

Foreign and Domestic

Arion Friday

A thesis

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Abstract

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Tim Bond

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I believe that art is objectively quantifiable. I believe that vets come home to country that's worse than what they deserve. I believe that this country is killing its vets. I believe that we can change the world. I believe that Masterful-Art is, and of itself, *influence*. Charm. So, I set out to test my skillsets at self-producing and performing a semi-auto-biographical action-drama. As such, *Foreign and Domestic* criticizes modern American sensibilities through the lens of a black, immigrant, former Marine Officer—yeah, I know, a lot of qualifiers there—who transitions back to civilian life. Here's the logline: "With fresh intentions, a former Marine returns home from war, only to suffer at the hands of the same country he once served. In this examination, I intend to recount the creation and performance phases of my twenty-minute solo piece, *Foreign and Domestic*, with a primary focus on the successes and lessons learnt of any Professional Actor Training Program (PATP) coursework that I incorporated/attempted. We'll look at Producing, the Concept, Writing, Performing, and Future Goals. Throughout the examination, I'll reference the script, courses, and images/figures/charts in the footnotes.

For the creation of the piece, consider style, external-influences, purpose, editing, and quality assurance. In producing, style serves as the corner stone, and anchors the ethical compass towards the target audience. *Foreign and Domestic*, specifically, targets white U.S. conservatives. The Documentary Theater course (1st yr PATP)¹, taught by Senior Artist-in-Residence, Karen Hartman, inspired my creation of a sort of Combat Correspondence Theater, which, lessons from Prof. Mark Jenkins (Studio, 1st yr PATP)² helped me hammer out into given circumstances. So, if I had the choice—which I “always do” (Cathy Madden, Alexander Technique, 1st, 2nd, 3rd yr PATP)³, what one military thing should everyone learn about first? The veteran’s transition back into civilian life. The optimism and pain. Undervalued.

Much like the Prince of Denmark, Veterans understand the “burden of command” and contemplate any-and-all action...existence itself. Responsibility. Purpose. So, I chose to explore a ‘Shakespearean’ point-of-view, loaded with verbal and allegorical syllogism; and while I’m at it, “Why not tell the story of the dark Prince through the eyes of a dark man?” Of course, the story would have natural limitations: schedules, stage-shapes, technical requirements, resources, and even individual initiative and group dynamics. Solo-Shows is a misnomer. For example, Prof. Valerie Curtis-Newton (Solo-Show, 2nd yr and 3rd yr PATP)⁴ helped us shape a performance-sequence that alternated between provocation and healing. That pattern was simply waiting to be discovered; and as Val has said, “You have to be open to discovery—be open to experiencing” (Directing Lab, 1st yr PATP)⁵. In retrospect, producing occupied most of my available time, through planning for style and coordinating external influences.

¹ Documentary Theater

² Studio

³ Alexander Technique

⁴ Solo Show

⁵ Directing Lab

Writing was the next phase of creation. *Foreign and Domestic*'s concept came from modeling the Three-Act-Structure (HJ3ActStructure) of Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey"⁶. The HJ3ActStructure is widely used in professional film and television scripts⁷ (including reality tv...yes, they're scripted). I've attached an example of an early *Foreign and Domestic* structural outline⁸, which helped specify—indeed, quantify, the protagonist's arc. With that scaffold in place, I focused my attention to formatting, time, space, audience-points-of-view, and adaptation decisions (especially since I planned to incorporate the most famous monologue in the world...TWICE). Ten cover-to-cover rewrites, and twice as many outline rewrites later, I learned the most important lesson of the entire process—and maybe one of life's: "Kill your 'darlings'." Condense pages or paragraphs into one line/word/action. That's the perfect trajectory. Check out the quality assurance chart⁹ I created to ensure that all beginnings had a middle and an end.

Speaking of which, on to performance. I was also the group's sound designer and engineer; so, once we were in the theater, I was building sound much more than I was rehearsing...sound skills I most definitely need in the future. Worth it. However, it reflected in the performances. After I executed the tiniest bit of blocking too early (Friday, p. 9)¹⁰, the second half of the first night's performance was either three seconds behind or three seconds ahead, for the duration, as I tried to bracket my way back onto rhythmic track. The audience couldn't tell, from those I got to ask; but, I could feel that I was telling a different story. A good story, but not the one I was aiming for. Day one of the solo-show-self-test gave me tons to think about. Overnight. Day two went off without a hitch—so much so, that when I finished the *equity*

⁶ Full Sail University – Creative Writing Master of the Fine Arts (CWMFA) w/ emph. In Screenwriting.

