An Actor's Trust

Nathaniel Arthur Stahlke

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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An Actor’s Trust
An Actor’s Trust

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

by

Nathaniel Stahlke
Oral Roberts University
Bachelor of Arts in Theatre 2012

May 2015
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

__________________________________  _______________ _______________
Mavourneen Dwyer, M.F.A.    Michael Landman, M.F.A.
Thesis Director     Committee Member

__________________________________  _______________ _______________
Gail Leftwich, M.F.A.    Michael Landman, M.F.A.
Committee Member     Committee Member
ABSTRACT

This thesis is a reflection of an actor’s learned ability to trust oneself and to trust the process, following three years of intense training. It consists of my statement of artistry, documentation of my thesis project and performance, as well as my future professional development materials.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special Thanks to:

My God of love, in Whom I live and breath and find my footing.

My parents, for always supporting me and always teaching me to be fearless in everything I do.

My Brothers Andrew, Sam and Zac, for being my best friends, my heart, and my soul.

My teachers, at all levels, who have shown me what my potential is and hold me to that standard of excellence.

My classmates Kholoud Sawaf, Stephanie Bignault, Jason Shipman, James Taylor Odom and Laura Shatkus, whose eternal friendship means more to me than words can describe.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my little brother Zac. Thank you for being the best little brother anyone could ask for. You showed me what it means to love those who need it the most. The pain and Joy that you permanently infused upon my heart spurs me on to be the most giving person I can be. Though our time here was cut short, I will carry on for the both of us, as I know you are daily cheering me on to run the good race and to fight the good fight.
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STATEMENT OF ARTISTRY

“The only thing we have to fear is…fear itself”. Those were the famous words of Franklin D. Roosevelt at his first Inaugural Address on March 4th, 1933. It is funny to me how often these wise words are tossed around, and yet so often unheeded. I cannot keep track of how many times, unknowingly even, I have fallen victim to fear. As an artist, I have long battled with the ugly face of fear, and many times have lost. A fearful artist cannot truly fulfill his destiny as an artist. In these last three years, I have really learned to see fear for what it is: not believing the truth about myself. I am done with being a fearful artist. I am an artist who trusts in what I know to be true.

I very distinctly remember having a moment of self-reflection in the sixth grade. I was standing in the art room of my elementary school. One of my classmates was talking about how much fun it would be to be an actor. I remember that moment so clearly, because deep down I felt this joy and excitement rising up in me like never before. Within the same instant, I went through all the reasons in my young mind of why I could never be an actor. My school was very small, and did not have a theatre program of any kind. I had never been exposed to theatre. I thought it was way too big of a dream for me. That was the year 2000. Fast forward to 2008, after almost 3 years of college, I was a half satisfied nursing major. While on my fall break during a week off of school, I traveled to NYC to visit my brother, and there I saw my very first theatre production on Broadway of the musical Spring Awakening. My imagination was jumpstarted like never before. I felt that same joy rising up within my like I experienced in that moment way back in the sixth grade. The following school year, I switched majors from nursing to theatre.
I was attending school at Oral Roberts University, and was very fortunate to have talented acting teachers Courtneay Sanders and Chris Crawford teach me, from the ground up, how to be a real theatre artist. After getting my Bachelors degree, I was immediately accepted into the MFA program at the University of Arkansas for acting.

Even at this point in my artistic career, I felt very inexperienced. I was still clinging to the idea that everybody knew more than me, that they had done more dynamic shows than me, and that they knew much more about what they were talking about than I did. I felt like I was just a normal guy hiding in the shell of a theatre artist. Throughout a big portion of my time at the U of A, I still listened to my own fears that told me I didn’t know what I was doing, and that I was not going to know what I was doing for a long time.

Here at the U of A, my teachers taught me so much. I learned how to do good script analysis, how to be more honest in my acting, how to use my voice and body in the best ways, and how to free myself of bad acting habits that I had grown accustomed to using. Through wonderful teaching of all kinds of techniques, as well as so much encouragement from my teachers and classmates, I have finally begun to realize that I really am an artist, I have a voice, I have real human truths to share from the stage…I am valid. The moment that I stop trying to “get it right” and start trusting myself as a true artist is the moment that I can really give to people instead of trying to please people.

