2011

Planting: One director's approach to cultivating and nurturing within a female ensemble

Erin Snyder
Virginia Commonwealth University

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PLANTING: One director’s approach to cultivating and nurturing within a female ensemble

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Erin Colleen Snyder

Bachelor of Arts in Spanish & Theatre

University of New Hampshire, May 2007

Director: Dr. Noreen C. Barnes, Director of Graduate Studies

Department of Theatre

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

May, 2011
Acknowledgment

This thesis would not have been possible without some truly delicate inspiration. I would like to thank my two mentors, Professor Raina Ames and Dr. Noreen Barnes. Without them, I'd still be a nanny vacuuming up legos in New Jersey. I would like to thank everyone who worked with me on Marigolds: Martha, my faithful assistant and dramaturg; my cast of four who breathed life into Marigolds' world; my crew, from costumer to musician, whose hands created a beautiful world in which my play has lived; and the list of people who unlocked doors, planted flowers, hung lights, photographed, videotaped, fed us, baked pies, and shared celebratory cheesecake.

I would like to thank my mother Colleen, a true survivor with the perfect pie crust. I would like to thank my sisters—Nell, the hopeful dreamer, and Cara, the ever loyal lover. I would like to thank my friends for sharing their hearts, hands, stories, and hundreds of slices of pie. Without you, I would be a lonely girl in a lonely world. I would like to thank fresh flowers. And I would like to thank Paul Zindel, for writing an honest, hopeful story that I fell so deeply in love with.
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Abstract

PLANTING: ONE DIRECTOR’S APPROACH TO CULTIVATING AND NURTURING WITHIN A FEMALE ENSEMBLE

By Erin Colleen Snyder, Master of Fine Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

Major Director: Dr. Noreen C. Barnes, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Theatre

A director, just like a pastry chef, must be delicate. Actors are fragile, fearful human beings. And just like a pie crust requires the perfect balance of water and flour, an actor requires a similar balance in both comfort and companionship. Eryn Snyder worked for three months to create a space where her actors could live freely in the world of the characters. With a cast of four, rehearsals were intimate, demanding, and playful. Theatre requires a director to lay down the sort of soil that encourages growth. It nurtures, it listens, it plays, and it asks questions. A director’s job is to fall in love with a story and cultivate the safest space for discovery. When achieved, the words don’t matter. There is a life unlike any other between a group of courageous human beings. Strung together with letters and love, here is a story of some extraordinary planting.
Prologue

It started with a seed.

My introduction to theatre was through the role of Wilbur in a production of E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*. I was eight then, and much of the work I began in the years to follow was with devised pieces, playwriting workshops and children’s theatre. Involved in three separate choirs and the school musical, my repertoire of “straight plays” consisted of a handful I’d see each year at local community theaters. But after a particular afternoon in April, Paul Zindel’s was the only one I needed to know.

I was sixteen years old when *Marigolds* and I first met. A junior in high school, I had been invited to a spring play competition hosted in a nearby town. I borrowed my parents’ Volvo, and with a bouquet of daisies in the passenger seat cranked the sunroof open and let the coastal Maine air carry my teenage troubles away. A friend of mine was playing the role of Tillie in Paul Zindel’s *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. I knew nothing of the play, but was told that these young women whom I shared lunch period with had spent the long Maine winter months working and needed our support.

In two hours a seed had been planted within me. It was a seed that belonged to a Hunsdorfer marigold. That afternoon I had fallen in love with four women, their home, and their story. Captivated by a mother’s cruelty, a daughter’s hope for life, and a family connected by heartache, I asked myself that day “What about directing?” It was the first time that I didn’t have the itch to be on stage performing. I was perfectly content to be an audience member, taking the world in and noticing everything around me. And after seeing this production, I wanted nothing more than to read the play and daydream some more. This time, from the director’s seat.
What is now a torn, scribbled-in, coffee stained, bath water bent yellow paperback, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* is a piece of my heart. It found a home in my library that spring day, sat on a bookshelf aside Madeleine L’Engle and Charles Dickens for almost a decade, and found its way into my hands again and onto a Virginia stage. Combining a handful of hearts with my own, what was once a spring love story grew into a sequel. *Marigolds* bloomed into a love affair far more beautiful than I’d ever known.

My first copy of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (which, for the sake of saving trees, I will refer to as *Marigolds* over the next sixty or so pages) sat on a shelf in my parents’ home for four years. I packed it with the few plays I knew for college and used a monologue of Tillie’s in a freshman acting class. I traveled the world with little more than a suitcase for three years, leaving my library at my family’s home in Maine. While I was a New Jersey nanny for another year, *Marigolds* patiently waited for me to find my way back to theatre. And when I applied and was accepted to graduate school, facing another move on my own, the little yellow paperback copy made the cut. *Marigolds* cozied up in a cardboard box in the trunk of a rental car for an eleven hour road trip to Richmond, Virginia.

Beginning my MFA in theatre pedagogy, the stars aligned for me when my college professor and mentor, Raina Ames, referred me to VCU. Having attended the program, she spoke highly of the faculty, and in particular of one professor, Dr. Noreen Barnes. Dr. Barnes was her professor as a graduate student. Raina mentioned that the program at VCU was very much self-directed, that it allowed for discovery, and that she still considered Dr. Barnes a dear friend. I was sold. If Raina was still connected by heart to the faculty at VCU, that was the place for me.
Chapter One: The Seed

Accepted in the fall of 2009, I was a new student in an old city along the river. I planned to spend the next few years directing, acting, analyzing, and finding the perfect coffee shop to write my thesis. In my first year I took graduate courses and served as a teaching assistant for undergraduate theatre classes. Introduction to Drama is a course offered to freshman theatre majors, surveying ten or so contemporary plays. I would lead a discussion group three mornings a week where the students would pose questions, consider contrasts in time, space and character, and often engage in some wonderful (and even for an early Monday morning wonderful) conversations. In the spring section of this course I had a young woman named Jeannie Melcher in my discussion group. I grew more familiar with her than the rest of my students because she was also enrolled in the directing class where I served as a teaching assistant. I saw her every day during the week, and was aware of her energy, talent and rare ability to engage actively and critically in discussions. Her presence in class was undeniably acknowledged, and often times she would pose a question so thoughtful and relevant that students would find themselves in a half hour conversation on the topic. Jeannie was captivating, and her eyes reflected an excitement and an eagerness that I looked for in all my students.

After the first two months of the semester Jeannie began arriving late, missing classes, and neglecting to hand in assigned work. Much of this was excused through multiple doctor notes and appointments; however, it was apparent to me that this young woman was suffering something. Her eyes appeared empty to me, shallow and protective. And as I sometimes say, her heart was in need of a safety pin.

My best friend describes me as her “one hundred emotions”. I feel everything, deeply. I care very much for the women in my life, too. They are sisters, friends, family, and my source of
calm and contentment. In order to spread my wings in Richmond I had to connect, by heart, with women here. And my heart hurt for her. If nothing more, she needed an escape and a reminder that she wasn’t alone in the world.

One Monday morning in early April I lent this troubled young woman my very own eight year-old copy of *Marigolds*. On the cover was a purple post-it note that read: “In the darkest of times there is always something to shed even the faintest of light on us. I hope Marigolds is that to you, too. e”. Two days later Jeannie returned the play to me, with a four page handwritten letter attached. Jeannie’s letter found a home in my datebook for almost a year now and it isn’t going anywhere. Her words serve as a reminder of the labors of love that we go through. It is a reminder of my very first date with *Marigolds*. I remember the wind in my hair, carrying my worries away as I drove along the Maine highway. I remember how it felt to see the Hunsdorfer women so empty, but with the faintest glimmer of hope beneath their uneasy eyes. I remember wanting nothing more than to direct my own *Marigolds*. I remember the loss that I felt without inspiration, and the fullness that I felt with a single play. That four page letter was the beginning of my autumn love affair.
MISS ERM.

I know I wrote on the attendance sheet today that I wanted to talk to you about "The effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds", but I just couldn't stop myself, so I felt I had to write you a note. First off, thank you so much for lending it to me - I read it last night and it changed my life. It was so beautifully written, every character was so complex and interesting, I literally couldn't put it down once I started reading it.

The opening descriptions of the set was so detailed, every little piece was used; the author clearly had a vision, a beautifully crafted image for the audience to very clearly build the characters (the Shaw family) that this wasn't going to be an ordinary play.

At first, I didn't like Beaureac. Yet, I was captivated by her. Her dialogue was marvellous. (smiling & snoring) Made me see real. I missed her when she wasn't on stage. Lite dial. I knew the character. I originally disliked her but turned out to be my absolute favourite. It's one of my favourite reading year notes. I've read in a play in a very long time. She's been a seemingly selfish self-involved, but actually, she's a struggle victim. She has all the talk of what she should have been. So stuck in the past that she doesn't do everything else she has been in the present. Her daughters, especially herself, have so many issues that the relationship is almost nonexistent through these problems. Butt (my second favourite) seems so similar to Beaureac. I absolutely loved their relationship. At first, I couldn't believe how Beaureac talked about daughter - she was mean. At first, I didn't think it was the right thing to say. Yet, I almost felt like when they were together, they were like sisters - the gossip, the giggling, the smoking, even - I feel like that was the oddball out, almost the most of the family. I loved how each character was so different.
A so extreme, but still genuine & real. Tillie was such a
vision of pain & age, & she was so beautiful & so calm & so uncomprehending, she was really necessary to be the core of the family.

