On the brink of transformation: Becoming Ones True Self

Jordan Lee Williams

University of Arkansas-Fayetteville

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd

Part of the Acting Commons

Citation


This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu.
On the Brink of Transformation: Becoming Ones True Self

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

by

Jordan Lee Williams
Tougaloo College
Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications and Public Relations, 2019

May 2023
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for the recommendation to the Graduate Council.

____________________
Amy Herzberg, M.F.A
Thesis Director

____________________
Michael Landman, M.F.A
Committee Member

____________________
Steven Marzolf, M.F.A
Committee Member
Abstract

It brings me great joy to share with you the story of my journey through Academia. This thesis will cover some of the milestones I’ve reached throughout my studies here at the University of Arkansas, which led me to be able to attain an MFA in Theatre with an Acting Emphasis. You’ll be granted an all access pass into some of the works I’ve been able to produce while studying here at the U of A Including my one person show, statement of artistry, a link to my website, and information on my career as a professional stand-up comedian.
Acknowledgments

Special thanks to:

My teachers, professors and mentors: For teaching me and showing me the way
Shameka Pledger, Mr. Mendez., Rachael Petruzi, Maynard Brown, Destiny Brown, Rhonda Holbert, Jennifer Kushell, Ken Sagoes, Dog Man, Kimberley Morgan Myles, Yohance Myles, Mr. Karlous Sanders, Pastor Grigsby, Eunice Grigsby, Mr. Wong, Maria Bennett

My Family: For opening my heart and mind and inspiring me to breathe. For giving me a sense of purpose in this life. I do it for you.

My Friends: for constantly challenging me to improve daily and work to maximize my full potential.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to: Curtiss Lee Robinson. My Granny. I miss you every single day and I know you’re looking down on me with your beautiful smile. Thank you for teaching us how to be strong, love firmly, make it happen and keep going.
Table of Contents

Statement of Artistry 1

One Person Show 4

Thesis Role 14
  • Play Synopsis
  • Personal Take
  • Acting Approach

Roles Played During Grad School 16

Stand Up Comedy & Me 18

Joke List 20

Works Created 21
  • 5016 Pilot Sample
  • Mac N Dailey Pilot Sample

Works Produced 37
  • Monologues and More Til Midnight
  • #BlackAtUarkComedy Show
  • Kava Bar Comedy Showcase

Resume 40

Headshot 42

Website Link 43

Photo Samples - Appendix 44
  • Thesis Role
• One Person Show
Statement of Artistry

“Sometimes I wonder if this is what God actually wants us to be doing: Acting. Lying. It's like, he designed this whole life for us, a beautifully complex person with their own thoughts and emotions and experiences and here we are trying desperately to be other people. Real or unreal people. Animals. Anything but ourselves. Why? What is it that we are running from, or running toward? Are both these things the truth of self.” - Jordan Williams

Acting at its core is being, on stage--a gift granted to each and every one of us. The ability to exist. By existing on stage, we give one another the opportunity to see themselves from the outside in. To relate, empathize, judge and be inspired and thrust into action within their own lives. I do art to expose my fellow humans to new ideas, to impact their minds and hearts and get them to embrace their full true selves.

In the pursuit of identifying the purpose of life we act. Maybe if I can't find purpose within my life, I can find purpose and objective within yours, or theirs. I create art in pursuit of the truth. I'm always most deeply affected by art that is above all things, true. Regardless of how brutal or lovely, how hot or cold, the message is true.

Empathy

“I feel you.” A phrase I’ve heard so much it’s become a part of my artistic philosophy. To be felt means to be seen, heard, and understood. To be felt is to not be alone. For your motion to be seconded, and your presence be validated. An actor’s ability to empathize with a character is the level of abandon they’ll approach the role with. I feel every character I’ve ever played. In my professional opinion one of the most useful facets of life, relevant to acting, is empathy.
Empathy is defined as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another”. In other words, as the honorable Amy Herzberg would say, “To lend your heart to the character”, even when you may not agree with that character’s actions. For example, Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler* makes a decision that in my opinion seems not only questionable but just flat out wrong.

Brack’s choices completely oppose my beliefs and morals on many levels. However, in order to play the role truthfully, empathy is required. I must find a way into why this character is able to justify his actions based on his personal life’s experience. I must find a way to see this person who I’ve never seen before, so intimately that I understand why they do what they do.

to see others is to see one’s self.

Truthfulness

To be honest, the truth will set you free. I’m sure this quote has rested upon your ears or eyes at some point or another, but has it penetrated your mind and heart? Truly, lies are easy to tell. To invent a false reality for comfortability or to mask truth is easy. From an early age, children are encouraged not to lie. We are born with the capability and awareness, but the truth will set you free. To be free as an actor is all we seek. To be creative and honest and collaborative and free; free to be and live. Free to exist in truth.

Bravery

To approach life on a daily basis in truth is a risky business. We risk judgment, misunderstanding, rejection, vulnerability--we risk, so much just by living in truth. In order to achieve such an incredible feat, one must be bold and brave. Make a fist and choose not to be a victim anymore. Choose to live my life in true freedom regardless of what the outcome may be. Some harsh truths must be embraced within self before they can be lived on stage.
Public speaking is one of the most common fears among people. Fear can be crippling to an actor. Fear can shock us into a state of inaction. It's taken me several days, weeks even to begin this paper because of my fear of the future and my fear of not being enough. Not writing enough or saying the right things, however fear had to be conquered so that this truth could in fact set me free from graduate school and allow me to start the next chapter of my life.