Throughout this wonderfully difficult and pressing process here, aside from learning my craft as an actor, my biggest lesson has been to trust myself as an artist. When I begin to trust myself as an artist, I no longer have a need to resort to false acting habits. I have found such a joy in freedom from fear of failure. Through this joy, rather than focusing on my own
insecurities as an actor, my focus shifts to sharing the story that I am telling from the stage. To me, this is what being a real theatre artist is.

I am still on this journey to continually become a fearless actor, but am now winning battles with fear and self-doubt more often than not. When I continue to trust myself, trust what I have been taught, and trust the work through process, I find that my fellow actors and directors trust me as well. The actor who lets go of fear can truly become one who collaborates well, encourages their fellow colleagues, and most successfully imparts human truths to the audience…which is why we do what we do in the first place.
THE FOREIGNER PRODUCTION PROGRAM

The University of Arkansas
Department of Theatre
Proudly Presents

The Foreigner
By Larry Shue

Directed by
Michael Landman

Scenic Design
Joseph B. Farley

Costume Design
Patricia J. Martin

Lighting Design
Jacquelyn R. Cox

Sound Design
Priscilla White

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
CAST

5/Sgt. "Froggy" LeSueur ........................................... Robert Flaherty Hart
Charlie Baker .............................................................. James Taylor Odum
Betty Meeks ................................................................. Stephanie Faatz Marry
Rev. David Marshall Lee .............................................. Colin Bennett
Catherine Simms ............................................................ Keely Cain
Owen Meener ............................................................... Bill Rogers
Ellard Simms ............................................................... Nate Stahlke
Townspeople ...................................................................... Rachel Bethaus
Matt Clothier, Flex Coreas
Elijah Dewitt, Erin Dosher

Place
Betty Meeks' Fishing Lodge Resort
Tilghman County, Georgia, U.S.A.

Time
1983

Act 1
Scene 1: Evening.
Scene 2: The following morning.

Act 2
Scene 1: Afternoon, two days later.
Scene 2: That evening.

The foreigner will be performed in two acts,
With one 10-minute intermission.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production
is strictly prohibited. As a courtesy to other patrons, PLEASE TURN OFF
CELLPHONES AND OTHER DEVICES during the performance.
DIRECTOR’S NOTES

Now twelve... playwright and actor Larry Shue might be alive today, continuing to share his inventive comic gifts. He was only 48 years old when he died in a small plane crash in 1985, less than a year after The Foreigner opened Off-Broadway. At that time his career was beginning. He was adapting The Foreigner as a screenplay for Disney, and was cast in his first Broadway role in The Mystery of Edwin Drood. While he didn’t get to perform on Broadway, in 1987 he played The Hard in his first produced film, where it ran for over a year. The Foreigner continues to be immensely popular and is regularly produced by professional, university, and community theatres.

Now with... the organization the villain of our play is associated with, the KGB, FMIN, had long ago disbanded. Unfortunately, the hate group remains active in small factions throughout the United States, with its self-proclaimed national headquarters in Arkansas. Their disdain and hatred reminds me of the words of one of our Founding Fathers, Daniel Franklin, who said, “It is not the stomach is not too much a shame, as being unwilling to learn.” Or, as Martin Luther King, Jr. noted, “Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than false ignorance and confession stupidity.”

