tonight. C.C., *King Lear's* costume designer, is not only one of my best friends here in Lincoln, but she is extremely talented in her craft. I have worked with her on two other productions and know that my costume will look great and most importantly, allow me to move around on stage without much restriction. Mobility for my character is particularly important because Virginia and Harris both want me to keep my coat on during the eye gouging scene and fight. Tonight fight call was interesting because this was the first time that I was able to wear my almost complete costume during my fight with Jessica. Was I able to move effectively and safely during the entire fight and death scene? Absolutely! The fight call went smoothly and without any major glitches that Calen could pick up on while watching from the audience in Howell. C.C. and her crew helped dress me and the rest of the cast and we made our 7:30 P.M. run time of the show. My costume is a fine looking blue/black/teal refined outfit with masculine and royal looking black ornamentations on the front sleeves of the coat. Honestly, I think that my costume looks the best out of all of my male cast members in the production. There is something so intense and inspiring about wearing your costume for the first time on stage. After dressing downstairs, I proceeded onstage to show my look to Virginia, who was in the back of the audience taking notes and giving feedback on her first impressions of our costumes. She told me that I looked handsome and powerful and that this look was something that worked well for me and that this time period compliments me well. I agree. I feel like I just stepped out of Napoleon's court. I feel, for the first time in rehearsal, that I am royal and that I do give off vibes of intimidation and thirst for control and power. After talking with Virginia and C.C. about my costume, I waited backstage for the top of the show. We started the run at our usual time and it went pretty smoothly,

especially during the first half of the show. I was a little concerned about the opening scene because it would be the first time that I would have to deal with Tiffany's train. We ran the court's entrance a few times because Virginia was not happy with our timing. She also told us to "glide" up the stairs and to make sure that all of us were smiling when we entered. Tonight, I really focused on my relationship with Tiffany and Daniel. Regan and Edmond are the two characters that I most interact with onstage. These two relationships are important and pivotal to my character's place in the show. I will journal more about that tomorrow night after rehearsal because I want to see what happens between all three of us tomorrow. In closing, tonight's rehearsal was really about the costumes. At the end of the night, Virginia only gave the actor's a few notes because most of her attention was given to observing our costumes and consulting with C.C.

Tuesday, Nov. 17th

Our agenda for tonight was to run our second and final dress rehearsal before we open to the public tomorrow night. Virginia and C.C. also wanted the cast to be in full hair and makeup. I arrived at Temple around 5:00 P.M. in order to vocally warm-up and allow myself time to do my hair and makeup before my fight call. C.C. wanted Will to dress my face up. She instructed my former student to age me by at least 15 years. Will was absolutely amazing at doing my make up. He knew which colors to use and how to apply it, especially under my eyes and on my natural jaw line, in order to effectively age my face. One note that C.C. and I received last night from Virginia was that my hair was in my face thus preventing the audience from seeing my eyes. My hair is long. In fact, this is the longest I have ever worn my hair in my entire life. I was instructed by my director and costume designer at the end of last semester not to cut my hair at all during the summer break. C.C. also made sure that all of her male actor's began to grow their facial before we started rehearsal for *King Lear* at the beginning of October. Growing my beard was more of a pain than growing my hair. Even though I can grow a full beard without a problem, I never had one in my whole thirty-three year old life. I never enjoyed the feeling of long stubble on my face. My beard is extremely thick and fast growing. The hairs on my face are coarse and have the feel of barbwire. In fact, if I let my beard grow for more than two weeks without shaving, I have to use either scissors or a beard trimmer to prep my face for a razor. C.C. had a very specific idea of how she