In order to fully live on stage, our personal fears must be secondary to the fears of the character. My fear of humiliation must be superseded by the character's desire to achieve their objective. I must in many ways abandon my cowardly self and wholeheartedly embrace this other being.
Creating and performing my one-person show, *On the Brink*, taught me a great deal about who I am. I was challenged for the first time to sit alone with myself as the Playwright, Director, and Actor in a search for truth. Seeking an honest unbiased analysis of the choices I’ve made over my life -- and more importantly beginning to build a roadmap for how I want to make choices moving forward. Five characters and five locations all portrayed through my one body initially seemed intimidating, however, with the expertise of people like Michael Landman and a whole semester a show was attainable.

The show follows the character “Mr. Williams” inspired by yours truly. Mr. Williams is 98 years old and miserable. He is filled with regret, which comes across as frustration and anger but is really rooted in both love and pain. Mr. Williams desperately wants his caretaker, Jordan, a 23-year-old professional procrastinator (also me) to take advantage of his time and maximize his potential. Mr. Williams’ respect for his caretaker Jordan, along with his personal life’s regrets, drive him to attempt his objective: To change his caretaker’s life by exposing some of his own deepest darkest downfalls before it's too late.

The themes in this play are not only therapeutic for me as I process through the complexity of who I am, but they can also be extremely helpful to an audience who may be facing the same plight. Procrastination and potential wasting. “*Regrets usually consist of the things we don’t do, not the things we do!*”. How can what we do, or our “actions”, be more in alignment with our goals, destiny and purpose? This play tackles that existential question bravely and boldly.
ACT I

Overall Lighting: The show takes place in a low budget behavioral/convalescent home residential facility. A house that's usually dim and quiet outside of noise from patients. It's always cold.

Jordan sits on stage rolling up and watching YouTube videos.

Jordan


ohhh shit oh shit. what are you guys here for? ohhhh shit thats today? ohhhh fuck damn... fuck my script it’s not ready.. the story. It I... what?

Jordan notices that the audience notices his weed.

oh. woah. hey. oh. That? That’s nothing that’s... uhhh..

sprays air freshener

nothing. nothing at all. but the show? yeah, I have nothing... well ok... OK! Don't get pushy. Here it is.

Jordan takes a deep breath

Lights shift

It's a story about me, the 98 year old fart I become if I don't get my shit together. and me the young black handsome go getter who struggles to maximize his full potential. The Procrastinator. I'm traveling to the future to try and save myself from who I'm becoming.

(blackout)

SQ - TIME TRAVEL

Lights up on an empty bedroom in a behavioral convalescent home. Mr. Williams enters wearing an all white hospital gown he slowly drags himself on a walker to his sink. rinses his face and looks in the mirror.

Mr.Williams

I Know.

jr enters (unseen)

LIGHTS SHIFT - ROOM INTERIOR
Your late. That ain't true. Your always late. Now come on. Don't let the next thang that come out ya mouth be a lie. How old are you again? Right 23. Im over three times your age and three times as wise. Don't worry about how old I am. I'm old enough to be ya daddy. I'm old enough to be ya grandaddy. I'm old enough to be the doctor who smacked you on ya ass when you was born. I'm old enough. Yes I am. Now how you gone tell me how old I am? It's not in my file. don't do that you'd be waisting ya time. HEY! Stop playing! Now i'm serious don't look in my file.

Jr realizes it's his birthday

Yes its my Birthday. I don't need no happy birthday from you. It's just another day. You come in here late high as a kite like you do every day. Ain't nothing changed. Yes you are. You are everyday you think I aint noticed cuz I ain't said nothing but I know. I can smell it on ya. I ain't crazy. It's cheap weed too. Reggie. psh High and late, late and high. you probably gone be late to ya own funeral if you don't get it together son. Time ain't waiting for you. It's gone keep on moving going right along ahead and you just gone be sitting there with blood shot eyes wondering where it all went.

I Slept fine.

I don't want breakfast.

Because it pisses me off son!

You want to get me something for my Birthday? No. you ain't got nothing I want. Im Good. I don't want no joint, I don't want any of you instruments you play no i'm good. I want to be left alone. Yes. I didn't say ya music wasn't good I just just said I didn't want any of the instruments ya lay see. Sensitive. I actually think ya musics alright son. Yes alright. ok good. Damn ya musics good son. Uh Uh I wasn't dancing I just kept almost falling from left to right. get it right. There you go lying again. And see thats what pisses me off! its because you got potential. if you can make a old man like me dance in a damn sick house you got some talent. and who knows son you could be big! you could be BIG! really living. you got potential and That's what people use to always tell ME. "You got potential" you got potential" and I had it. I'm telling you. I had charisma, charm, everything working in my favor except me son. You think I ain't never been late? you think I aint smoked a blunt? How you think I got here?

I was late all through high school, high and late all through college and it costed me the rest of my life. Don't make no sense.

I use to live so close to my high school I could hear the morning announcements on the intercom from my bed! It was like the school bell was my alarm clock. Everybody already at school and here I come flying down the street just to make it on time so I could do my part! see I was supposed to be on the morning announcements! They called me the "weather man". See back to the charisma and charm I was the voice of the student body always knew exactly what to say but could never make it on time and everybody knew it!

shift to flashback
Lights shift (CALIFORNIA SUN)

Chimezie (16) grills young Mr. Williams about his timeliness.

Chimezie

Nigga I thought you wasn’t even gone make it!

Jordan

I always make it! (Groggy)

Chimezie

Nigga, did you just wake up?

Jordan

No.

Chimezie

Yes you did!

Jordan

Naaa I been up.

Chimezie

Then why you still got house shoes on?

JORDAN

Fuck.

CHIMEZIE

You live closer to this school than anybody I can see yo house from the front gate bro. How you late everyday?