Also, nancy! Hilarious! I would love to see that scene on stage, & I love how Beatrice is heresy toward her, but still takes care of her. Also, Janice! Hilarious! she has a small part, but it's a very bright role indeed. I think an audience would just adore her.

Back to Ruth, god, I loved her part. Pathological love/ fovoritism is such an awesome aspect to her character, yet, there's so much sadness in her. She's kind of a sexual characteristic to her character, & it intensifies her relationship to the man she marries (appropriate). She puts on a face, but underneath, she loves her wife, & you see that grow throughout the play. Her loneliness coming out, her character would be awesome to see. Beatrice, I could just see the intensity, then now would definitely require to have a very intimidating stage. Her eyes. For some reason, I could not get out of my head an image of just her use of her eyes - decept, pain, longing, anger, struggle, everything would really need to be through her eyes, else it would be distorted from her dialogue. The heaven is heresy, heresy. Her passion, her language. Her desire to learn & believe & love, & awful contrast to her shy, almost defeated, demeanor of Beatrice. As I read her, I just could see Movement, very aware when she walks, lost in her own thoughts, but not aware of her surroundings. Focused, she's determined, in a sense. Her hands could see how she would use her hands, might, attempt, have - picking up things, moving things, fast & so.
not calm or fluid (could see that with Tillie, a gentle awkwardness to her movements; breath, languor & precise) I could almost see Beatrice just speaking through her movement—slamming stuff down, everything having intense (sorry I'm kind of rambling, but these characters were so easy to image, I was stunned)

Okay... but my hand dies, I have to talk about this. The scene where Beatrice is deciding/killing the rabbit. I would give anything to perform this scene. This scene made me feel like enjoying a top kind of thing. Then anger, & pain, & sadness, & emptiness. The hideousness of it all; her violently tearing things down, making the tea room, the rabbit—god this scene was so good. It was shocking & awful, but incredible. This play, this scene specifically, would truly define talent in acting.

I mentioned it to my mom & she said the play is truly a teaching play. You come out of it a more incredible artist. You learn, you feel, you believe in it. She didn't read it, a bit of that, she couldn't get over the rabbit scene. I'm not sure that what she did was right, but I wouldn't change it. It's harsh, ugly, weak, violent, cruel, hateful, disturbing—yet, when the girls come home after the scene, it's almost sad. She's trying to be strong, but is so broken.

This play was phenomenal. It sent chills down my spine. I would give anything to hear it the first time again, just to experience that initial explosion again.
After reading Jeannie’s letter, re-reading Marigolds, and reminding myself of the beautiful blooms within Paul Zindel’s words, I knew what I wanted to share with the Newdick stage, VCU, and this new home of mine. I scribbled a proposal letter in sharpie on a yellow notepad, sealed it with a kiss, and said my prayers that the board of students would pick me. I was unsure as to whether or not it was the type of play they’d approve for the space, but was reminded by my college professor’s mantra that theatre should be thoughtful, meaningful and important. Paul Zindel’s characters are thoughtful, their journey is meaningful, and their story is important.

Every woman in the audience would see themselves in these women. The men would see someone they knew in these women. And with an open heart, the actors would fall in love with these women. A woman would fall in love with the fight in Tillie, another with the fear in Ruth.

Thank you.
Thank you,
Jeannie

PS. Feel free to steal fellow the impulse to even lend me a play, hah. I would love to read what stands out to you, b/c I love your taste in art.

8
After reading Jeannie’s letter, re-reading *Marigolds*, and reminding myself of the beautiful blooms within Paul Zindel’s words, I knew what I wanted to share with the Newdick stage, VCU, and this new home of mine. I scribbled a proposal letter in sharpie on a yellow notepad, sealed it with a kiss, and said my prayers that the board of students would pick me. I was unsure as to whether or not it was the type of play they’d approve for the space, but was reminded by my college professor’s mantra that theatre should be thoughtful, meaningful and important. Paul Zindel’s characters are thoughtful, their journey is meaningful, and their story is important. Every woman in the audience would see themselves in these women. The men would see someone they knew in these women. And with an open heart, the actors would fall in love with these women. A woman would fall in love with the fight in Tillie, another with the fear in Ruth. Loving their mother wouldn’t be easy, but someone would fall head over heels.

Creating a safe space between a small group of women and myself was the most important thing for me with *Marigolds*. I wanted four actors and a dramaturg to join me. I later welcomed a lighting designer, a set designer, and a costumer. I wanted these women to bond together with tears and triumphs. I wanted them to grow as actors, as friends, and as people. I wanted them to fall in love with Paul Zindel’s words. I wanted them to fall in love with their characters, their relationships, and the world in which they lived.

I wanted *Marigolds* to be a lesson. I wanted it to be a lesson of hope and heartbreak, of triumph and defeat, of silence and voice, of young director meets young actors, and of life. I now confess that these women taught me the lesson. They were my very own lesson in love. Directing *Marigolds* was so much more than I ever dreamt it would be. It was the best thing that has happened to me in twenty five years. These women are the safety pins of my heart. This experience makes me feel whole, and real, and alive. And with the faith, love, and dedication
(and a thousand grams of sugar) of these women, I sewed together a story of heart, hope, and the power in a female ensemble.

Not only was *Marigolds* a lesson in love, but it was also a lesson in growth and self-discovery. What began with Jeannie's letter bloomed into a three month journey. Four young actors went somewhere they had never expected to go. Each woman, at one time or another, had a breakdown, questioning their commitment to their character. "I want to do her justice", Jeannie would say. I promised each of them that they would. These women wanted so badly to bring the Hunsdorfer women to life. They wanted to hear Nanny's shuffle down the hall, smell the air within the kitchen, taste the whisky in Beatrice's bottle, and touch the petals of Tillie's flowers. That is what acting is, bringing a story to life on stage.

*Marigolds* was a journey that very few young actors are able to take. However, I have had the privilege of being a young director in VCU's Theatre Pedagogy program. I play the role of friend, sister, student, mentor, and teacher every day. Being a graduate student is a difficult place to be. I often compare it to my work as a nanny, never knowing which table to sit at during dinnertime. I have found that there lies a respect, confidentiality, and a trust between myself and young people as a graduate student. This doesn’t always exist between students and faculty members. It doesn’t exist between all undergraduate students and graduate students. And I am aware of the treasure it has been.

*Marigolds* allowed for the connection between myself and a small group of female students to deepen. The process these women and I shared was therapeutic and terrifying. And after the final performance, *Marigolds* had proven itself to be the opportunity for me to learn exactly what kind of a connection I was able to make with young actors and with theatre. *Marigolds* was so deeply meaningful and so delicately cared for that it has become a tender spot within me. I smile through tears at the thought of this experience. And for myself and these women it became just as frightening of a journey as it was freeing. We learned the power and beauty in fear, a feeling
that we so often bury deep within us. With *Marigolds* we were able to acknowledge our fears, nurture them, share them, and reshape them into a gorgeous yellow petaled flower. As directors, it is our job to cradle and nurture our actors’ fears. Acknowledging that they exist within all of us allows for the construction of a safe space and a believable world. We had our droughts and we had our downpours. There were doubts, too. But after three months, a bloom had grown into something beautiful.
Chapter Two: The Soil

I proposed *Marigolds* in March with my love letter to SALT and a to-do list of my intentions. SALT, short for Shafer Alliance Laboratory Theatre, is a student run, student funded organization on campus. SALT provides students with the opportunity to act, direct and create in a black box theatre. Producing two to three shows done on the main stage, SALT schedules a different play each weekend. With dreams of a theatre full of flower pots, handwritten programs on fancy stationery, and favors for the audience members, I warned myself of the possibility of maxing out my credit card with this project. This wasn’t something that I was going to be reimbursed for. The university may support the hard work and talent showcased through SALT, but they didn’t support them financially. Many of the pieces done on the Newdick stage required nothing more than what was provided to them— a handful of black wooden blocks and a few chairs. My plans for *Marigolds* were quite pricy. And although this was my thesis project, I was going to have to budget myself.

As I watched flowers bloom all spring, awaiting a dreamy acceptance letter, I found myself sitting in the theatre just staring at a blank stage. I imagined live music, an old refrigerator, a staircase, and a cage for the Hunsdorfer family rabbit. I imagined my family and closest friends in the audience. Don’t start planting, I said. With the proposals of both graduate students and undergraduates, I knew that there was some tough competition for the fall. I knew that there was a chance that *Marigolds* wouldn’t make the cut.

I believe in making wishes on pie. A slice of pie. The point of a slice of pie. The very last bite of the point of a slice of pie. And so, between March and the middle of May I had made more wishes on points than I had since my first break-up. And somewhere, in a cozy southern-style
diner, on a late evening, in the company of a good friend, in a bite of sugary magic, my wish was heard. And answered in the night sky.

On May 11th, 2010 Marigolds’ first miracle arrived. An inbox typically full of bank statements and bill payment reminders, this was a message that I had been waiting on for months.

Eryn,

I'm writing to let you know that the SALT board has accepted your proposal to produce The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds.

We've scheduled your production for the weekend of December 9-12, 2010.

Please let us know if this is a conducive time slot ASAP. The board will hold a meeting of all the season's directors the first week of classes next semester to connect you with a production manager, to make you aware of the department's rules for working in the space, and to answer any questions you may have. Please plan to attend.