wanted my beard trimmed. A few days ago, I took a picture of what my beard should look like from C.C. and Rachael with me to the Captain's Chair, a local barber close to Temple. Our costume designer wanted Cornwall's facial hair to be trimmed into a style known as a "chin-strap". Basically, this type of shave made me look like a crazy, intimidating looking Amish person. When I received my shave, almost everyone thought that I looked Amish and that I definitely looked like I may be up to no good. Personally, I was happy to get rid of some of my facial hair. I liked the look. It made me look and feel like a different person. The Kyle Broussard that everyone knew over the last two and a half years drastically changed within a few minutes. Well, after fight call and several inspiring comments from our director, Amber instructed us that we would start the top of the show in five minutes. I took my place backstage at the bottom of the main stairs and prepared myself to give the best performance to date. I knew that I had to focus on everything that I had been working on, including my posture, voice, diction, and overall place in the arc of the script, in order to effectively give a worthy performance. It went O.K. I think that last night's rehearsal ran more smoothly. I am not sure why I did not feel the same about tonight run. Maybe the cast and crew are all just exhausted. I know that I am extremely tired at this point of the semester. Again, I think I am going to resist writing about my performance tonight and interaction between Tiffany and Daniel so that I can contemplate and digest it all more.

Wednesday, Nov. 18th

Bam! Here we go kids! We have an "official" audience for the first time. Howell Theatre will be filled with Introduction to Theatre (112) students. In fact, the house was completely filled to capacity. Tonight's performance was even more important to me because I help teach two 112 classes and many of my students would be in the audience. Throughout the semester in class, the students have been introduced to different elements of *King Lear* and all of them knew what the overall concept of the story was about and my particular role in the show. Several times throughout the semester, Julie H. and Judy H. let the graduate students address the class about the show and allowed us to answer any questions that the students may have about our thesis show. Every single student in 112 had to go see our play and was required to write a paper on it. I did my best to guide them through the actions of the play and explain to them that the language might be

difficult to follow at times, especially during the first fifteen minutes of the play. I explained to my students that it was not important to understand the meaning of every single word, but that it was most important to allow themselves to let the actors and script to help guide them through this long and heavy Shakespearean tragedy. Also, I knew from previous experience that a house full of 112 students is a unique and different experience than that on opening night. We would have to work our butts off in order to keep their attention. If we lost their focus, we all knew that it was going to be a long night filled with a rowdy and bored audience. I was so pumped about performing tonight. There is nothing more exciting for an actor to perform their work for the first time in front of a full house. I was so excited that my palms were all sweaty and my shirt was beginning to be drenched with perspiration. How did we do tonight? Awesome! Sure, the audience laughed at certain times that caught us off guard, but overall, I was content with our performance tonight. Virginia was please with all of us. She had very few notes for us because I had the feeling that she knew we were all tired and that any major notes to any of her actors would not be productive at this stage in the game. She encouraged us to keep pushing through the show and continue to try to take more time off of the clock. Most importantly, she said that she was proud of all of us and that we would be ready for tomorrow night's official opening to the public. In closing, let me address the question that I have been avoiding to write about for several nights. How well did I work with Tiffany and Daniel through the first half of the play? Well, I will begin with my experience with Tiffany. I trust her. Over the last five semesters, I have grown to admire and trust Tiffany's work. I know that she will always be prepared to bring her best work at each and every rehearsal and or performance. We spoke numerous times about what our relationship in context to the play should be like. Even though she has her eye on Edmond from their first meeting, she ultimately loves her husband and looks up to him for protection. Personally, I feel the same love for my wife and that it is my duty to protect her throughout our time together on stage. We made sure that we looked into each other's eyes throughout the play and that we physically showed our affections to each other to the audience, especially during the opening scene of the play. Me and Daniel's relationship is also very important to the play because my trust in his character is motivation to our actions that unfold throughout the first ACT. Virginia wanted me to give my love and trust to Edmond. I was to become the father figure that

Edmond wanted and was missing from his real father, the Earl of Gloucester. Cornwall and Edmond are two of the play's main villains. Our actions help dictate and influence the downfall of almost everyone in the show. Daniel, like Tiffany, made my job so much easier because he is such a seasoned actor. We worked hard on our relationship. I think that the audience knew that we were up to something sinister and cruel from our interactions with each other. It is time for sleep.