1st period bell rings

Sound Q BELL

Jordan

Oh shit I’m late for Mr. Wang's class!
Lights Shift

transition to Mr. Wang's Door

Mr. Williams

Now it's 8:36 in the morning and I've already been late, twice!

Young Mr. Williams approaches Mr. Wang's Door.

Mr. Williams

Shit (under his breath)

Knocks on the door

Knocks on the door

Wang

Mr. Williams why are you late to my class, again?

Jordan

I was on the Intercom and didn’t realize the bell would ring so.....

Wang

That's no excuse mister Williams. Do you come to school to learn how to do the announcements? Are your announcements about the weather more important to you than my class?

Shift to real time

Mr. Williams

He didn’t want to hear my real answer

Shift back to flashback

Mr. Williams

No.

Mr. Wang

And now I have to spend time at my door with you when students who want to learn are already in their seats? You are wasting my time. Come in.

No no no. Mr Williams, come stand up here
Mr. Williams

Now I love being the center of attention so this can't be too bad? Right? charisma, Charm

Shift back to Flashback

Mr. Wang

You all know Jordan right? He’s pretty popular right yes? He’s involved in things, on the morning announcements right. Jordan right? You see him? Right here? Ok Don’t be like Jordan. Jordan does no work in my class. Jordan has failed every test in my class. Does anyone think Jordan is stupid? No. No. Because he isn’t. He’s lazy. Jordan has all the potential in the world but Jordan does not apply himself. a Ferrari with no engine. Don’t be like Jordan. Have a seat Mr. Williams.

Shift back to real time

Mr. Williams

So with my house shoes on and crust in my eye, and mini sweat beads on my forehead. I drug what now felt like a dead body from the front of the class to my seat. It hurt. But not in the way that you’d think. It was a long pain one that stuck with me throughout my life as a recurring theme on my journey. Not a gut punch but food poisoning. I can still feel it. But now I understand and I can make sense of those moments.

Mr Wang wasn’t being a dick…for no reason he was desperately trying to teach me a lesson. The numbers weren't adding up to me so he said it in the best way he knew how. He was trying to get me to unfuck myself. He was trying to get me to avoid becoming who I am.

I could’ve had it all. Shit, I had it all, the popularity the charm the life, but I didn't have the ambition. I Didn't show up on time. I was late. We took a test that day in class you think I passed? Fuck no. Instead of writing the answer to the math question I wrote him a note. An excuse as to why I didn't know what I was supposed to know.

You good at math? Me either. I use to hate math the only I didn't understand decimals til I got to college. I knew a an eighth of weed was 3.5 grams. and cost me Too Damn much money! How much is an eight these days? Drugs. a Waste. a wast son. you do any other drugs? good. don't man. thats a dark dark tunnel you don't want to go down. well lets just say I have some experience. not pleasant. Son. I really don't want to... ok.

Alright picture this. Dorm room. Full of niggas. Young brilliant horny excited ass niggas crowded in a dorm room getting ready for a party! The party of the semester! Everybody got on some fly shit. I had on a bucket hat. Super fly. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have
pre-sale tickets showed off by wearing these bright yellow wristbands. These wristbands were our claim to fame for the night.

I stepped into this room that’s obviously over capacity and everyone in the room gather around this thing. This kinda tall, skinny, hot thing, this may have been the first time I’d seen a “Hookah”. It looks like a tripod with tubes attached but instead of a camera theirs a hot coal on the top.

SQ (WEED MUSIC)

Stoner

“yeah mane, it’s a hookah but we put weed in it! Take a hit”

Mr Williams

Weed. After all my years of sobriety. Judging potheads. Here I was. This was it. The beginning of the end.

Young Mr Williams

Nah maybe not naaah maybe not ok YES.

Mr. Williams

Yes…. I said yes. I didn’t initially but I’d grow to hate that.

Lights Shift - Scary

I hit the hookah and Begin trippen, suddenly the yellow wristband, my claim to fame, my golden ticket gently unravels from around my wrist, reveals his face, grows legs and arms, and starts to run around my building. I could not resist the urge the calling to chase him!

Mr. Williams begins to run around the room

So I’m running. He’s running and I’m running. They were all laughing. Until I’m out of breathe. And I’ve been chasing him every sense. Chasing that feeling. Chasing that moment.

And at some point, smoking (breathes) went from chasing that thing to running from something. Or was it both. was I running from …. What was I running from? was I running from me? Maybe I was running from my full potential. Maybe my higher self my better self my super self was chasing me down with every ounce of oxygen left in his lungs step after step following me! Stalking me so that he can live out the days of my life that he deserves. Maybe he’s tired of watching me struggle and eat shit and self sabbatige and he’s just dying to take center stage and show this weak ass excuse of a human what life really could be like. But I keep running.

Light shift (Back to normal room)

and Maybe you running from the same thing. Maybe.
For the next few years, I smoked damn near everyday. Ended up dropping out of school and eventually I started messing around with other drugs. I’d never expected myself to become an addict. Junkie. but I was. My habits caught up to me and I folded. Like an intern at a laundry mat I folded. Like a retail worker at old navy I folded, like a … well you get the point. I never got my shit together. I blamed everyone else for my problems instead of focusing on my reflection.

I said Mary Jane came into my life and had me trippen. She became my god. But I couldn't be mad at Mary, as if she just rolls herself up and brings herself to my mouth and forced my lungs to inhale. No! However upset I was with Mary, I needed to be more upset with myself because I’m the one who made it happen.

So when I was talking to god, in the late of the night while I was out there asking her why she’s dragging me through the mud and not making things the way I thought they should be, She said look in the mirror. Not this way not that way but right there, all the signs you’ve been looking for are right there. See yourself. And I never looked. I looked everywhere else but right there.