Also, please join us tonight at the SALT Banquet to hear the announcing of the season, along with the SALTy Dog Awards, food, music, and much more! Come to SSPH 302 at 6 pm and join in the fun!

We hope you join us next season,

The SALT Board

The wishes and the pie and the company and the diners didn’t end on that celebratory day in May. My first year in graduate school may have been over, but my own work had just begun. I started the summer scribbling pretty petaled daydreams and doing research in a flowered binder. My apartment was always filled with the warmth of an oven and the smell of homemade granola.

I freckled on a picnic blanket while studying the life of Paul Zindel. I read as many reviews of Marigolds as I could get my hands on. I spent any and all rainy days avoiding seasonal depression at the library doing research on epilepsy and New York City schools in the 1960s.

And during my afternoon naps I’d be transported back half a decade to Staten Island. A lovely
corner coffee shop located just a short walk from my house witnessed a summer of scribbles, while supplying me with enough sugar and fresh coffee to get me through long days.

By July I discovered that there was never enough time in a day to read and research, and that the more I believed in Marigolds, the more I believed in the power of dramaturgy. After much thought and consideration I asked a Sophomore, Martha Johnson, to work as dramaturg on the project. Having worked together on William Inge’s Picnic, I was familiar with her approach to theatre and knew that she would be the perfect combination of delicate and dedicated. After all, these were flowers we were working with. And with Dr. Noreen Barnes’ dramaturgy class, I had already done much of the research. I handed her my half-full binder and bribed her with berry tarts and a promise of love.

By August, Martha and I were speaking the same language and ready to run. The two of us did more than just research. We began thinking about potential students for parts, drawing up ideas for the set, and brainstorming the very best ways to advertise our show in the city. Martha believed in me, and in everything that this show meant to me. She saw the pain in these women, and the beauty in them, too. She was someone I could confide in, but also respected much of my vision. I had a plan for this play, and she believed in it.

Martha and I had played the roles of mother and daughter six months earlier. And as we began to meet for dessert and conversation, we discovered the many parallels between Picnic and Marigolds. Many of the characters in Picnic resemble the women in Marigolds. Flora Owens, like Beatrice, is raising her two daughters alone. The eldest daughter, Madge, is the pretty face of the family, like Ruth. She wants to fall in love, and believes that to be the only road to happiness. The youngest daughter in Picnic is Millie, the curious dreamer. Like Tillie, she is hopeful and spirited, but often left voiceless. There is even the elderly woman presence in the play. Helen Potts is the next door neighbor, caring for her invalid mother as Beatrice does for Nanny. There is a mother’s struggle for survival within the play, a woman abandoned by a man and left to raise
her daughters only in a home that reminds her of the man who got away. Books are both Millie and Tillie’s escape. The mirror is both Madge and Ruth’s.

Martha and I are both old souls, cloudy cup dreamers, and utter perfectionists. A natural do-it-yourself girl, I had always preferred not to work with an assistant. I believed that Martha would be my dramaturg, and that I would be the fearless leader, the one with the watering can. But I soon discovered that two brains were better than one. She challenged me, trusted me, and respected me. And as a graduate student working side by side with an undergraduate, this was another challenge for me. I accepted her as my equal, encouraging her to share rehearsal notes with the cast and myself. Martha deserved to be known for what I considered her to be- an adored assistant. Martha proved to be so much more than that. She is now a sister to me. And at twenty years old, Martha’s brain is a rare gem.

The hard-boiled, the handicapped, the heedless. The Hunsdorfers. Beatrice, mother of daughters Ruth and Tillie, is swallowed in a savage world she has let mount in 1960's Staten Island. The Glass Menagerie injected with a shot of estrogen. A matriarch haunted, each day rotting in a no man’s land of a child's surpassing success and recognition of personal failure. The Effect of Gamma Rays On Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds sprouts a heavy heart in its audiences. (Martha Johnson, Dramaturg)

AUDITIONS for Paul Zindel's The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds

When? Tuesday, September 7th at 7pm
Where? Shafer 204
Any other questions, please e-mail eryn at: eryncolleen@gmail.com

*Sides are available in the theatre lounge for you to borrow.
Auditions have always excited me. As a child who begged her mother to fill out all the paperwork in a dentist office, I should have known that making up an audition form would be just my cup of tea. As a friend who painted clipboards for each of her girlfriends at high school graduation and spends hours wandering stationery aisles, I should have known that standing at the door with my very own clipboard and sharpie marker, calling actors in one by one, would be thrilling. And as a young woman who has made a lifelong friend over a gallon of milk, I should have started sitting on the other side of the table years ago.

flower dress

strawberry red

i must confess, you’re my safety pin

hold me together

hide me well

so he cannot tell the shape that i am in

Fellow graduate students warned me of the possibility of a lack of students auditioning. A few of my peers had been forced to cancel their shows due to terrible turnouts. The main stage productions were a priority for our undergraduates in the program, and that I understood. Often times at the beginning of the semester, a handful of shows will have already been cast, leaving very few talented students with time to rehearse.

But I was confident. Having made connections with students over the past year on and off campus, I felt close to many of them. One of three girls in a large family, and still in touch with a close group of women from high school and college, I had grown particularly close with some freshman girls. Many of these young women were kindred spirits to me. I even let a few of them in on the possibility of Marigolds before it was accepted. And so, despite the discouragement
from other graduate students, I held my head high and convinced myself and the respect between these students and I that there would be full hearts and bright eyes in the audition room.

The auditions were scheduled for the first Tuesday in September. With Rosie Thomas to provide a calm sea of musical stylings, Martha Johnson to squeeze my hand from time to time and remind me to breathe, and in a room that held a month of positive Picnic memories, I took the tiller and prepared for smooth sailing. By seven o’clock there were over twenty women waiting outside the classroom door. They read sides, dug deep, and brought tears to my eyes. And in the sea of estrogen, there was Jeannie.
...marigolds...
(cyrn snyder, director) (martina johnson, dramaturgy)

name: Sarah Wilson

mail: 109 W Grace St. Apt 3, Richmond VA 23220

wilsonsh*@v.com #708.131.5805 age 22 height 5'2" hair brown

what part are you auditioning for? Any one would you accept other roles if offered? Yes

Cock vs. screen?
Teepee vs. mountain?
Chocolate, strawberry, or vanilla?
Tea or coffee?
ocra, markers, or colored pencils?

circle one: oldest child middle child only child baby

what is your favorite childhood memory?

Walking to school everyday with my father. When we lived in Amsterdam.


I was supposed to grow pea plants and compare them, but I forgot why are you interested in playing in this production?

Tillie reminds me of me when I was younger.

my typical sunday = Gym in the morning, Thrus homework, then work from 4pm-1030pm.

REHEARSALS will most likely be held on weekday evenings from 710, with sunday morning marigolds here and there, please write your CONFLICTS between now and december 18, 2019 ON THE BACK.

class schedule (name, location, time, professor, on the book, please)
...marigolds...

cryp. naydes, director) (martah johnson, dramaturg)

name: Liz Earnest
mail addr: 1030 W. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23220 (Apt 5)
Earnestl@vnu.edu #804-371-0294 age 20 height 5'7" hair brownish

what part are you auditioning for?  willy tette (but i like ruth, too!)
would you accept other roles, if offered?  absolutely!

stage or screen?  stage - but i love film!
chese or chicken?  chese!
strawberry or banana?  strawberry!
tea or coffee?  tea for relaxation, coffee for late nights and early mornings!
colored pencil

once you: oldest child middle child only child baby

what is your favorite childhood memory?  making gingerbread houses with my sister

define your mother in three words: 1. resourceful 2. devoted 3. compassionate
describe your sister in three words: 1. SMART! 2. hilarious 3. needy
describe yourself in three words: 1. self-conscious 2. caring 3. smart, indecisive

what have you done a science fair project on?  algae blooms in the chesapeake bay

why are you interested in being in this production?  i think the script is beautifully written, and i find the conflicts that each character faces heartwarming and intriguing.

my typical sunday: sleeping in, followed by homework

rehearsals will most likely be held on weekday evenings from 7:10, with sunday morning marigolds.
here and there, please write your conflicts between now and december 12, 2010 on the back.

class schedule (name, location, time, professor, on the back, please)
I included several prompts in the audition form that I had hoped would give me insight into the young women's lives. Rather than simply inquiring one's height, weight, and past productions, I was eager to hear what their hearts had to say. I was looking for a genuine and delicate nature in Tillie, manipulation and sorrow in Ruth's eyes, and a captivating silence in Beatrice. I was looking for tough love in Janice, a character who served as Tillie's competition in the science fair and only appeared for a monologue in the second act. I was looking for fearlessness and flexibility with Nanny, the invalid woman who lives with the Hunsdorfers. Nanny is waiting to die, having been abandoned by her own family.

There are five female roles in Marigolds. Their roles are dynamic, intricate, and challenge one beautifully. Playing any of these characters would be a wonderful lesson. And after
I included several prompts in the audition form that I had hoped would give me insight into the young women’s lives. Rather than simply inquiring one’s height, weight, and past productions, I was eager to hear what their hearts had to say. I was looking for a genuine and delicate nature in Tillie, manipulation and sorrow in Ruth’s eyes, and a captivating silence in Beatrice. I was looking for tough love in Janice, a character who served as Tillie’s competition in the science fair and only appeared for a monologue in the second act. I was looking for fearlessness and flexibility with Nanny, the invalid woman who lives with the Hunsdorphers. Nanny is waiting to die, having been abandoned by her own family.