Michael Landau
Director

WHO’S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Michael Lawrence (Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Head of the MFA Directing program at the University of Arkansas. Professional credits include 3 Stars for Company, A Director Named Dursie, On Golden Pond, Ivanov, The Great Gatsby, and the world premieres of The Sound of Meat (Arkansas Shakespeare Festival), All Things Famous, Still, and Church Bus (Whole Cloth, NY). He is the Company’s Artistic Director and the Friday’s Shakespeare Festival, Arkansas Shakespealer, Young Shakespeare Company, The Shakespeare Theatre. He was in

Stephanie Rasco, Mary (Misty Moore), is a 27 year old actress, storyteller, producer from Roanoke, VA. She holds a BFA in Theatre Directing from the University of Maryland and a BFA in Directing from the University of Arkansas. In addition to her work on stage, she is also a member of the National Theatre Association and the American Guild of Artists and Dramatic Artists. In 2012, she was a recipient of the Gloria Stuart Award for Excellence in Directing. She is also the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of the stage theatre company, The Fringe, which produces new works in the areas of comedy, drama, and musical theatre.

Robert Riordan (Jack “King” Gough) is a native of Chicago. He has appeared in numerous University Theatre productions, including The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, A Christmas Carol, and A Christmas Carol. He trained at the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has been a member of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and is currently a graduate student in the Department of Theatre at the University of Illinois.

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
Who's Who in the Production
Community Theatre produces four plays per year, which include one musical and three dramas. The plays are performed at the University of Arkansas Performing Arts Center. The season typically runs from September through May. The productions are directed by a professional director, and the cast and crew are primarily students from the University of Arkansas. The productions are designed by professional scenic designers, costume designers, and lighting designers. The orchestra is conducted by a professional musical director.

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
GETTING TO KNOW...
Actor/Playwright Robert Flaherty Hart

Who is Robert Flaherty Hart?
I was born in Kansas City, MO, and grew up in the suburbs of Overland Park, KS. My undergraduate degree is in Theater from Emporia State University. I worked for many years as a writer and editor for a weekly newspaper, a parenting magazine, a nonprofitCHILD sponsorship organization, and in business and corporate communications for both sports and health care. Although I acted in community theater in the 70s, I was too old at 45 that I decided to go back to school and pursue a career in the arts.

What made you decide to pursue not one, but two MFA degrees at the University of Arkansas?
I came to Fayetteville in 2010 to begin the MFA Acting program, which was a wonderful experience. I managed to take one effective class in the very challenging acting curriculum during those three years—a course in presentation. That led unexpectedly to my being invited to join the UA FAYLincoln program, which has been an extraordinary adventure as well.

What is your favorite show that you have ever watched so far?
Last year, I think it was probably 33 elections, now at Yale in the fall of 2018. It was so beautifully directed by Amy Herzog and it raised my voice as Ludwig von Beethoven. Plus, I got to work with an amazing cast and crew. (Remember mention to Alan Ayckbourn, a play I wrote that was directed by Menierdreams Director in Studio 54 last fall.)

If you had to pick either acting or playwrighting, which would you choose? Why?
Acting. I’ve always had a love-hate relationship with writing. I have done some, but I don’t necessarily enjoy the process. Acting, on the other hand, is sheer joy, particularly once everything goes and the audience arrives to experience something new and exciting.

What do you plan to do after you receive your MFA?
I’m off to Chicago to be a starring and, I hope eventually, non-starring theater artist!

What would you say is the biggest or most important thing you’ve learned at the University of Arkansas?
Treat yourself. Treat your peers. All the time I spent second-guessing is truly wasted.

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
Dear University Theatre Patron,

First of all, welcome to the University Theatre’s third production of the 2014-15 Mainstage Series! We have an exciting line up of productions both here at the University Theatre, and at our Studio Theatre – 404 located in Kemp Library as well. We hope you have a chance to experience the line up we’re doing in this intimate, 70 seat black box space.

2014-15 is an exciting year for us. We continue to make changes in an effort to grow our season subscriptions and patron base as well as make it easier for you to find us on campus. I hope you saw the “Sandwich Board” sign guiding you to our theatre – we know many of you know your way around, but some of you may be attending for the first time and we wanted you to feel welcome as you maneuver through our beautiful campus. We will also be using them for our Studio Series productions guiding you up from the Harpem Garage, and we stamped out where our studio theatre is located on the #5 floor. We also invite each of you to stop in and have your picture taken in front of our “Stop & Report” wall located in the lobby of the University Theatre. We would love for you to share it on your favorite social media to let everyone know you are at the University Theatre.