And that's what I need you to do...

You want to make my day? QUIT! Quit being late. Quit smoking everyday.

and QUIT this job! I know you don't want to work here son. A young man like you don't belong in here changing old folks under wear you should be out there tryna get in someone elses!

You like it here? Be honest. I know you don't. You want to be a musician. You sit over there and play that DAMN Keyboard all day! so long sometimes you forget to check on me. And on one hand it pisses me off but on the other I admire it. I admire your dedication to that keyboard and your good you have potential. Whatever you want to do in this world son do it!! just quit wasting your time Get out there live to the fullest!

Now in order to do that, you gone have to do some real soul searching search deep within yourself and figure out how you developed the habits you have. If you can't stop being late try and figure out, whats your relationship to time? well its gotta be something, Think.

Look for me it was my dad. I gave a lot of false promises. Told people what they wanted to hear instead of the truth until my dad died. Ya see heres three things I learned from watching my dad move.

Wait on the things you want in life and keep waiting until they show up.

Greet most plights with a smile. Even if the smile isn’t genuine, just fake it for everyones comfort.

Telling people what they want to hear even if you know its not the truth is absolutely OK.

These were learned behaviors things I picked up just by watching how he moved I couldn't help it.
I remember making plans with my dad one time. Or my dad making plans with me. Us making plans together for tomorrow. Tomorrow is important because it’s the day before I start school and he promised. He promised to take me school shopping. Idk if “school shopping” is a thing these days but in my day, no kid felt confident at school than a kid who was just taken school shopping. Scratch all ya gear from last year you probably outgrew it anyway, you need some new shit, some fly shit, like those Dub Zero’s or PF Flyers, LED pencils, you know… but we MADE PLANS. We made plans. The time was 1:00 … at 12:30, I started waiting. The waiting kept going, over an hour until around 2 my mother sees me on the porch and ask me what I’m doing just sitting there. I said I’m waiting on my dad.

It was the look on her face. The regretful, conflicted, look as she decided weather or not to tell me “yo punkass daddy ain’t coming he be lying” like “baby, how many time I gotta tell you he don’t love you!” but instead of poisening me further hurting me further, she just smiled. She smiled and let her head fall forward. And went back into the house and Let me wait until the sun went down. Then she grabbed her keys and took me shopping herself! and although I was happy I could help feeling forgotten and alone like I was still waiting. And I never forgot that. Because I’ve been waiting ever since.

Lights Shift

what happened in your life that made you who you are? the defining moments.

and figure out Who are you doing it for. When I graduated Highschool, I was doing it for my family. Trying to make sure they had some other option in terms of what to look forward to in this life. In college I did it for the ratchets. Women, trying to be liked. Trying to be valued. and at some point in the midst of all that, I got lost.

Now you been my caretaker. taking care of me for almost a year now and on today my birthday I'm trying to give you some advice that will take care of you for the rest of your life. you looking at somebody who had all the potential in the world and wasted it. you shouldn't be getting high and counting the days in this sick house, you supposed to be out there in the world making the days count!TAKE ADVANTAGE of your time here son cuz its running out and you don't wanna end up like me, an old sack of potential.

Young man if I knew the answer to that I wouldn’t be sitting here, not like this. Not alone like this. All these other old bags got friends and family that come back and check on em, people who care that they doing alright me ? psh. I got nobody. Thats the consequence I get to live with based on the choices I've made in my life. Isolation. Luckily I was born like this.

If you want to know if your on the right path follow the signs. There are always signs but we think we can outsmart Mother Nature. un un. That's a tough bitch.

and If you see no signs. and nothing makes sense….ask yourself this…. Have you given up? The moments in my life I most regret are the moments I gave up on myself. The moments I didn’t take advantage of the opportunities that were before me. But as long as you haven’t given up, your doing atleast one thing right. well hell I done talked you into lunch time! Alright see ya after lunch! 1:00 Don't be late! and bring me a McDouble
Mr Williams gets in bed for a mid day Nap.

Light out

Lights up

2:00pm. NURSE enters with birthday cake.

Nurse

Hey Hey Mr. Williams! I got something for you man. Mr. Williams? Wake up! Mr. Williams?

Nurse holds Mr. Williams lifeless hand.

Ok. Ok.

Lights out

SQ (Shit talk)

Lights up

Ladies and gentlemen Thank you again for tuning in to our season finale of "Shit talk" the show where we talk shit! This last episode could've been dedicated too anything, black lives matter, global warming, the political climate.. But I really wanted to dedicate this episode to the man who motivated me to change my life before he died. He's actually the reason im sitting here now in front of all you! with no pants on! he taught me many things but what I want to leave with you is this. Maximize your potential! every single day! so to that were gonna make a toast! Theres cupcakes under everyone seats! Hold them high! Todays his birthday! so on the count of three everyone say Happy birthday Mr. Williams! As loud as you can! 1.. 2... 3... Williams

Lights out
Thesis Role

Play Synopsis

For my thesis role, I played the role of Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler*. This role challenged me in ways I had not yet experienced as an actor and led me to explore new ways to approach character and bring myself fully to the character's values.

Personal Take

Playing Judge Brack was the furthest I've stretched as an actor while in graduate school and contrary to my initial hypothesis, the stretch was successful. When cast, I knew this role would be a challenge for me as I was far more comfortable playing the comic relief or the “Good guy”. This was the first time I was tasked with playing the opposite but, challenge accepted. On the surface, Judge Brack is slimy, a snake, a shark, a demon, and I was tasked with bringing the truth to this character. How could I loan my heart to such an evil soul? How could I loan my heart to someone who I completely disagreed with? Would empathy and bravely be enough for me to discover the truth.