There are five female roles in *Marigolds*. Their roles are dynamic, intricate, and challenge one another beautifully. Playing any of these characters would be a wonderful lesson. And after seeing the women audition, I wanted to make five casts. By ten o’clock, the audition room was empty and Martha and I began excitedly drawing out our ideal cast. Our perfect Hunsdorfer family was the same. After no discrepancy, I took out my sharpie marker collection, a bright yellow piece of card stock, and began to draw a five petaled flower.

The name Sarah Wilson appeared in two of the petals. Having spent much of our time after auditions deciding what was right, I decided to give both the roles of Janice and Nanny to one actor. Like I mentioned, Janice is on stage for a single monologue about her science project on a cat she has boiled and put back together into an elaborate skeleton. Side-splittingly funny, her monologue is placed before the very last scene and is fundamental to the roller coaster of a second act. Nanny, the Hunsdorphers’ source of income, is a silent corpse of a character who waddles across the stage with her walker and spends much of her time sitting at the head of the kitchen table attempting to sip from a mug filled with whatever Beatrice decides to pour her (tea, water, beer...). The silent element of Nanny was enough reason for me to cast Sarah in the two roles. A play very much about the power of one’s voice, I didn’t want to have an actor left without one. My only fear was that Sarah would have difficulty transitioning between such
different characters. I see this happen a lot in live theatre at the college level when directors do
devised pieces and actors are left to play multiple meaty roles in an evening. But Paul Zindel was
clever. Nanny doesn’t appear in the show’s last two scenes. The first of which is Janice’s
monologue. The play’s structure allowed for a perfect transition from corpse to comedian.

Erin Adelman, a sophomore theatre student with beautiful dark curls and kind eyes provided a
genuine, touching interpretation of Tillie’s character. She had a calming effect on the room,
something Tillie provides for her mother. The other women were captivated by her voice, and it
was apparent that Tillie and Erin shared something really special. Martha drew hearts on Erin’s
audition form as I sniffled my way through her monologue. She was our dreamer.

Liz Earnest, a junior theatre major in braids with yellow bows was seated in the corner of the
room when the auditions began. She was most interested in the part of Tillie, but after hearing
her read with Erin there was no question who the older sister was. Liz’s eyes were piercing and
powerful, manipulating Erin’s every move around the room. They played off one another’s
impulses well. And while the two looked nothing alike, they shared a similar sadness. And while
Zindel's characters are in no way defined by their fear and sadness, it allows for a connection
between Beatrice and her daughters.

I was considering looking at four women for the role of Beatrice when auditions began. Martha
reminded me to keep my options open, especially with the two graduate students who were there.
But there wasn’t any competition with Jeannie. She had Beatrice’s body, her voice, and her pain.
Liz and Jeannie laughed together and challenged one another like sisters, while also looking
alike. So much about Beatrice is child-like, and seeing Ruth's reflection in her provides a
reminder of Beatrice's past. A mother's immaturity often places a child, and in Marigolds Tillie,
in the role of caretaker. Beatrice resents a bit of that, unable to reverse the roles but unwilling to
accept them. Erin was the perfect source of jealousy for Beatrice. Ruth was the perfect source of
escape. And when the three women read together, a family was formed.
Rising from flannel sheets on three hours of Christmas Eve-like sleep, I awoke to make myself a special batch of pancakes and raced to school. In the lounge on the second floor of the theatre building I posted a bright yellow flower with my cast list and stepped back to take the first real breath of the week. I let Martha know that people would soon be finding out. We squealed together for a few minutes and hung up. That was the joyful phone call.

An hour later, my phone rang again. I remember three words: grade, point, and average. The students need to have appropriate grade point averages to be involved in the productions put on by the program. My four women, three sophomores and one junior, had yet to be cleared with the head of the department. And until they were, I was to remove my cast list and wait. It may have well have started raining as the clouds hovered above me.

I spent the day disconnected from my classes, anxiously awaiting a sign from above that told me all would be fine. That evening, amidst my four slices of pie (one wish for each girl), the call came. Three of my actors were in the clear, they said. But that left one: Jeannie. Having done terribly her second semester in the program, her work was often late, and she had far too many absences to be excused. Jeannie spent the summer bringing up her average. Jeannie’s GPA had improved by September, but it wasn’t good enough. She wasn’t going to be able to do the show. I began to think there was something wrong with that apple pie.

Was I going to have to put up “are you my mother?” signs across campus, desperate for the perfect woman to play Beatrice? Was I going to have to cancel my show due to heartbreak? One of the most beautifully written female characters in history, Beatrice was the foundation of Zindel’s story. The show wouldn’t work without Jeannie, and I was convinced of this. Not only that, but this story and this proposal and this journey had begun with her letter.

So what does Eryn Snyder do when the world begins to fall and her heart begins to tear? She reaches into her sewing kit, pulls out a pen, and writes a letter.
To Whom it May Concern,

As a student and an admirer of all you do, I respect the decisions you make as faculty. I know that academic excellence is at the forefront of our students' experiences here.

But if I could, I am going to fight, like artists do, for what I believe in.

Last Spring, I was Jeannie Melcher’s TA for Intro to Drama and Directing classes. In the middle of the semester, I noticed that she was suffering. I saw sadness and I saw loss. And so, I lent her a play. It was Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*. A story that haunts me, my only wish was that she would hold on to the hope in its story. Or that she would cling to this planet and the hope that lives within it. She wrote me a four page letter the very next day. I carry this letter around in the folder of my notebook.

Jeannie writes "as I read her (Beatrice) I just could see her movement, very rigid when she walks, lost in her own thoughts, but in a sense aware of her surroundings....I could almost see Beatrice speaking through her movement...drinking/ killing the rabbit, I would give anything to perform this scene. This scene made it for me....the hideousness of it all; her violently tearing things down, making the tea, the rabbit. It was shocking it was awful, but incredible. This play, this scene particularly, would truly define talent in acting."

And so, I'm fighting. I'm fighting for a girl who needs a connection. A girl who needs meaning. And a chance. And another girl, a bit older, but still a girl, who knows she can guide her. My heart and this show would not be right without her. I just can't leave her aside.

I know that Jeannie doesn't have satisfactory grades from last semester. But if there is ANY way that I can work with her, work with you, and perhaps keep her under a watchful eye as this semester progresses, I would be deeply grateful. I will limit rehearsals, organize study sessions, and can promise you that she will improve.

For a student who may have been lost for a while, I am fighting for her chance to grow again.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Eryn Snyder
Another pound of pie (and this time, pecan), an evening of phone calls, and an email later, *Marigolds* got its miracle. The flower found its way back to the bulletin board. And on September 9th, a cast of four signed their names in Paul Zindel’s petals.
Chapter Three: The Roots

where, oh where, could that marigold be?

ms. erin adelman . 302.450.2638 . adelmanen@vcu.edu
ms. becky brooks . 703.772.8093 . brooksrk@vcu.edu
ms. liz earnest . 804.397.0294 . earnestee@vcu.edu
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ms. sarah wilson . 703.851.3585 . wilsonsh@vcu.edu
eryn colleen snyder . 207.730.0677 . eryncolleen@gmail.com
Marigold is the story of life, wilting away. But with the hope and heart to bring it back again.

The planting began on September 15th. For the month of September, my plan was for the marigolds and I to meet every Wednesday, baby stepping our way into the play. The first evening began with empty notebooks and ended with empty milkshakes. Personalized for each of the women, I wanted their notebooks to be brought to every rehearsal and used for discoveries, my notes, their notes, and anything and everything marigold related. Each woman introduced herself and her role, and we did our first read-through of the play. Tears greeted my cheeks. I had a beautiful show on my hands.

Martha ran a dramaturgy session soon after, introducing the girls to the playwright and his intentions, life story, and accomplishments. We concluded with a girly girl milkshake outing at a campus diner. These events typically consisted of dessert and arts and crafts. My intention for the first month was to create a safe space where we could reveal ourselves to one another. We read the script each week, stopping to ask the origin of words and importance of moments. We scrapbooked, did table work, shared milkshakes, told secrets, and asked hundreds of questions.
While the first half of the evening consisted of a read-through and open discussion, the second half of these Wednesday evenings allowed for building a textual foundation. Gathering around for a dramaturgical meeting as actors and designers, we'd zoom in on an element of the show that had much to be revealed. Martha led sessions on Paul Zindel, epilepsy, play themes, and reviews. So often there isn't the time for everyone to begin on the same page, but with the show in December, we could take baby steps. The fourth room on the second floor of the Shafer Street Playhouse became a sort of haven for the nine of us. And in the chance that the room was occupied, we were handed a key by a pair of kind eyes and cuddled up in the library. Martha and I discovered that these women were being introduced to the idea of dramaturgy for the first time. Having never worked on a show that wanted so deeply for everyone to have a voice, there were

...middle-of-the-week marigolds..

**Wednesday, September 15th**

6pm (read) hand out scripts/schedule. called: liz, erin, jeannie, sarah
7:30pm (write) dramaturgical focus: _characters/epilepsy_ with miss M. add: nicole, becky, virginia
8pm (sip) milkshakes en me.