I am so pleased to report that between 2013 and 2014, the number of people who support University Theatre has grown by 50% with an increase in giving by 65%! Not only do these contributions allow us to produce theatre at the highest level, they also serve our students by offering them experience and training using state-of-the-art technology. As an ever changing technological world, it is more important today than it was ever before to give the students at the University of Arkansas a leg up on the competition by providing outstanding training – your generous gift helps to make that a reality for us. Although we do receive state funding that supports some of our production costs, by no means does that cover the expenses associated with providing the highest caliber training possible.

At all of this line up of theatre, it is my desire that each of you will enjoy each of the productions and that you will consider making a donation to help us continue our Mainstage and Studio Series programs. I would also like to consider supporting our exceptionally talented students by contributing to our University Theatre Patron Program by becoming a Friend ($50-$99), Patron ($100-$149), Grand Patron ($200-$299), Angel ($300-$499) or Super Angel ($500+)

I hope you enjoy this evening’s (or afternoon’s) performance of The Foreigner.

Best,

[Signature]
The University of Arkansas
Department of Theatre
Proudly Presents

The Chairs
By Eugène Ionesco
Translated by Rob Melrose

at Studio 404

Directed by
Kholoud Sawaf

Scenic Design
Kiah Kayser

Costume Design
Nicole Thompson

Lighting Design
Jacob Hofer

Sound Design
Will Eubanks

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
Meet the Cast

Laura Shatkus
Nate Stalkhe
Colin Bennett

CAST
Old Woman (999 years old).........................Laura Shatkus
Old Man (1000 years old).............................Nate Stalkhe
Orator..................................................Colin Bennett

Setting
Anytime and anywhere.

Director's Notes
When I first "met" The Choir two years ago, I remember feeling a roller coaster of excitement. I couldn’t stop laughing and jumping up and down at the old couple’s journey and surprises. I thought how fun it would be to try to direct a scene from this play, which I subsequently did in one of my classes. I fell in love with the story and its characters. A summer later I was reading the play in my hometown of Damascus, Syria, as I was listening to the nearby destruction and shelling of an ongoing civil war. I started hearing the words of the play as if for the first time. It was suddenly a completely different piece for me. I met it again. It was so deep, moving, sad, and funny. It was very personal. I was laughing and crying at the same time as I was reading it.

The more I work on this piece the more I find parallels between the old couple’s Paris and my Damascus. The Paris that “existed for four thousand years and then collapsed into ruins. There is nothing left from it except a song. A lover, an allegory.” From a Damascus heart, drawn to the songs, to the rain, to the jasmine of my city, I want to share and bring to life this play, and earnestly wish our artistic team might forever leave a trace with you.

Thank you...
Khaled

The use of photographic or recording equipment during this performance is forbidden by law. As a courtesy to other patrons, PLEASE TURN OFF CELLPHONES AND OTHER DEVICES during the performance.

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Khaled Sowef (Director) is a 3rd year M.F.A. Acting Candidate from Damascus, Syria. She holds a B.A. in Mass Communication and has worked at the Performing Arts Program in the American University of Sharjah, UAE and at SAPK Productions in Damascus. Previous acting credits include Time Stands Still, V is for Violin and A Doll's House (U of A), as well as Forgiveness and segments of Gilgamesh: Images & Dreams (AUS). Khaled was also Assistant Director for Hamlet and The Importance of Being Earnest at TheatreSquared. She plans to work as a professional director in theaters around the U.S. and eventually return to Damascus where she would like to start a theater school to help improve, heal and educate her beloved country.