Approach

One of the most important aspects throughout my process while developing this character was fighting my impulse to judge. I had to refrain from judging Judge Brack in any way shape or form. Ironically, his whole profession was based around him judging other people in the court of law-- however in approaching playing Judge Brack, judgement was not an option. I needed to relate to judge Brack on neutral grounds as opposed to biased ones. I was sure to not allow anyone’s opinion of who judge Brack was penetrate the development of my characterization.

I knew that the audience would only be allowed into a few moments, literally no more than one hour of Brack’s life, but I’d have the privilege of seeing and experiencing it all. No one
would be able to get to know judge Brack as intimately as I would, and I used that to my advantage. I was able to build a backstory that brought me to empathize with him as a person and understand why he was how he was, and why he made some of the choices he made. I believe that as humans, we are merely all the things that have happened to us, so I was able to give Judge Brack some experiences throughout his life that would justify someone turning into a greedy power-hungry monster.

Although Brack was described as a wealthy man in the script, within my approach Brack’s childhood was a life of poverty. His parents were sociopathic bullies who tortured him into becoming just like them. Brack’s relationship with his mother sprung him into terrible relationships and ways of interacting with women. A womanizer. Brack’s relationship with his father lead him into a lifestyle of alcohol abuse. This backstory allowed me to make sense of Brack's actions in Act Four, when he makes an incredibly disgusting pass at Hedda. Of course, this guy would do that!

The dialogue in this play was filled with subtext that offered a great deal of opportunity for exploration. Every one of Judge Brack’s lines were tactical moves to get him closer to achieving his objective. For example, when Brack says “I prefer back ways. I get to see things that are otherwise kept from view.” On the surface Brack was referencing the back door he was leaving out of, however underneath that Brack was making a sexual inuendo toward Hedda.

There was always so much more to what Judge Brack was saying than his words alone. Using my voice to color the words was always fun because the sound and rhythm of the scene was clearly laid out. It took my scene partner and I a while to find the proper balance of time and energy to achieve the truth of those moments, however once we did the world of the play really started to move.
Roles Played During Grad School

**Damis - Tartuffe**

RESPONSE: The very first role I was cast as was Damis in Molière's *Tartuffe*. I was completely fresh at the University of Arkansas and challenged to wrestle with some incredible heightened language full of rhyming couplets. This was a great challenge and in turn, propelled growth in my work as an actor.

**Ensemble - Laramie Project**

RESPONSE: *Laramie project* was my first every virtual performance. Because of the Covid 19 pandemic we performed the play via Zoom. This format offered a whole new experience where the work was more film or camera based than theatrical. We all embraced this new medium lead by the phenomenal director Huan Thien. It’s an experience I’ll never forget.

**Lenny - Marisol**

RESPONSE: Lenny in *Marisol* offered me the opportunity to exist as a character in magical realism. My character Lenny obsesses over his sister’s best friend and manifest her in his mind so much that he becomes pregnant with her child and gives birth to a still born. The approach I had to this character was very far from my approach to comedy. I knew I didn’t want people to make a mockery of Lenny and I wanted to present him in a serious manner, though the circumstances were so bizarre.

**Berowne - Loves Labors Lost**

RESPONSE: This was my first time acting in a Shakespeare production. Shakespeare’s language can be intimidating at first but once embraced can be truly fascinating. The
language in this play challenged me to trust. Challenged me to release breathe and life onto partner and trust that my body would instinctually carry me through my moments.

**Claudio - *Much Ado About Nothing***

RESPONSE: Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre Festival was an immensely incredible experience for me. I feel like this production led my biggest breakthrough as an actor in terms of access and vulnerability. All the work I’d been doing throughout school for the prior three years all began to make sense. I had studied a series of techniques and genres—including Meisner, Chekov, Pinter, and Liz Lerman—and the rehearsal process form this show allowed me to synthesize these approaches and discover a new level of availability in my acting.

**Fabio - *This Bitch***

Response: There are no small roles, only small actors! I got to play a bumbling security guard who was secretly madly in love with his co-worker. He eventually gets the love he deserves and lives happily ever after. Great time. I’ll never forget it.

**Judge Brack – *Hedda Gabler***

RESPONSE: SEE “Thesis Role”
Stand Up Comedy & Me

After weeks of mentioning to friends and family that “I want to be a comedian”, I can remember being encouraged to go for it. Thus, my journey in comedy began. In 2014, I performed *Words of Wisdom*, a comedy set for my senior classmates at Crenshaw High School. I talked about the things that brought us together as classmates -- for example our disapproval of our then principal, our collective respect and admiration for Ms. Elenore our school custodial staff, and the bravery embodied in one of our classmates, Emmanuel Williams, whose fashion forwardness was before its time. I talked about all the things that lessened the distance between all of us and they all ate it up. The room roared and I was instantly addicted. I was thrust into a world of researching.

Throughout my undergraduate studies at Tougaloo College in Jackson Mississippi, I created and produced stand-up comedy shows featuring myself as well as local talent. I used the funnel of stand-up comedy to process my experience with culture shock as a “City Kid” who was now in the “Dirty South”. My experiences dating, studying, failing classes, all were brought up during my therapeutic comedy sessions. Comedy for them, therapy for me.