**Wednesday, September 22nd**

6pm (read) called: liz, erin, jeannie, sarah
7:30pm (write) dramaturgical focus: _characters/epilepsy_ with miss M. add: nicole, becky, virginia
8pm (share) bring something important to you.

**Wednesday, September 29th**

6pm (read) called: liz, erin, jeannie, sarah
7:30pm (write) dramaturgical focus: _images/geography/sound/music_ with miss M. add: nicole, becky, virginia
8pm (sing) bring in a cd by your favorite artist

**Wednesday, October 5th**

6pm (read) called: liz, erin, jeannie, sarah
7:30pm (write) dramaturgical focus: _play reviews_ with miss M. add: nicole, becky, virginia
8pm (scrapbook) photos? memories? art supplies? bring them all!

**What to bring:**
* your script
* a pencil
* your notebook
* your heart

**Adoringly,**

Eryn

Marigold is the story of life, wilting away. But with the hope and heart to bring it back again.
While the first half of the evening consisted of a read-through and open discussion, the second half of these Wednesday evenings allowed for building a textual foundation. Gathering around for a dramaturgical meeting as actors and designers, we’d zoom in on an element of the show that had much to be revealed. Martha led sessions on Paul Zindel, epilepsy, play themes, and reviews. So often there isn’t the time for everyone to begin on the same page, but with the show in December, we could take baby steps. The fourth room on the second floor of the Shafer Street Playhouse became a sort of haven for the nine of us. And in the chance that the room was occupied, we were handed a key by a pair of kind eyes and cuddled up in the library. Martha and I discovered that these women were being introduced to the idea of dramaturgy for the first time. Having never worked on a show that wanted so deeply for everyone to have a voice, there were endless thank yous. Needless to say, these four September days provided an invaluable foundation for our work together.

marigolds,

thank you for this evening, your jewelry, music, photos, and furry friends- each a part of you- represented something so thoughtful. a relationship.

to the cast: as you start making discoveries within your traced hands in your journals, please feel free to start writing thoughts and ideas down to share. as you begin to sketch the paths between the women in the show and the men who hold such mystery, ask the questions and let your characters fill in the blanks. questions are welcome, fears and excitement too.

and to the women who are going to make the marigold bloom beautiful and bright: thank you for being a part of this journey. i can't wait to see your visions for the show. have i mentioned how lucky i am? feel free to come on wednesdays with your ideas/questions/brilliance to share! we would love to hear:)

have a lovely seven days until we meet again.

love, e
In a graduate dramaturgy course that semester, I drafted a note entitled “Lies and Lipstick”. This time around, I was going to leave it up to Martha. I allowed these dramaturgical sessions to be a reminder of some of the elements that pieced together so beautifully into *Marigolds*.

Paul Zindel has delicately woven the women of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* together, creating a haunting story of shattered life. Inspired by Zindel’s own childhood, *Marigolds* tells a tale of heart and hope within the Hunsdorfer’s broken home, earning several laughs in the cracks between floorboards.

Zindel’s work is a perfect portrayal of a question we all ask ourselves at one time or another. Why am I here? The Hunsdorfer women are each searching for meaning. Living in a filthy, cluttered home that was once a vegetable store, we are reminded of human life—its pain and glory, its dreams and disappointments. Tillie, the shy but optimistic daughter, is performing a science experiment on marigolds and their reaction to radioactivity. Beatrice, the girls’ mother, has been paralyzed by fear, leading her to a bottle of whiskey and a tattered nightgown. And her eldest daughter, Ruth, a pathological liar with epilepsy, is hidden from the truth behind a layer of lipstick.

Paul Zindel was many things. He was a playwright, a science teacher, a writer, and a son. *Marigolds* was his life. “The idea of a dominating mother drastically affecting her two children came from my life. I lived the story.” Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award in 1971, *Marigolds* premiered at the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas. Later moving to New York, it is remembered as “one of the greatest, probably the greatest, hit of its Off-Broadway season” (1969, 64). It became a film in 1972, with the help of Paul Newman and his wife. Collaborating as director/actress, accompanied by Nell Potts and Roberta Wallach, *Marigolds* bloomed both on stage and on screen.
Taking place during the early 1960s, this play dances on the line between reality and imagination. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 is remembered to be one of the most frightening moments in history— a time of doubt, a time of crisis, and a time of question. Coinciding with this, scientists were beginning to test the effects of atomic energy and radioactivity on life forms, playing with uncertainty and instability. James Barron wrote in The New York Times “Mr. Zindel contrasted the marigolds one daughter grows for a science project- marigolds that had been exposed to radiation and grow abnormally- to the family, which mirrored his own”. Life and death are everywhere. In the family rabbit, Peter, the potted marigolds, and the piercing telephone ring, one sees that Zindel has not only written a play, but he has written life— raw, honest, and true.

Zindel died in March of 2006, leaving behind a legacy of stories. Marigolds is a story of life, wilting away. But with the hope and heart to bring it back to life.

Eryn Colleen Snyder, VCU Dramaturg

Having read my note, and compiling the research that I’d done so far, Martha presented different material every Wednesday for four weeks. These sessions were not only a wonderful opportunity to ask questions and discover something new, but they were also a perfect pairing with a read-through. Given enough time to hold dramaturgy sessions in a rehearsal period, I have vowed to include this with every play I direct. When organized, specific, and well structured, these sessions can spark some incredible character discoveries.
TOPIC TODAY: EPILEPSY

What does Merrin say? When nerve cells in the brain fire electrical impulses at a rate of up to four times higher than normal.

What do we see? A pattern of repeated seizures.

What is a seizure, and what does it look like to us? The act or an instance of seizing or the condition of being seized; a sudden onset or sensation of feeling or emotion.

- Can be classified as either focal or generalized.

- Clonic seizures—a form of generalized seizures, is one of my predictions of Ruth's experience. Description: These seizures are characterized by rapidly alternating contraction and relaxation of a muscle — in other words, repeated jerking.

Other idea: Tonic-clonic seizures: another form of generalized seizure. Are characterized as: The person loses consciousness and falls to the floor. After the tonic phase comes the clonic phase: The arms and usually the legs begin to jerk rapidly and rhythmically, bending and relaxing at the elbows, hips, and knees. After a few minutes, the jerking slows and stops.

- Ruth is conscious prior to onset, but we do not know if she remains so during. Muscles do not totally become limp, but she does lose ability to stand on her own, and with help make it over to couch. Beatrice holds down and legs and holds a wooden spoon under her tongue, also holding her shoulders down.

What are the causes:

- Abnormalities at birth
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Tumor growth
- Low glucose levels
- Head trauma
- Stroke
How is it recognized when coming? How Tillie can sense her sister’s oncoming? Symptoms vary depending on the type of seizure. In most cases, a person with epilepsy will tend to have the same type of seizure each time, so the symptoms will be similar from episode to episode.

Phone the doc! Now technically, Bea has not played the poor mother card when dealing with Ruth’s seizures. (Technically). You should only seek a physician if:

- The seizure lasts more than five minutes... could well have been...
- Breathing or consciousness does not return after the seizure stops.
- A second seizure follows immediately.
- You’re pregnant.
- You have diabetes.
- You’ve injured yourself during the seizure.

Symptoms relatable to Ruth: Depression and Mood Swings.

*About 29 percent of people with epilepsy have a major depressive disorder.

*The brain is our body’s control centre, so sudden changes in the brain – such as a seizure – can affect someone physically, and also affect moods, emotions and behavior.

- Build-up to a seizure
- Seizure itself
- After-effects of a seizure or seizures
- Your reaction to seizures or feelings about epilepsy in general... likely is ashamed, feels is a bother to her mom and sister, although will not admit it...
- The limitations that epilepsy can create
- The reactions of other people to your seizures... Bea is not the most comforting...
- Myths and misconceptions of epilepsy in society... is a more embarrassing and a shameful mark on your family much more so during that time... status in society....
- Medications... assume Ruth is not on any...

*People may have short-tempered behaviour, become hostile and irrationally angry.

Another look at what actually is going on inside that head of hers.

Brain cells misfire repeatedly and in unison, causing changes in behavior, sensation, or motor function. These occurrences are called seizures, and a person who has experienced two or more seizures is said to have epilepsy. Unfortunately, for 65 to 70 percent of people with epilepsy, the underlying cause or causes of seizures remain a mystery. This is complicated by the fact that seizure types vary so wildly.
The Effect Of Gamma Rays on Man In the Moon Marigolds

Dramaturgy

Dramaturge: Martha Johnson

Director: 25 yr old Eryn Snyder

Cast: Tillie, Ruth, Beatrice, Nanny, Janice

September 29 2010

Session Three:

Topic Today: Geography/ Images/ Sound & Music

We know the setting...1960's Staten Island. 13.9 x 7.3 mi approx. 220, 200 residents

Give me a picture:

Stapleton is one of the older of neighborhoods in Staten Island. Picture: A suburb set in its ways.

Stapleton-home of Tottenville High. Zindef’s school. His rememberances of this area paint the setting for this play.

The Island is divided into neighborhoods, similar to out counties. While the Island itself is one of five boroughs. Public schools within the neighborhood of Stapleton are managed by the New York City Dep. Of Education. This is the largest public school system in the U.S.

Why this is important: while the borough, or even island in itself may have an intimate feel. It is still governed and surrounded by something much grander. Constantly intruded by peoples moving out of the cities and into more affordable areas. A great sense of isolation can be adapted. A feeling of not recognizing yourself within a whole. An additional element that may lead to a saddened atmosphere.