Thursday, Nov. 19th

It has finally arrived! Opening night of my thesis show, *King Lear*! I decided to write this review the next morning because I was too excited to write anything last night. Where do I begin? Well, the evening started out on a high note with my fight call running so smoothly. The entire cast and crew all seemed refreshed and excited about performing for the "official" public. We all knew that the crowd tonight would be much different than the audience we had on the previous night. Virginia came into the dressing room with hugs, encouragement, and a personal letter for everyone involved in our show. I was surprised at how calm everyone was in the dressing room. I decided to head backstage a little early so that I could warm-up before the top of the show. Personally, I was much more relaxed at this point of the night than I had been all week. I knew that I was ready for this performance. After six weeks of intense work, I was confident in my preparation and knew that we would have a good opening night. Howell was packed from top to bottom. In fact, I think that it was a full house. Amber announced "five minutes" to the top of the show and we all took our places. I hugged Beth, Tiffany, Lucy, and Steven because they were all next to me at the bottom of the main stairs. After the lights on stage came on, I grabbed Tiffany's hand and walked onstage to begin the opening scene. The first ACT ran so well, especially for our King Lear, the talented and sometimes humble Steven Patterson. After the first scene, I made my exit and prepared for ACT II, which is my biggest ACT of the play. This ACT is so important to my character's development in the show that I made sure that I was as engaged and "in the moment" as possible. I listened, reacted, and commanded the stage. I made sure that my stride was long and confident and that I oozed confidence and a thirst for power. After the second ACT of the play came to an end, I went on a search for Daniel and told him that we will rock our short, but important scene between the two of us. After we

performed our little number, I made sure that I had my bloody rag in my pocket and that my dagger was in the proper place. The final scene of the first half of the show is probably my biggest scene in the play; certainly it is my final scene because my death is the final thing the audience observes before intermission. Also, I believe that the “eye gouging” scene is the most violent scene in all of Shakespeare. It is bloody, cruel, and leaves a dark impression on the audience. How did it go? I was so engaged in my character that it is hard to remember everything that happened on stage. I know that when I died and was laying onstage waiting for the lights to go down, I was exhausted and out of breath. After the lights onstage faded out, I picked myself up and walked quietly offstage and headed to the dressing room. I took a moment to think about everything that happened in the last ninety minutes and then decided to go outside and get some fresh air. I liked my performance. I believe that it will continue to improve night after night but that I put forth a solid effort for our opening.

Friday, Nov. 20th

After last night’s opening of *King Lear*, I woke up early the next morning to read the review in the “Journal Star” before I headed to the gym to work out with Harris Smith. I opened the paper and from the headline alone, I knew that the review was positive and that the critic enjoyed the play. Larry and our department have an interesting relationship to say the least, especially over the last three years. For the last three shows, *An American Daughter*, *As You Like It*, and *The London Cuckolds*, Larry generally gave us a positive review but he always managed to single out a few people negatively by the end of his article. In *An American Daughter*, he singled out my performance and said that my acting was “jerky”. I must admit, being my first show here in Lincoln, I wanted to have a strong debut and this review really shot me down and messed with my mind. It was a good lesson to learn about taking professional criticism. The lesson learned is that not everyone is going to like your performance and that my profession is full of opinions and that the actor must learn how to handle both negative and positive reviews in order to not go crazy. Well, it seems that I have come full circle with the “Journal Star” because he positively commented on my performance in his review. I know that it should not matter if he liked or hated my performance, but I am human and having him praise my work as Cornwall really did put a smile on my face and