My mentor and professor, who I have so much respect for, often would shun me for my dedication to stand up. She didn’t want my strengths in comedy to diminish any growth I could have dramatically in theatre. In her eyes, balancing stand-up comedy and acting was not worth it for me. She insisted I’d go to graduate school before I even imagined it. Although she never embraced me as a comedian, I credit her with my placement here at the University of Arkansas and attaining my MFA. I felt the pressure to choose one, but I just couldn’t.
As I transitioned into graduate school, my microphone transitioned with me. Just as I was becoming comfortable in Mississippi, I was thrust into a whole new second culture shock. I went from a Historically Black College to a predominately white institution that is the University of Arkansas which offered a whole new world of shit to process and therapy/comedy to be spoken. For the first time in my life, I was “the only black guy in the room”. At the grocery store, the bar, in some classes, there was only me (and my Brudda/Classmate EDWIN GREEN) to represent a whole race. This brought a great deal of tension to my mental state and my humor suffered.

I went from only seeing and highlighting similarities between audiences and I in high school, to only seeing and highlighting the differences in graduate school. It took me a lot of time, tough/awkward conversation, and just plain bad jokes, to get to a point where I could talk about race as I experienced and it actually be funny.
Stand Up Comedy - Joke List

Joke List

Life decisions
- From LA to Fayetteville
- Neck tattoo
- Master’s degree
- I don’t know anything

From Los Angeles peoples always say …
- Being from LA isn’t all it’s cracked up to be
- Young mom
- Financially scared
- Out to eat
- Holidays

First white experiences
- First white friend
- Hypersensitive to race, angel and devil

Acting like a professor
- Professor Jordan – white students
- Fine students

Single
- My type
- Dating apps
- Cold freak

Miscellaneous
- Mouth squirt
- Suck my dick

New
- Walmart (New)
- Wet dreams (New)
During Covid-19, my skills as a writer were challenged through a “Writing for Television” class taught by John Walch. I wrote a teaser for a pilot based on the life of a college graduate trying to re-establish himself in his hometown.

EXT. HBCU- Dorm - Night

INT. Taz's Dorm.

The room is bare. Nothing is on the walls and there is no furniture. In the corner TAZ(23), is wrapped in a blanket not big enough for his body, laying against two suitcases slumped. He is sleep both literally and metaphorically.

He sleeps. He snores. He dreams. He's exhausted.

Fade to Black

An announcer call him to stage in a nightmarish voice.

voice

Coming to the stage, TAZERE JAY.

dissolve TO - COMEDY CLUB

INT. Comedy Club

A dark room dimly lit on stage with a mic, mic stand, and stool.

TAZ IS ON STAGE

TAZ

Senior year was hell. Man, I failed everything. You ever know you failed a test before you even failed a test?

The crowd is silent.
Taz

You know what? Y'all are right. School IS stupid. I actually hate school too. I honestly don't even know how I've made it this far to be honest. I really don't.

Taz nervously laughs. The crowd is now deathly silent. Sweat drips from Taz's forehead. Murmurs are heard as a red light flashes illuminating the entire room with blood red. An alarm sounds.

Voice

That's it Taz. You got no laughs.

Taz

Wait, Wait, please! It's just tonight. Its a bad night, I got a lot on my mind but I'm funny. I'm really funny. I know I am. People tell me all the time.

voice

People?

Murmurs are heard from the crowd.

Voice

No laughs! No laughs, No life! You know how this works.

Taz

I got one more! Please! It's about hearing my mom having sex growing up, it's hilarious!

Voice


The sound of a bomb exploding erupts. Taz is hit with the force of an atomic bomb landing on his chest and falls to a death in slow motion.

The Mic lands and rolls on the floor.

BLACKOUT

TAZ (VO)
There comes a time when the leaves change. The seasons switch. The clock shifts. And you. Me. We. Must jump off the cliff. Jump out the plane. Fall. Die. To live. Now's the time to for us to become men.

CUT TO

INT. Taz's Dorm room - Night

TAZ's face beads with sweat. A nightmare he can't escape nor wake up from.

He sleeps. He snores. He dreams. He's exhausted.

CUT TO

EXT. A Los Angeles, Crenshaw District house on 3rd Ave. Night

INT. HAROLD's(70) home. An old school Los Angeles style one bedroom home. The couches are covered with plastic and occupied by clothes. The living room is filled with stuff. At the back wall the stuff reaches the ceiling. There's an old school huge fish tank. The front door drags to pull open.

MAC(23), has just got out the shower. As MAC walks out the bathroom, he leaves a puddle of water on the floor. HAROLD notices.

Harold

Hell naw! Out! You young niggas never learn.

MAC

I ain't going nowhere old man.

Harold

To hell you are. Ya ass is outta here! That's it! Nigga that's the last time! I done told yo shrimp dick ass for how many days, months, years now?

MAC

Years? grandpas/

Harold

Do! Not! Leave! Water! On! The washroom! Flo! How i'm suppose to get in the damn tub if its a goddamn whole river and a half I gotta pass before I make it there?
MAC

Man what you talking bout river? That's you wetting the bathroom floor! I told you, you need some new glasses. Your aim is off, Ray Charles!

Harold

It's my washroom! Not yours! My aim is none of your concern, goddammit!

cut to

INT. Apartment complex in the jungles. Night

Sir (24) carries Roses and Dulans Soul Food takeout into an apartment complex he hides them behind his back. He sneaks in through the window of KARRIE's place. He falls in front of her. She screams.

karrrie

(screams)

She grabs a wine bottle. He grabs her.

Sir

Wait, wait!

karrrie

Get the fuck off of me! Please!

sir

Wait just wait baby! It's me!

She clocks him in the head with the wine bottle.

sir

What the fuck!

karrie

What the fuck?

Sir?
Sir

Yes! Shit, it's me!

She turns on the light.

Sir

What the hell fuck.

karrie

Oh my god, Sir! I'm so sorry! Come here! You scared the hell out of me!

sir

I was trying to surprise you.

karrie

Surprise?

sir

Surprise!