Defining characteristics of interior 1960's home: Designs were now becoming similar all over the country with regional variations disappearing. This came from better transport links around the country and private developers merging to create national firms.

Sixties suburban housing is was driven by growing house ownership and is characterized by large panes of glass used in 'picture windows'; sometimes with the area beneath the ground floor windows glazed or filled with a coloured panel. There might be large windows at the back and doors leading to the garden from a dining room or living room as well as the kitchen. This was all made possible by the development of the float glass making process which made it easier and cheaper to construct large panes of glass with acceptable quality.
Sixties' houses were often detached or semi-detached, although terraces continued to be built. As car ownership was also on the increase, the semi's and detached houses would also have garages and drives, features that had first begun to appear in the Thirties. Central heating and inside bathrooms and toilets were also incorporated.

The other big trend of the Sixties was the emergence of high-rise tower blocks, in large towns and cities. They were and often `brutalist' in design, with large concrete surfaces as decoration in addition to being structural.

Dull colors. Grays/browns/brick reds and navy blues.

Mothers driving dingy Oldsmobiles. Streets aligned with dilapidated warehouses and weary store fronts.

What's on the boob tube?

Only the best show of family values of course!

"Leave It To Beaver"
"The Andy Griffith Show"
"The Dick Van Dyke Show"
"The Honeymooners"

The shows of the decade basically fell among one of these themes: Family Sitcoms, Children's Educational, Cartoons, Musical, Southern Sitcom, Westerns, Police, and Live Comedy.

And on the radio? Gimmie that Top 40!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best of the Beatles</th>
<th>Otis Redding</th>
<th>Simon &amp; Garfunkle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Doors</td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
<td>The Beach Boys</td>
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How do these types tie into the Hunsdorfer household? Not well. While the media is blasting love peace and happiness, there is a great collision with this family. While the social networks were doing everything in their power to hide the distress of the war, our family seems to have chosen to sink into the most depressive of states.

To the outside, (neighbors, schoolmates, co workers) this despondency looks absurd, questionabile, illogical....I only...
The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man In The Moon Marigolds

Dramaturgy: Marty J
Director: Oprah Star
Cast: Tillie Ruth
Beatrice Nanny
Janice

October 6 2010

Final Session

Topic Today: Play history/ Reviews

You'd be surprised... What we know about the history of the play is now quite a lot. However we have yet to learn anything about the production, besides its debut date, and its initial audience and critic response. What I'd like to focus on now is its reaction from audiences over the decades.

This remark summarizes our point of focus:
Statement from one critic (2001): "Now we expect so much less from family life that what was once a tear jerker today, fails to jerk any tears at all."

Here will be our greatest fear for with this production: The weight, the level of devastation that comes along with our family's circumstances has become diluted over time. Our reactions to their situation and their actions within their given circumstances have lost their profoundness.

have almost completely overwhelmed any feelings of genuine emotion we can feel towards one another. In other words, it is almost impossible to feel sympathetic towards a couple on say Jerry Springer because our feelings for their situation have become deadened through overuse of exposure. Whereas, if we knew this couple personally, we would be more apt to experience feelings of sympathy for them.

Summation of these points: It is a real shame, that today's fascination with other peoples struggles, have sabotaged the experience an audience could get from this production.

Additional Review Comments/ Further issue of Concern.
I'd like for us to discuss as a group:

Statements: "I could not imagine a modern day woman falling into a stupor because her daughter calls her a loon."
Issue Faced: Yet again, we must heavily emphasize decade difference and why this difference matters.

"Characters seem so black and white, you wonder why Beatrice doesn't don devil's ears and Tillie dress as an angel?"
Issue Faced: There is a lack of a character arch. A pre-disposed feeling towards who these people are, that is never wavering. How do we add dimension, mystery?

"Tillie's fascination with decaying atoms parallels the decay of the nuclear family ."
Issue Faced: This correlation is easily lost. How is it regained, and more importantly sustained.

"Audience soon learns to empathize with Tillie."
Issue Faced: We should not have to learn at all. This feeling should evolve over the course of the play. Learning risks emotionally exhausting the audience.
dearest puddle jumping marigolds,

tonight's rehearsal is from 7-10pm in SHAFER 204.

we will be working on SCENE 2.

please bring: your script, your journal, and a pencil. dress to move and come to work.

if you're not called tonight (miss elizabeth earnest & the terrific tech-savvies), have a lovely fall break. sip cider, thrift shop for a halloween costume, and jump in a pile of leaves:)

autumn amor,
dearest puddle jumping marigolds,

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fall break. sip cider, thrift shop for a halloween costume, and jump in a pile of leaves:
autumn amor,
e

Panting up a flight of stairs in the Shafer Street Playhouse, I would arrive in room 204 just as the
sun was going down. I liked to be the first one there, and when I did would quickly fall into a
comfortable routine. Turning the lights off, I would set my bag on a chair and slip off my
oversized sweater and shoes. I would find a place on the floor and lay down, closing my eyes. I'd
breathe, exhaling out the voices in my head and inhaling the quiet and calm of the room. At
almost seven o’clock in the evening, these were often the very first deep breaths of my day. I’d
sink into the floor a little more with each one, recognizing how my body felt and accepting that
some days my brain wasn’t going to stop for three minutes. Just as I had expectations for my
actors to be present, making this rehearsal their only concern and their first priority, I set the
same standards for myself.
Loading a cd of mine into the fancier-than-God entertainment system, I’d wait for the system to warm up, moving the classroom chairs to the edges of the room. Breathing in the footsteps on the third floor, breathing out the to-do list items I’d missed today, these few minutes were my time. I could be selfish, I could be alone, and I could be present in the space. I would end with a gentle spine stretch, and find my way to a standing position. Gaining this sense of control and awareness in a space where one is directing has been invaluable to my work. I have claimed this space as my own, as a place where I feel free and welcome to succeed and to fail. I lay it out there, my fears and my stories, my excitement and my anxiety. I am ready to work.

Directing at a non-profit theatre in New Hampshire one winter, I discovered the beauty and importance in rehearsal relaxation. I had run a middle school drama program before, but was a high school student and concerned myself with keeping sixty students corralled in one room and excited about theatre. In college I acquired several directing techniques from the theatre education classes I had taken. Combining this work with my own college acting classes, I discovered the importance in the body and in breath. No longer was I a girl memorizing lines and movements, notes and costume changes. I was discovering the importance in preparation through a character’s story, and in protection through a proper warm-up and a focus on breath.

Carried up my sleeve for the past five years, I begin all my rehearsals with a simple relaxation exercise. In an empty room, or on a bare stage, I gather my actors and ask them to find a space in the room and lay on their backs. With their eyes open or closed, arms at their sides, and body stretched along the floor, I begin to count out loud with them as they breathe. After a few minutes, I ask them to continue breathing and find my way to a cd player. Playing a song of my choice, I ask them to simply breathe the day away as the music plays. Letting go, releasing tension, and silencing the mind are the goals of this exercise.

These women and I shared our evenings with Ani Difranco, The Avett Brothers, Simon and Garfunkel, Patsy Cline, The Beatles, Cat Stevens, Rosie Thomas, and nearly a hundred more.
Not only were these few minutes an opportunity to breathe and be, but this first part of the evening allowed another voice to share the space with us. As actors, so much of what we do is about the power of voice and the transformation that it takes when a character is connected to it. I was blessed with four actors who had such distinct voices that paired with their characters. Paul Zindel wrote a script so that it could be read and be heard. These women were going to bring it to life beautifully.

happy scarf-worthy day!

thank you for tonight. the scrapbooking socials have only just begun. and with your songs in the background, too! learning about each of you is such a joy.

as a reminder, PLEASE let me know if you are going to be missing a rehearsal. it affects the show's schedule, other cast members' lives, and my own. each one of you is very important to the growth and life of this show. i hope that you know how much i appreciate your presence and hard work.

E

In today’s age of Facebook and text messaging, Blackberry emails and Twitter statuses, information is easily lost in cyberspace. An avid writer and conversationalist, I was aware that I must acknowledge this shift from pen and paper to computer and cell phone. However efficient and convenient, I wasn’t going to let this become an excuse for a lack of communication between my actors and myself. And it wasn’t until one of the women decided to text me five minutes before rehearsal and let me know she was missing that I had to address the issue and my expectations. There was never another miscommunication.

Often times I would plan a rehearsal’s warm-up while walking to campus. I’d gather a pile of leaves and find that they held inspiration, or admire graffiti on a brick wall and decide on a character building activity. My mother’s daughter, I can sometimes work best on impulse. She is
a preschool teacher, and never plans her classes. Her students love her, the parents wish they had her energy and creativity, and I aspire to be more like her. I, too, am my father’s daughter. I worry, I write, and I feel everything with my heart. I am stubborn, too. I, like these women, am afraid that I won’t do this show justice. I want to bring Zindel’s world to life as best I can.

Directing through SALT, I was aware that finding a space to rehearse could often be a challenge. There were three classrooms in the Shafer Playhouse and three basement rooms in the performing arts center. Over the course of those three months, six shows were in rehearsal. The main stage was given priority on spaces, and the SALT rehearsals were scheduled on a first-come first-serve basis. I was aware that this could be a source of tension between directors, so in order to avoid it as much as possible, sat down with two students who were directing shows with similar rehearsal schedules to mine.