pumped me up for the rest of the run. After taking a shower and heading out early on the cold Nebraska morning to meet Harris, I was interested in his opinion of the show because I knew that he was in the audience last night. Did he enjoy my work? Yes, he did. He told me that I commanded the stage last night and that I was engaged and “in the moment” throughout all of my six scenes in *King Lear*. His positive words meant more to me than anything any theatre critic could ever write. Over the last five semesters, I have come to respect and love most of my professors. Virginia Smith, Stan Brown, and especially Harris Smith, have helped guide me through the long corridors of Graduate School and have positively encouraged me to develop into the best actor that I could possibly become in the few years that I have been in Lincoln, NE. In closing, tonight’s performance was pretty good. It was missing some of the spunk, excitement, and energy that we had on the previous night. I think that having tomorrow off from school and *King Lear* will help recharge everyone’s internal batteries.

Sunday, Nov. 22nd

Today’s afternoon performance of *King Lear* was performed on a Sunday because of the Husker’s home game on Saturday. This was a different and unique change for me because I never had a Sunday performance before during my studies and training here at UNL. It was nice to have the chance to experience an afternoon audience in Temple. Surprisingly, the theatre was pretty full and audience was more responsive and engaged than I had expected. The cast and crew looked well rested and excited about today’s performance. As usual, I arrived early and made sure that I was physically and vocally warmed up before my scheduled fight call. Virginia and Daniel have both been encouraging me to continue exploring my lower register for Cornwall because it makes me much more powerful and grounded on stage. In fact, Bobby, Ian, Judy, and Stan have all encouraged me to develop my lower voice because it blends & compliments well into my six-foot-three body frame. Getting a real grasp on the deeper tones of my vocal chords is a challenge to me because I naturally have a higher tenor voice. After almost ten years of vocal training, my vocal coaches and me have really developed my higher register, including my falsetto, with ease and fluidity. I know that continuing to strengthen and explore my lower voice will be something that I will have to work on for years after my training here at UNL is complete. However, Virginia and Stan both agree

that I have made big strides in anchoring my body with my lower voice in *King Lear*. Today's run had much more energy than Friday's show and would be our last performance before Thanksgiving break. Ten days would separate today's performance till our show on Wednesday, Dec. 2nd. After the lights came up in the audience for our bow, I went to the dressing room content with today's showing and kissed and hugged everyone goodbye, wishing everyone a happy holidays. It will be a much-needed break.

Wednesday, Dec. 2nd

Well, we are back in action for our last four shows of *King Lear*, including our adjudication on Friday. Last night on Howell Stage, our brush-up rehearsal was replaced with an understudy performance of the play. I agree with Virginia and Paul's decision to give the undergraduates a chance to perform our roles in legit run for an audience. How was it? Well, for the most part, I was highly entertained and enthralled by the showing. Despite the fact that certain individuals were not off book and used note cards to get through their scenes, most of the cast was well prepared and delivered stirring and emotional performances, especially Nate, Peter, Calen, Christian, Jessica, & Katie. It was refreshing to see them work so hard in preparation for the chance that they would have to step in for whoever they understudied. In fact, tonight's performance gave Katie Gell the chance to perform in place of Tiffany Baker, who has been suffering with flu-like symptoms for the last few days. After watching Katie beautifully perform the character of Regan last night, I was not worried in the least bit for tonight's performance after Virginia told me about the change earlier in the day. I told Virginia that I would take care of my wife onstage, AKA Katie, and that everything would run smoothly. After finding out the news about the casting change, I decided to head to the theatre much earlier than usual with the intentions of finding Katie to work through our blocking together and answer any questions that she may have for me. We did just that. For about 30 minutes, Katie and I worked through our scenes together and solidified all of our blocking. When Amber announced five minutes to the top of the show, Katie and I took our places at the bottom of the stairs and gave each other the thumbs up. Well, how did the show run tonight with Katie replacing Tiffany? Awesome! Tiffany and Katie have such different acting styles. Katie impressed me with her performance because she learned and studied Tiffany's character choices and interpretation of Regan, which is