Laura Shaltos (Old Woman) is a 3rd year M.F.A. Acting Candidate from Elgin, IL. She holds a B.A. in English from the University of Illinois and has studied acting at various studios in Chicago. Previous credits include The Fall of The House, Arkansas New Play Festival (TheatreSquared), The New Now (Artist's Laboratory Theatre), Art Out Loud: Gertrude Stein & Picasso at the Lapis Agile (Arkansas Staged), Prison Stories (Prairie Repertory Theatre), The Diviners (The Misseling Melody). A founder of 5 Months Pregnant—Fayetteville's only all-female improv group. Professional credits include Marivaux's Nuits Orphica, Accidental Death of an Anarchist (3rd Street Rep), The Mousetrap (Misanthropic Theatre) and The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Fireworks of the Gift Theatre. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois and has appeared in the following roles: Gertrude: 33 Variations, Joanne: Company, Lane: The Clean House, Adult Woman: Spring Awakening, Linda: Kim.

Note Stahlke (Old Man) is a 3rd year M.F.A. Acting Candidate from Mansfield, OH. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre Arts from Oral Roberts University. Previous credits include Lucky Stiff, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Oklahoma! (OBU), Flamingo and Decatur (Arkansas New Play Festival), Charlie Brown Christmas, The Tempest, Untogether/ The Musical (Playhouse Tulsa), Company, Translations, Godspell. As You Like It, The Foreigner (U of A), and A Christmas Carol (TheatreSquared).

Colin Bennett (Draper) hails from Olathe, Kansas and is in his third year here at the U of A. He plans to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Advertising/Public Relations with a minor in Theatre. This is his sixth show at the U of A with a few former roles being David in The Foreigner, George Hastings in She Stoops to Conquer, Sylvia in As You Like It, and Krostad in A Doll's House. After his graduation Colin plans to attend graduate school to receive his Masters of Fine Arts in Acting. From there he would like to pursue Chicago as an avenue for professional work.

Umer Wlash (Stage Manager) has called Fayetteville Arkansas home for the past four years. She is a senior at the University of Arkansas and is currently studying to get her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre. Her previous credits include Into the Woods (New Threshold Theatre).

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

The New Now (Artsitic Laboratory Theatre), The Jungle Book (Trike Theatre). At the University of Arkansas she has worked as The Foreigner, Kim, Time Stands Still and she Stoops to Conquer. After graduation she plans on finding work at local theaters and someday moving to Chicago to pursue a stage management career.

Sarah Gill (Asst. Stage Manager) is from Fayetteville, AR. She is a sophomore English major at the University of Arkansas, minor in Theatre and Anthropology. She previously worked on costume crew for the University's production of Kim and as assistant stage manager for The Foreigner.

Nicole Thompson (Costume Designer) is a 3rd year M.F.A. Costume Designer and Technology candidate from Apple Valley, MN. She previously designed costumes for Godspell and served as shop manager and draper on numerous U of A productions. Professionally she has worked as first hand for 4 seasons at American Players Theatre in Spring Green, WI. Upon receiving her M.F.A. she plans to move back to the Midwest and seek a job as a technician or shop manager in a regional theatre.

Kiah Kayser (Scenic Designer) is a 3rd year M.F.A. scenic design candidate from Young America, MN. She holds a B.A. in Theatre from Iowa State University. Previous credits include Romeo and Juliet, A Steady Rain, Gin (University of Iowa), The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Trike Theatre). She is the set design consultant for the U of A's production of A's Kim last fall.

Kiah plans to pursue a career as a professional scenic designer and artist.

Jacob Hofer (Lighting Designer) is a 2nd year MFA Lighting Design Candidate from Slusal Falls, South Dakota. He holds a B.S. in Theatre from South Dakota State University. He served as Lighting Designer for SDSU and was the Lighting Head at Prairie Repertory Theatre for the past three summers. He previously designed lighting for Kim and As You Like It at the University of Arkansas. In the future he plans to move to Chicago or Minneapolis and pursue a professional career in Lighting Design.

Will Eubanks (Sound Designer) is currently serving as Resident Sound Designer at TheatreSquared in Fayetteville, where he has designed over 10 shows, including Look Away, Proof, Hamlet, and others. He holds a degree in Theatre from the University of Arkansas, where select credits include A Streetcar Named Desire, Up, and Othello.