In less than an hour the three of us had arranged our schedules so that we could share two classrooms as best we could. We kept in mind that there was a graduate student director who would need the third floor of Shafer, a faculty member who would rehearse in the basement of the performing arts building, and a main stage show that would need the other two basement rooms. We left these spaces open. Having open communication with these other two directors throughout the process was an enormous gift. I had directed with them the year before, admired their passion for directing, and acknowledged their support for SALT. Organizing our schedules and communicating as the weeks passed allowed for a sense of ease when it came to finding spaces to rehearse.

There were times when schedules didn’t match up perfectly, and on those days I would request the Shafer library. Smaller than our beloved 204, we accepted it as an open space to work. The Shafer library quickly became another friend to us when we discovered the storage space in a back closet. With the assistance of a graduate student librarian, we were given a space to store chairs, tables, a coat rack, plant pots, pillows, books, accessories, newspapers and pile of kitchen
supplies. And as the rehearsal process continued, carrying the props from the library to our rehearsal space became a part of our evening ritual.

these are a few of my FAVORITE things:

hot plate, jars, saucepan, wooden spoons, wooden chairs (3), tablecloth, mugs, mismatch cloth napkins, books, dish rag, jar of instant coffee, jar of honey, metal spoon, mismatch cups, whiskey glasses, beer bottle, whiskey bottles, back scratcher, phone book, telephone with cord, side table with drawer, mason jar, slips of paper for jar, macaroni necklace, extra thread, extra noodles, small jar, needle, chloroform bottle, side table, sofa, throw blanket, brush, comb, compact mirror, hair pins, lipstick, small purse, coat rack, composition books, schoolbooks, pencils, newspapers (circa 1960s or before), real estate sections of the newspaper, lettuce, rabbit cage, rabbit, refrigerator, counter space, hot plate, trophy, pillows, bench for center stage wall, walker for nanny, hair clips for Janice, cigarettes, ash trays (3 or more), matchbooks, lighters (at least three), paper bags (2), cardboard boxes, curtains, curtain rods, quilt, mirror or hanging framed art for back wall, thumb tacks, tape, wicker baskets, rocking chair, small carpet for telephone table, larger carpet for sofa, envelopes of seeds, planting flat, bags of soil, marigolds, pots (at least 3), science 3 fold presentation board, desk for it to sit on, cat skeleton, pointer for Janice, notecards for Tillie, art supplies for poster (markers, glue, paper, maps)

The first act of Marigolds takes place in the Hunsdorfer’s home. A claustrophobic space shared by four women, their house is an old vegetable store with very little natural light and an enormous amount of clutter. Used to coordinating technical elements myself, I wasn’t familiar with having a set designer. But when a young woman named Becky Brooks showed interest, I willingly signed her on to the job. Becky had big, beautiful dreams for Marigolds, none of which came true. I spent the month of September asking for a ground plan and never got one. Eager to
have a baseline from which to work with the women in October, I gave up on Becky’s and sketched a rough idea of my own.

I created four major acting areas within the space. The first was downstage left, where the rabbit cage would be. Tillie spent much of her time here, tending to the family pet, Peter. The second acting space was center stage, and we placed a sofa and side table there. Ruth was often found on the sofa, and during her epilepsy fit needed a safe place to retreat to. The third acting space was center stage left, at the base of the stairs, where Beatrice would sit in a chair with the telephone. A table was placed next to her chair with an ash tray and telephone book. The fourth acting space was stage right, where we created the layout of a kitchen. There was a large table with three chairs, and upstage was a refrigerator and counter. On the upstage left wall was a mirror, coat rack, and a staircase to the bedrooms. Upstage center was a doorway to Nanny’s room, and she would enter and exit from here. Upstage right was a kitchenette, and far right was the exit from the house when the girls would leave for school. With this rough ground plan I was able to begin blocking the first act.

I believe in allowing most of my blocking to come from the impulse of the actor. I have worked on shows before where directors block first, getting any movement mishaps out of the way. I have never found that to be beneficial, because with every actor there is going to be an entirely new set of impulses and movement patterns. Once the environment is set, beautiful connections are made through movement on stage. Naturally, characters are drawn to different places. Naturally, characters are drawn to one another in different places. This proved itself to be true in *Marigolds*. Liz found Ruth’s place on stage, Jeannie found Beatrice’s, and Erin found Tillie’s. Sarah, slowly but surely, and with the help of Nanny’s walker, found her chair at the kitchen table.

Because blocking completely on impulse can often freeze actors up for fear of walking and talking in circles, I utilized an exercise at the beginning of rehearsals to start to get them familiar
with their surroundings. After walking through the empty space, breathing into their bodies and finding the connection between actor and character, I would ask the women to begin greeting one another as their characters would. Interactions and arguments would arise, and avoidance was often witnessed from the audience. Next, I would ask them to begin setting the stage in character. Beatrice seldom helped the girls, a beautiful character choice. Erin was gentle and methodical, just as Tillie was. Liz was forceful and loud, recognizing Ruth’s manipulation on the others. And Nanny was in the way.

Setting the stage in character was never boring, stale or all too familiar. The women would make new discoveries, use their voices, and fall into their bodies with this exercise. When I first mentioned that I would watch them move around the space in order to decide how to best block the show, they seemed fearful of making mistakes. But half way into October, the stage was set and the blocking patterns were connecting on their own. There were times where I would have to readjust things in order to highlight moments or heighten tension. This was expected, and I learned a great deal about blocking and stage pictures working this way. My actors had never before rehearsed with a director who didn’t pre-block the show for them. And while they each worked differently, with a little patience and a whole lot of trust they began to accept and appreciate the freedom within the space.
Coffee is there, don't forget - look for

find B's sarcasm (mad meets dracy)

T-danger - fall into it.

♥ you getting bawji's attn

but bawji needs to

B - "certainly think that's delight - find your voice

such a better myth

have fun of hit in 2nd scene, too. [hearing title]

"don't know" - that's on the defense

this is so much fun to watch.

nice recovery, ruth

and react to mamie's house in k

lines! when you drop doesn't change - too late
In a three hour rehearsal we would practice and play, spending the first half an hour greeting one another, relaxing and warming up. The warm-ups were different every day, but always included a bit of vocal work and a movement exercise. The girls would then set the stage in character. We moved into scene work directly after, spending this time working and reworking moments. Martha and I would share ideas with one another, and the women responded to the two of us quite well. I would end rehearsals with notes, open the room up for questions from the actors, and sometimes share a just because pumpkin pie.

After the first couple of weeks rehearsing in the Shafer Playhouse, the librarian was gracefully letting us store more and more props and small set pieces in the library each night. One evening he asked me why I chose to incorporate the props so early into the process. While some shows
In a three hour rehearsal we would practice and play, spending the first half an hour greeting one another, relaxing and warming up. The warm-ups were different every day, but always included a bit of vocal work and a movement exercise. The girls would then set the stage in character. We moved into scene work directly after, spending this time working and re-working moments. Martha and I would share ideas with one another, and the women responded to the two of us quite well. I would end rehearsals with notes, open the room up for questions from the actors, and sometimes share a just-because pumpkin pie.

After the first couple of weeks the Shafer Playhouse’s, the librarian was gracefully letting us store more and more props and small set pieces in the library each night. One evening he asked me why I chose to incorporate the props so early into the process. While some shows wait until the last couple of weeks to throw the props in, I recognized that there was a certain dedication and element of time utilized with the addition of props. I told him that there was far too much to throw at them last minute. The life of these women is reflected in much of the business they are doing on stage. For the entirety of the play, Beatrice is drinking, talking on the telephone, making coffee, or reading the newspaper. All the while, she doesn’t stop smoking. Ruth relies on her lipstick, the backscratcher, and her mother’s cigarettes to get her through an interrogation or story. Tillie is planting and caring for her marigolds during the play, watching them grow from scene to scene. And aside from the plants, Tillie has a pet rabbit, too.
Chapter Five: The Leaves

Peter, a gift from Tillie’s science teacher, lives in a small cage in the family’s living room. Detested by Beatrice, he is an intricate part of the play, and a very important member of the family. Tillie loves him, Ruth does too, and Beatrice wants nothing more than to have him chloroformed. As a director, I had to make a decision as to whether I would use a live rabbit or not in the show. Sending an email out to a theatre student with a furry friend named Fez, I asked if she’d mind a few babysitters during the week. Tori and her rabbit were both excited and willing to be a part of the process, and we were lucky enough to fall in love with him over the course of the show. Erin and Liz bonded with Fez beautifully on stage, and off stage no one loved him more than Jeannie did. Fez was a perfect addition to Marigolds, and very well behaved, too.

In the last scene of Marigolds, the girls come home from school to share the news of Tillie’s science fair win when they discover that their mother has killed Peter. A haunting moment that begins the downward spiral into Ruth’s epileptic fit and the show’s ending, we acknowledged the importance in our audience connecting to a live animal on stage. We also acknowledged the pain and sorrow that they would feel after seeing Peter leave in Beatrice’s arms only to return (disguised by a high heeled shoe) wrapped in a towel in the final scene. This was just another living, breathing, loving part of the Hunsdorfer story that was lost.