exactly what an understudy should do in case they are given the chance to step up and perform. Katie and I flowed well together and our time onstage was solid and at times, very compelling, especially during the “eye gouging” scene. After my death, I went into the wings and watched her in the second half of the show and was again, impressed with her preparation and delivery. Having Katie replace Tiffany tonight gave me the opportunity to explore and discover different elements of my relationship with my Regan. They both had a strong connection to their husband on stage and relied on me to protect and guide them through the first half of our show. It was a great experience and a rare opportunity for me and the rest of the cast and crew to experience an understudy performing in a legit and scheduled performance. Also, after tonight’s run, we had a scheduled “photo-call”. It was a long night. Photo-call ran for almost an hour and a half. It seemed to drag on and on with no end in sight. Finally, our Stage Manager dismissed us and I headed home to get a few hours of sleep before my early day was to begin.

Thursday, Dec. 3rd

Well, the run for my thesis show, *King Lear*, is coming to end in three days. It does not seem real to me that all of this will be over by the end of Saturday night. Heading into tonight’s show, I reminded myself that my time on Howell’s stage during my graduate training would be over in days. I wanted to make sure that I enjoyed every last second of the remaining three shows. Tonight’s performance was the best it has been since opening night. Every night I discover more and about my character and myself as an actor. I have gained a certain amount of confidence over the semester, especially during my work on *King Lear*. I think a lot of “bad actor” habits of mine were addressed and corrected during the show. Listening, the key to any good acting was something that I had to work on because my concentration is often scattered all over the place. Listening keeps me engaged and focused. I needed those two things to help me get through several scenes in *King Lear* where I do not have many lines and Cornwall must listen to everyone else on stage. In fact, during the fourth scene in the second act, Cornwall must tell a story with his body language and facial expressions in order to tell some sort of story of his feelings on Regan & Goneril’s banishment of Lear. I think that this scene has been most improved night after night. The layers of emotion and storytelling piles on with

each performance, despite the fact that lines and blocking stay virtually the same. I would love to see what our show would be like if we had an extended run.

Friday, Dec. 4th

Tonight's agenda was "KCACTF Response" of *King Lear* after the show. Since this was my fourth experience being judged by an adjudicator, I went into tonight's drilling with an awareness of what was to be expected at the meeting. I was fairly confident with tonight's run and hoped that the "judge" would like his experience of our play. Brad Buffum warned a few of us graduate students that this particular professor from a college in Iowa was known to be long-winded and very opinionated during his review. After our curtain call, I headed to the dressing room to change out of costume and then proceeded to take a seat in Howell. The KCACTF representative spoke for about forty minutes. Surprisingly, he managed his time efficiently and had some interesting observations about the directing, set and costume design, and lighting design of the show. For the most part, I think that he really enjoyed our interpretation on *King Lear* and that one must expect a few odd comments when being judged in this particular situation. In closing of his review, the adjudicator gave a few comments on acting to Beth, Lucy, Steven, and Ryan. He never addressed me once throughout the critique. I figure that if he really hated or loved my performance, he would have mentioned something directly to me. I just hope that the cast and crew will take his response with a grain of salt and not let his words alter our show on closing night.

Saturday, Dec. 5th

So it comes to an end. My journey through the storm of *King Lear* finally came to an end tonight. I did not think that I would become so emotional after my final scene in the play, but I was crying like a baby after I made my way offstage. So many different thoughts and emotions were radiating throughout my body and soul that it literally made me weep. I could not grasp the fact that my professional and academic time on Howell Stage, especially with Beth, Tiffany, Lucy, Ryan, Robie, Jason, and Daniel, has come to an end. After almost three years of training with these people, I was saddened with the prospect of having to close this chapter on my life. I love and respect each and every one of my fellow graduate actors. We all have certain strengths and weaknesses as actor's