Karrie

Baby it's 1:00 in the morning. You know I'm resting for my-

Sir

-test. Baby yes your test, I know! I figured maybe you'd be down for a little late night snack babe. I brought your favorite.

Karrie

Dulan's is closed.

Sir

I got it earlier. And these.

He presents flowers.

Karrie
You did that for me?

CUT TO

INT. Harold's house.

Mac is putting on his shoes.

Harold

YES! I be done fell and broke my neck and died then you'll be in a river a tears. "My daddy, my po daddy. I'll prolly never see him again"

Mac moves to grab his charger.

MAC

You ain't my daddy old man you my grandpops!

Harold

I know it, but ya daddy gone be in jail for trynna kill YOU after he done found out YOU done killed me by drowning me in a river of Flo water. murder attempt.

MAC

Here you go again with all this death talk.

Harold

It's life talk son. It's about time you start coming to terms with life as a man.

MAC

You seen my charger?

Harold

I haven't seen anything you owned since the day you was born muthafucka.

mac

My I-phone charger man. It's white. I really don't have the time to...

Harold looks at him. And looks. Mac continues to look for his charger and preparing to leave.
MAC

Can you see anything Ray?

Harold

What's in them streets at this time a night anyway? You bet not be out there selling balls!

MAC

Selling what?/

harold

Balls cost more than/

mac

/nevermind

Haro

ld

/these young hoes/

mac

Never mind. I gotta go.

Harold

Yes, son. You gotta go.

mac

No, I'll be back.

Harold

Don't. Be back, don't. Please.

cut to

INT. Karries House

sir
I'll be right back.

Karrie

Right back? Sir, what's going on?

He runs out and reaches just outside the door where he has left a box. He reaches into the box, grabs something and comes back inside.

sir

Close your eyes baby. It's your birthday, and our anniversary is next week, so I really wanted to go in you know. You deserve it we deserve it/

karrie

Baby what the hell are you talking about?

sir

Just listen. You know you my queen right?

He grabs both her hands with one hand.

sir

Come here. Open your hands.

He places a furry gift into her hands.

Now open your eyes.

Karrie

Oh my god, Sir! Whose doggy is this?

sir

Our doggy baby.

Cut To

INT. An empty room.
The room is bare. Nothing is on the walls and there is no furniture. On the ground there are two suitcases. In the corner, wrapped in a blanket not big enough for his body, is a young man laying against them slumped. He is sleep both literally and metaphorically.

His cracked i-Phone rings.

It’s a group FaceTime from "Da Homies".

After it rings over and over and over he finally answers.

During the facetime call all characters are seen in their own space whenever they speak. Mac is on Harold's couch. Sir is with Karrie.

mac

Brooo!

taz

It's too early.

mac

The fuck you mean "it's too early". Nigga today is the day! Getcho ass up!

TAZ

Not yet.

mac

Not yet? Man what time is yo flight?

TAZ

6:30.

mac

What time is it there now in Buttfuck?

TAZ

It's 3:30 in the morning. In mississippi.

Sir pops in on FaceTime.
Sir

What could y'all possibly be talking bout at 1:30 in the morning? These big boy hours.

TAZ

Bro It's 3:30 in the morning.

mac

Nigga you aint doing shit but cup caking. Prolly surprised ya girl for her birthday or some corny shit.

Sir

Nigga shut up. How you know its her birthday?

mac

How do anybody know anything these days bruh? Insta!

and nigga Theres plenty to talk about, shit... Independence! This nigga Taz bout to have his own stop!

sir

Oh shit, I almost forgot about that! Yo mom and them moved out huh?

TAZ

mhm.

Sir

Where they move too, damn man Glendale? Hawthorne? No, no, don't tell me Victorvile?

TAZ

8th ave, my granny house.

Sir

Right, right.

mac
Nigga why you say Harwthorne like that? its Harthorne.

Sir

Oh shit, So you got the whole spot?

mac

Yes! This nigga got the whole house to his self!

Sir

Nigga if I had my own spot.. shit.

mac

Oh yeah I'd be in there too. Old time been trippen.

sir

Naa homie I said my own spot. MINE bro. Just me. What I do in my house don't involve y'all aight, its just me. and my baby.

Karrie

and our baby.

Sir

T, what time you land? this nigga ruining my fantasy.

Silence.

T!

TAZ

Yeah?

sir

What time you land? you need a ride from the airport or what?

TAZ

Nigga I told you last week I was gone need a ride!
Zip
Yeah bitch what time?

TAZ
1:00.

Sir
1 o'clock it is!

TAZ
I just gotta get my key from my moms and then we can go to my house.

mac
"My house" you hear this nigga?

TAZ
Here you go.

Zip
The bro got his own crib!

Sir
Awe shit. We on! See you at 1.
Mac n Dailey

Mac N Dailey is a teaser for a show about two black grad school students at a predominately white institution trying to find their way through academia.

EXT. A tall house in what seems to be the middle of nowhere

Opening Monologue

Jordan sits in his room

TBA

Int. Apartment, Late afternoon

Jordan is sleep in a room, suitcase on floor and a light mess of clothes and paperwork scatter the floor. Posters of President Barack Obama, Tupac, Snoop Dog, and a smoking monkey cover the walls along with a Black and Gold Tapestry. Highschool Pictures and Certificates and an African styled graduation stole hang along walls. He wakes up and opens his eyes but doesn't move. He is in no rush. As he feels around the bed for his cracked I-Phone his frustrations grow until he realizes he can't find it.

Through the wall

Mack

Yo.

Dailey

Yooo! When the fuck did you get back bro?