Jesus Rivera (Asst. Sound Designer) is a 2nd year B.A. in Performing Arts major from Jacksonville, AR. Previous sound design credits include Macbeth, Mountaintop. She was the sound designer for The Monkey's Paw at Theatre Squared and will be the sound designer for the Very Merry Christmas (Theo Theatre Company). He was the assistant sound designer for the U of A's production of A's Kim last fall.

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE PATRONS

SUPER ANGELS........................................... Orville and Susan Hall, Barbara Shadden, Trike Theatre

ANGELS........................................................................... Mike and Terry Johnson

GRAND PATRON.................................................... Hugh and Nancy Brewer, Ronnie and Nancy Denn,
D. Andrew Gibbs and Mary L. Gibbs, Roger and Patricia Gross, Ralph and Gale Jensen, Roger
and Jessie Koepp, Luke and Janet Parsch, Peter and Mary Savin, Martha Sutherland

PATRONS.............................................................. Donald and Susan Bobbitt, Janet Baker and Wade Burnside,
Bobbie and Susan Chadick, Virginia Ann Coogan, David and Marsha Crandell, David E.R. Gay
and Gary D. Thornton, Nancy Garner and Mort Gittleman, James O. Graham and Sharon Kinsky
Graham, Phillip Harrington, Douglas James and Elizabeth Adam, Jill and Thomas King, Alex
Lasareff-Mironoff and Hana Mironoff, Gregory and Hannah Lee, Michael and Eileen Lieber,
Vernon and Shirley Lott, David and Deborah Malone, Sabra Martin, Bill and Marietta Morris,
W. Warren Rosenaur, Barbara and Mitch Singleton, Charles and Janice Truax, Terry
Vaughan and Tim Gilster, Dina Wood, Paige J. Zaloudek

FRIENDS...............................................................Dick Bennett, Jo Bennett, Eugenia Donovan,
Brandon James and Elizabeth Barnes Keener, Sylvia King, Barbara Moore, Denise Nemeck,
Polly Rea, Nadine Purvis Schmidt, Jane Scroggs, Frank and Sara Sharp, Carolyn and Murray
Smart, Charlotte Taylor and Tim Hudson, Bobbie Nell Templeton.

For more information on how to become a patron of the Department of Theatre,
please call (479) 575-3645, email us at theatre@uark.edu or
visit our website at http://theatre.uark.edu.

Coming Soon to the Department of Theatre...

The Cherry Orchard
By Anton Chekhov
April 17th-26th at the University Theatre

One-Act Play Festival
April 27th and 29th at the Global Campus Theatre

Program Courtesy of UARK THEATRE
WEBSITE LINK

http://nathanielstahlke.sitey.me/
HEADSHOT AND RESUME

Photo reprinted with permission from photographer, Sean Frank
NATHANIEL STAHLKE

Height: 5'5" - Hair: Blond - Eyes: Green - Voice: Tenor

Regional

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Play</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Company</th>
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Educational

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Education

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<td>Theatre—Acting</td>
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Training


Special Skills

WORKS CITED

APPENDIX A.1

Email Correspondence with Sean Frank

4/10/2015

Gmail - Headshots

Nathaniel Stahlke <nstahlke88@gmail.com>
To: seanmichaelfrank@gmail.com

Thu, Apr 9, 2015 at 1:59 PM

Hey Sean!

would you allow me use the head shots you took of me for my thesis?

Thanks!

Nate Stahlke

Sean Frank <seoanmichaelfrank@gmail.com>
To: Nathaniel Stahlke <nstahlke88@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 9, 2015 at 3:29 PM

Of course, my friend. I give you permission to use those images in whatever capacity you see fit.

Cheers

Sean Frank

[Quoted text hidden]
APPENDIX A.2

Department of Theatre Publicity Release Memo

To: Graduate School and International Studies, University of Arkansas
From: Ashley Cohea, Business Manager for University Theatre

Date: March 13, 2015
Re: Use of Department of Theatre production programs, photos, and publicity materials in thesis publications

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