and human beings, but in essence, these perfections and imperfections makes us unique. I believe that I was so emotional because I will miss many things here at UNL when I leave for the unknown in May. From my professors to my fellow graduate and undergraduate classmates, I will always be thankful that I had the chance to experience an often rough road here in Lincoln with these people helping make each day special and rewarding. I will never forget and always feel privileged to have been given the chance by Virginia to actually perform in one of Shakespeare's toughest plays to stage. I may never get the chance to be in *King Lear* again. I think that my work on this show was the best it has been since I started the program in August of 2007. It took five semesters of trial and error to arrive at this place I am in my craft. It was a long, hard, and winding road throughout the last two and a half years. The most important thing that I learned was how to trust myself as an actor and surrender myself to everyone I perform with on stage. *King Lear* has given me the chance to really develop my listening and reacting skills as a performer. Harris has given me the guidance in believing in myself and embrace my size and physical presence in everyday life and on stage. Stan, the department's living Buddha, has nurtured my voice and soul. He always encouraged me to be myself and never be afraid of using my often "-bombastic" voice. Virginia always greeted me with a hug and words of encouragement, while never shying away from telling me what needs work and what she expects from me and the rest of the graduate actors. Harris Smith, Virginia Smith, and Stan Brown, you three have been instrumental in my development here at UNL. Not only have you guys been my instructors in the department, but also most importantly, you have all been and will remain my friends. Thank you! In closing of my journal, I would like to dedicate my thesis to my momma, Margaret Broussard, whose love and support made it possible for me to move to Lincoln. I love you more than can be expressed in a word processing document. My final "shout out" goes to someone whom I have come to respect more and more over the last few years, especially in the last few months, Jason Francis. He has taught me to be thankful for everything in my life and not to take anything for granted. His courage, optimism, and never fading belief in God and himself has inspired me throughout my time in *King Lear*. My heart tells me that you will scale this mountain that you are currently climbing with such grace and strength and that in five years from now, it will be a distant memory shelved as an obstacle of life and a growing experience. Jason, I love you! You have

inspired me to be a better person! What else could I possibly write in this journal after that last sentence!

Appendix C

Interviews

Virginia Smith Interview

KB: Do you think my portrayal of the Duke of Cornwall had a complete arc/journey by my final performance in *King Lear*?

VS: Yes, I do. You began as a strong proud man who is sort of at odds with the King, you became a co-leader of the realm and eventually a maniac about loyalty. The way to have improved that would be to add detail at those turning points, so we see even more of what's going on in your mind. (This an observation from the vantage of hind sight and not something I ever asked from you.)

KB: You often speak of the importance of an actor to "open their heart" to their cast mates. Do you think that I grasped that idea and made myself vulnerable and open to the cast and crew of *King Lear*.

VS: I have two points for you to ponder here. To answer your question, yes, I think you were as present as you can be at this point in your trust of yourself. This isn't loving everybody and being with everybody, but being completely open and ready for anything in the moment as your character onstage. You did love everybody and give of yourself. I think you have further to go on trusting who you are and being fully present on stage rather than checking out the details. It's a journey. The second point: I also believe that opening so that you are fully ready to feel everything the character has to go through is important as a way to prepare for a performance. I usually mention the heart chakra because so much of being able to be emotional or daring to be vulnerable comes from that chakra.

KB: As the director of my thesis show, do you feel that I met your expectations?

VS: Yes. I think in fact you may have exceeded them. You took some great steps this semester, steps that though I hoped for, I could not predict would be taken. I think you've

grown as an actor in a variety of ways. I hope we can list them and elaborate on them in this thesis document.

KB: As an actor who has a few bad habits such as not being present all the time and not listening to my fellow actors while I am silent on stage, do you think I made positive advancement with my listening and reacting skills during the eight weeks that I was involved in King Lear?

VS: You made great strides in listening and reacting. Now that you know these things why would you not just focus all your attention on what is happening. You focus too much on details like: my chin needs to be down, my back need to be straight. Get that physical stuff out of the way before rehearsals start so you can learn about the character onstage in interactions with the other characters.