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⁸ See ENCL 1 (Foreign and Domestic Structural Outline Example)

⁹ ENCL 2 (Quality Assurance Chart)

¹⁰ *Foreign and Domestic* Script. I was supposed to pick up the doll on "(Beat) Sickle cell", not on "You think...".

monologue (Friday, p. 5)¹¹, the pre-recorded insects and wildlife silenced, simultaneously. Talk about *serendipity*! Theater *can* be both subjective and objective. It *should* be both! That's what separates art from science...*intention*. Finally getting more rehearsal time definitely helped too. Furthermore, I noticed the significant impact that the opening and closing moments/scenes are for productions. I got to be right before intermission on day-one, and the final performance on day-two. I felt the pressure on both nights, but it was exhilarating. Another example, starting with a comedic scene (like day-one and Alana Cheshire's *Bewbs*), which appeared to have a noticeable effect on the audience's energy throughout the night.

In the near/distant future. I plan to start a hybrid theater/film production company. The creation and performance training that I experienced as a part of, or through, UW PATP (and affiliates/partners) helped me to make it possible. Now, is it probable? God Willing!

¹¹ *Foreign and Domestic Script*. "The insects stop chirping. AJ notices."

Foreign and Domestic Structural Outline Example

NOTE: **DRAFT** – “The N_Word” (A precursor to *Foreign and Domestic*)

THE N_WORD

<amateur → professional>

(A-Story = *Killed by police*; B-Story = *Suicidal ideation*; C-Story = *EOF*)

-----"1.2.3.4. Marine Corps"-----

<https://youtu.be/eB47Ps4Nhbq>

- 1.2.3.4... (**ORDINARY WORLD**) **Set up**
- Swearing-in. (**CALL TO ADVENTURE**) **TP1**
- Florida A&M / ROTC by day (**REFUSAL OF THE CALL**)
- Performance Theater by night. (**MENTOR**)

-----"C-130 rolling down the strip"-----

<https://youtu.be/dETZ9e1lzig>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veiKrMZXIPE> (1:58:25) Arabic flute.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Kw7MvVUObU> Desert at dawn.

- Deploy. (**CROSSING THE THRESHOLD**) **TP2**
- Distribute Scheme of Maneuver-CAS-CASEVAC-. (**TESTS, ALLIES, AND ENEMIES**)
- The waiting.
- Encounter kids while on mounted patrol. (**APPROACH THE INMOST CAVE**)
- Combined attack. (**THE ORDEAL**) **TP3**
- **Sister dies.** (**THE REWARD**)

-----"Pain...in my legs"-----

<https://youtu.be/CdiwaAePsc0>

- Return to reality. (**THE ROAD BACK**) **TP4**
- Suicidal ideation. (**THE RESURRECTION**) **TP5**
- Nepotism! / Killed by police. (**RETURN WITH THE ELIXER**)

-----"Taps ←crossfade→ Strange Fruit"-----

<https://youtu.be/kDMf7qcEAAM>

https://youtu.be/BcCm_ySBslk

Sensory = 5% = 4 pages

Talk = 45% = 9 pages

Move = 35% = 4 pages

Silence = 5% = 1 pages

Singing = 10% = 2 pages

Enclosure (1)

Friday 7

Quality Assurance Chart

	BEGINNING		MIDDLE		END
POINT IN STORY	1-10%	10%-25%	25-75%	75-90%	90-100%
DISTANCE FROM AUDIENCE	<i>Behind</i>	<i>Near</i>	<i>Far</i>	<i>Near</i>	<i>Behind</i>
EXPERIENCE	<i>Shattered expectation</i>	<i>Immersive</i>	<i>Dialogue + Direct address</i>	<i>Immersive</i>	<i>Shattered expectation</i>
BLOCKING	<i>Thrust</i>	<i>Proscenium</i>	<i>Round</i>	<i>Proscenium</i>	<i>Thrust</i>
RELATIONSHIP WITH AUDIENCE	<i>Sound (Music)</i>	<i>Soliloquy + Monologue</i>	<i>Dialogue + Monologue + Brief silence</i>	<i>Monologue + Soliloquy + Spoken Word + Singing + Silence</i>	<i>Sound (Music + Shots)</i>
SENSORY PROGRESSION	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Sight + Sound</i>	<i>Sight + Sound</i>	<i>Silence</i>	<i>Sight + Sound + Smell</i>
TRAINING INFLUENCE	<i>Composition + Shakespeare</i>	<i>218s + Studio</i>	<i>Shakespeare + Voice + Studio + Play + Composition</i>	<i>Studio + Suzuki + Singing</i>	<i>Voice + Shakespeare + Studio</i>

Encl 2. Quality Assurance Chart used to identify patterns and trends in given circumstances.

Here's a simple chart I created to track and align some of the similarities I began noticing between fictitious and real given circumstances. In effect, thinking about the project like this helped me to ensure that each element I introduced had a complete and intentional through-line.

Notice the percentages near the top of the chart. Those correlate to Joseph Campbell's HJ3ActStructure.

Suddenly, the twenty minutes seem much more manageable. Everything has an arc.

Enclosure 2

Friday 8