Mack

2:56pm. fkn crashed as soon as I got in bro. what time is it? I can't find my phone.

Dailey

True shit I think I was still at Walmart. It is now 6:22.

Mack

Fuck you already went to Walmart? Shit.
Dailey

Yeah bro first day tomorrow. Gotta get my shit straight. Got my room cleaned just finished this reading.

Mack

fuck, I gotta do the reading.

Dailey

Hell yeah bro I’m feeling good just took a shower, took my vitamin C, and now about to CRUSH this semester WE are about to CRUSH this semester man.

A Phone ring is heard Mack n Dailey begin desperately looking for it. Dailey finds mack’s phone under some clothes

Dailey

Boom!

Mack looks at the notification and smiles but doesn’t reveal who the person is.

Dailey

Awe shit who is that? The Mack attack already at it!

Mack

It’s Lola from shark tale.

Mack

Damn... You trynna kill some cops?

Dailey

(Gives look)

Cut to screen of grand theft auto San Andreas is projected onto the wall

Mack and Dailey sit on the couch in a pretty empty living room of a newer 2 story house they are transfixed on the screen as DAILEY kills cops and random citizens on the video game
DAILEY
So how was your break dude?

Mack

Man, not long enough g. That California breeze just rests on my skin so comfortably. It's still fkn freezing out here. Christmas is over! California greens. It was great bro. What about you?

DAILEY
Awesome man, you know just .... here.

Mack

The whole break?

DAILEY
The whole break.

Mack

Nigga I thought you were gonna stay for a week then go home for the second week.

DAILEY
I changed my mind.

Mack

...WHY?

DAILEY
because I like it here.

Mack

You like it here?

DAILEY

Yes

Mack
Since when?

Cut to

Flashback of DAILEY in musical theatre rehearsal

DAILEY

I hate it here

Cut to

Flashback of DAILEY washing dishes

DAILEY

I fucking hate it here

Cut to

Running after the bus screaming having a breakdown in the grass.

DAILEY

I hate it here

Cut to: present

Mack

You like it here?
Works Produced

Monologues & More ‘til Midnight

Monologues & More ‘til Midnight was an event where students across the U of A’s campus could come together and share their talent and gifts with one another. Actors, comedians, and musicians `all were able to come together for a night of art. So many performances took place and memories were created!
#BlackatUARKComedy Show

The #BlackatUark Comedy Show was an event I created through my RSO The Comedy Club. #BlackatUARK was a hashtag that was created by black, university of Arkansas students. They would share stories about their experiences at a PWI. The Comedy Show was an opportunity for me as well as other Fayetteville local comedians to serve and heal the student body through humor. As the host of the show I was able to highlight my personal experience as a black graduate school student and ease the tension through humor.
Kava Bar Comedy Show

I’ve partnered with the Kava Bar to provide bi-monthly relief through humor to the city of Fayetteville and more specifically, student at the University of Arkansas. This show has grown immensely over time and has now garnered the respect and attention of local comedians and comedy goers.
Resume

JORDAN WILLIAMS

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

The Tempest
Prince Ferdinand
Arkansas Shakespeare Th. Morgan Hicks
Much Ado About Nothing
Claudio
Arkansas Shakespeare Th. Stacy Pendergraft
The Mountaintop
u/s Martin Luther King Jr.
TheatreSquared
The Royale
u/s
TheatreSquared
A Christmas Carol
Wilkins, Topper
New Stage Theatre Peppy Biddy
Hell in High Water
James Goodin
New Stage Theatre Francine Reynolds
SWEAT
Chris
New Stage Theatre Francine Reynolds
Pinocchio
Gepetto
New Stage Theatre Touring Sharon Miles
If Not Us Then Who?
Medgar Evers
New Stage Theatre Touring Sharon Miles

EDUCATIONAL THEATRE

Hedda Gabler
Brack
University of Arkansas Lacy Post
This Bitch
Fabio
University of Arkansas Estefanla Paud
Marisol
Lenny
University of Arkansas Huan Bui
Love’s Labour’s Lost
Berowne
University of Arkansas Paul Barnes
Laramie Project
Ensemble
University of Arkansas Huan Bui
Heather’s, the Musical
Dud, Officer
University of Arkansas Morgan Hicks
Tartuffe
Damis
University of Arkansas Steven Marzolf
Drums of Sweetwater
Monkey Man
Jackson State University Yohance Myles
Colored People's Time
Joe
Tougaloo College Kimberley Myles
Fences
Cory Maxson
Tougaloo College Kimberley Myles
The Amazing Show
Coach
Tougaloo College Kimberley Myles
M’s of the Movement
Malcolm X
Tougaloo College Kimberley Myles
Pill Hill
Al
Tougaloo College Kimberley Myles
Grease
Johnny
Amazing Grace Conservatory Denise Dowse
Musical Revue
Ike Turner, Louis Armstrong, Cooke
The Giving Back Corporation Ken Sagoes

FILM & TELEVISION

Pit Boss
Lead
T.G. Matthews, Terrence Hayes Animal Planet
Dissonance
Supporting
Brian Payton Independent
The Secret Weapon
Supporting
Ken Sagoes Independent

HONORS & AWARDS

Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival
Semi Finalist Kimberley Myles

EDUCATION & TRAINING

University of Arkansas – MFA in Theatre – Acting Emphasis
Tougaloo College – Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications, Focus in PR and Journalism
New Stage Theatre – Acting Apprentice
Website Link

https://importantjordan.com/
Photo Samples Appendix

Thesis Role *Hedda Gabler*

*On The Brink*
Hi Xavier, Can I have permission to use your photos of our shows in my thesis?

Yes you may good brother