KB: What do you think was my biggest contribution to your King Lear experience?

VS: That you were inspired, from all the notes and work and maybe finally by the costumes and that you became an enormous, powerful man with great authority. You did transform by the end into a character who was more than what you had worked on in rehearsals.

Harris Smith Interview

KB: How do you think I grew as an actor with my role as Cornwall in *King Lear*?

HS: I'd say you grew in every aspect. Emotionally, you were more connected then you have been in the past. Overall, in general, you have more control over your nerves when you are performing. I think you came a long way. I still think you have a long ways to go with being relaxed. But, in saying that, you also had more fun. You were enjoying yourself more than you ever have. You were willing to take more chances. Tension limits what you can do on stage. And you seemed like you were having fun. You took up space and took ownership of your size and physicality. You made good interesting character choices. Vocally, you have it down. Emotionally, you are pretty well connected. The biggest challenge for you still is physical awareness. Continue to work on your coordination, especially when it comes to stage combat.

KB: A major goal of mine was to elongate my stride and physically and emotionally command the stage. Was I somewhat successful?

HS: Yes. Yes. I just answered that. You took my direction. Yes, you embraced the role and you embraced your size. The cockiness of your character gave me insight into you character. I liked how you took space up with your arms and also having your hands on your hips told me a lot about your character on stage. Having your hand on your hips was a very condescending, cocky gesture that you had throughout your performance, like when Kent was being put in the stocks, or when you were talking to the servants or someone you felt superior to in the play. You found that.

KB: What do you think is my greatest strength as an actor, especially in context to my performance in *King Lear*?

HS: I'd thought, vocally, you had a strong performance. And once again, I would say physically. As far as characterization, I thought you nailed it. I thought Cornwall was a cocky, greedy, son of a bitch. I think it came off well in my opinion. Does not mean that you cannot take it further. And that will come in time. I have been telling this to all of

your classmates, that it will come with time and experience. But that is why you are in graduate school, to learn and to grow. It does not mean that your growth stops when you leave school.

KB: What area would you like for me to continue to improve once I am done with my MFA?

HS: Continue to work on being aware of your body. You know that you want to do film. Film is the direction you want to go in. We know that you are good looking. You are a ruggedly handsome guy. So, you need to continue to work on your weight so you look good for film. You don't want to be typecast as a thug or a big dumb jock. The more weight you lose, the more marketable you will be. It does not mean that you can't play those roles. There are a lot of big men that can transcend beyond what Hollywood says. Continue to seek out any training that you can get. Try to get work and continue working on your craft. Film stuff seems to be coming easier to you. But if you want to keep being marketable, continue working on your theatre stuff. Mainly weight, you got to get your weight down.

KB: In conclusion, was your overall experience of *King Lear* affected by my performance? If so, why?

HS: The function of every character is to help the plot move forward. Did your character help do that? Yes he did. Did you help tell the story of conflict, good vs. evil? Yes. Was Cornwall one of the major antagonists? Yes. Your performance helped support the overall theme of the play. Your character did that.

Stan Brown Interview

KB: How do you think I grew as an actor with my role of Cornwall in King Lear?

SB: You are now able as an actor to create the illusion of character while maintaining the necessary technical considerations (with regard to voice and speech) which make the performance consistently understandable.

KB: A major goal of mine through the rehearsal process was to use my lower register to help "center/anchor" my character. Was I somewhat successful?

SB: You were very successful with using a consistent connection to your full voice. You have a lovely voice so it's wonderful to hear it used without the obstruction of distracting thoughts and tension.

KB: What do you think is my greatest strength as an actor, especially in context to my performance in King Lear?

SB: You had a formidable physical presence and, again, your voice was very commanding.

KB: What area would you like to see me continue to improve in when I am done with my MFA?

SB: Concentration. More specific, the ability to be totally surrendered to the moment without letting your energy become confused by unnecessary thoughts.

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