Along with props and a pet rabbit, the actors were blessed with a talented young woman to dress them. Nicole Slaven, a sophomore costume major and student of mine from the year before, went above and beyond to create a perfect 1960s, low income, Staten Island family closet. She researched the family, only to discover that much of Beatrice’s clothing would have been over a
decade old, and that the girls would only own a handful of garments. Nicole gave them each a costume piece to begin wearing in November; a robe for Beatrice, another for Nanny, heels for Ruth and Janice, and a skirt for Tillie. These pieces were small but intricate parts of these women, and allowed for another way to enter the world of their characters.

Nicole paid close attention to the time period and the economic status of the family, using muted colors for much of their costumes. In the second act she added in a few yellows and oranges, bringing out the parallel with the blooming marigolds that sat on the front of the stage. Her choices were inquisitive and thoughtful. And while she complimented the intentions I had for the women’s wardrobe, she also communicated openly and freely with Virginia Varland, the lighting designer. Virginia created a beautiful palette of washes and light cues for the show, and shared these with me during production meetings.

While Nicole and Virginia shared ideas with one another, Becky had intentions to use wallpaper that would complement both of their choices. She also planned to paint and build separate platforms for each acting space. Neither of these things happened. The kitchenette and staircase didn’t happen either, but rather we ended up searching high and low backstage in the Newdick Theatre and found a piano to put a plywood front on for the kitchen cabinets and two small sets of stairs to combine in order to give the illusion of a stairway. Becky was the only pair of not-so-helping-hands in Marigolds, and much of this was due to her making a commitment when her plate was already full. I appreciated her heart and passion for the show, and recognize this difficulty as just another learning experience.

On the evening of December 10th, Marigolds’ opening night, I was told from a fellow graduate student who teaches the undergraduate directing class that “this was the most fully realized world I had ever seen on the Shafer stage, Eryn.” It was all worth it. The extra work of using the props, the close communication between myself and the costume and lighting designers, and the helping hands of each of these women. No one had to know that we never really had a set
designer. No one had to know that I drafted a ground plan in my notebook one afternoon from a park bench, never imagining that would be our final one. And no one had to know that Jeannie Melcher's apartment was raided of furniture only to remain completely empty for the first half of December. These things added to the excitement and heart of the experience.

lady loves,

we're a little behind on planting, considering that i've been reading all over and it takes over a month to get the Marigolds blooming! so, we're going to save the skeleton and science project for november and get going on sow, soil, seeds... and sun (fake sun, i'm getting a lamp)

the plan for sunday is to plant together at my apartment, so if you're around in the afternoon i'd love your help.

2ish? i'm hoping to get soil and seeds and planting pots/flats before then (unless we wanted to go together to get things?)

i will be emailing you on friday before i head out of town for the weekend with the rehearsal schedule for the rest of october. another friend of mine (my pre-sorority college roommate) is getting married in massachusetts. i'll bring back all the pretty leaves for you!

the plan is to work the show three evenings a week...and of course throw in some random sunday morning get-togethers/late evening socials, too. (Nicole, Virginia and Becky- we WANT you at those!)... is 7 better so that people can have dinner first?

october conflicts? pretty please email me.

AND LASTLY, mark your calendars for sunday the 17th's brunch!

origami love,

e

Every step of the way felt as though I were swimming through the ocean, only to arrive at a beautiful island and lay in the sand with the sun on your face as a reward. In an attempt to plant and grow my own live marigolds, I failed miserably. I was delivered transplants from a sweet cashier at Lowe’s, very much a stranger until we met one day. I tried my best to keep them alive through the frost, but discovered that my thumb was anything but green. I ended up buying mums after visiting nearly a dozen florists that carried nothing remotely similar to marigolds-
plastic, dried, or alive. Amazing people like Rebecca from Lowe’s found their way into this yellow petaled project. Amazing people like Alex Fulton, an artist in a crocheted winter hat, found their way into the story, too.

hi alex!

my name is eryn snyder and i am a graduate student in the theatre program here. i know we've met before, and i always seem to see you in the prettiest of hats all over campus!

this fall (december 10-12) i will be directing paul zindel's "the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds" in shafer. my assistant, and your GRC mate martha johnson, may have already emailed you. if so, sorry for the inbox clutter!

the poster for "hurricane gordo" is breathtaking. really. and i would love nothing more than to have you design the poster for "marigolds". my thought is this: a sketch of the women's faces, of which there are four. simple. sweet. but showing the pain and power within the story.

would you have time to doodle and design our poster?

i'd love it.

we'll be rehearsing in shafer tonight, tomorrow and wednesday from 7-10. tonight in newdick and tues/wed in 204. feel free to stop by anytime (or email, if thats most convenient).. my number is 207.730.0677

Alex, a college Sophomore in the art department, designed Marigolds’ poster. What became a month-long project creating layers of paint, dirt, textiles and colors, the final product was just another waterfall of salt water across my cheeks. Without knowing more than an evening’s rehearsal and a few email exchanges, Marigolds’ had a breathtaking piece of art with which to advertise.
Rays on the man in the tree of effect of gamma
Paul Zindel’s

the effect of gamma rays on man in the moon

Marigolds

Shape Street Playhouse

directed by Cezn Snyder

Assistant Director Martha Johnson

december

10/11/12/13
In October and November, I scheduled two to three evenings a week for rehearsals. Jeannie and I would work lines, coach, and block her monologues on additional Friday afternoons. I included once-in-a-while Sundays for a get together, too. I didn’t see the need in rehearsing every night, and even if I wanted to, knew that it would be impossible. I am a waitress here in Richmond two nights a week, and I need my Friday nights to keep up on live theatre in the city. And at VCU, both work and play are important to keep me balanced and breathing. I wanted my actors to value rehearsals but also to value their time to explore, study, read, write, cook, and live. A few productive, quality rehearsals would mean more to me than meeting five nights a week and tiring ourselves out. I, too, was challenged to let go of my fears and let the flower bloom.

The rehearsal schedule couldn’t have been any better. Two rehearsals a week would have been too few, and five would have been too many. Having my actors keep their Friday afternoons open for me allowed for flexibility and coaching. Adding Sunday brunches or picnics allowed for us to celebrate and relish the time we shared. *Marigolds* has ten scenes, with five in each act. I devoted October to the first act and November to the second. Reminding myself that the first week in December was our tech week, and that a week in November was dedicated to Thanksgiving, this left ten weeks from beginning to end.

I was reminded daily by other graduate students that I was spoiled with so much time to work, and asked why I was planning on rehearsing for so long. “Well your show will obviously be good. You have so much time” said a graduate student whose dream to direct in Newdick was denied when too few students auditioned. The competition that lives within a theatre program was what I disliked most of all. There should never be a time or a place to be cruel, and with this
program it existed in moments of fear and envy. I felt a tenderness within me when comments like that were overheard, or when graduate students chose to criticize my actors’ work. The hardest part was that I wanted to argue back, making it known that our rehearsal schedule was just as light as everyone else’s. *Marigolds* was a sensitive spot, and there isn’t a day that goes by where I don’t feel this show in every bit of me. It runs through my veins and brings tears to my eyes.
Weekday rehearsals that were scheduled for the evening focused on specific scenes, while Friday afternoon was set aside for tentative one-on-one coaching between myself and an actor. Martha didn't come to Friday rehearsals, and I found that to be beneficial to both myself and the actors. In these afternoons I was able to create a relationship between the women and myself that was one-on-one, intimate and different from the rest. I spent many afternoons working with Jeannie. She and I would have afternoon dates with her telephone. She found a perfect rotary phone at a Richmond thrift store, and while her script served as the security blanket for the first few weeks, the telephone began to take its place. Jeannie would carry it around campus like a small child that she cared so deeply for.

Jeannie had a different repertoire and wasn't as familiar to the theatre practitioners, acting techniques and directing terminology as the other three women. I used our moments together to

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**October Marigolds**

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**What to Bring:**
- Water
- Movement clothes
- Your script
- A pencil
- Your journal
- Your heart
- Any props/objects that you would like to have with you during rehearsals.

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**A NOTE:**
We are amidst the lovely room-shuffles, so locations as of now are TBA. Ideally, we will be in Studio 204 on Tuesdays, PAC 57 on Wednesdays, and Shaffer 204 on Fridays. But I have to request spaces each week. Availability changes. I will let you know on MONDAY of each week, so pretty please check your phone/mail and then SHARPIE IT IN.
Weekday rehearsals that were scheduled for the evening focused on specific scenes, while Friday afternoon was set aside for tentative one-on-one coaching between myself and an actor. Martha didn’t come to Friday rehearsals, and I found that to be beneficial to both myself and the actors. In these afternoons I was able to create a relationship between the women and myself that was one-on-one, intimate and different from the rest. I spent many afternoons working with Jeannie. She and I would have afternoon dates with her telephone. She found a perfect rotary phone at a Richmond thrift store, and while her script served as the security blanket for the first few weeks, the telephone began to take its place. Jeannie would carry it around campus like a small child that she cared so deeply for.

Jeannie had a different repertoire and wasn’t as familiar to the theatre practitioners, acting techniques and directing terminology as the other three women. I used our moments together to introduce her, while the other women were kind and gentle with her, slowly explaining things they had discovered in sophomore acting class. Each of these women brought their own challenges, different from one another. I worked with Erin on her trust, Ruth on working by impulse, Sarah on simplicity with Janice and specificity with Nanny, and I worked with Jeannie on dimensions. These women trusted me, and I trusted them. They became the girls at the dinner table, and I became their nanny.

dear pumpkins,

another week is beginning, and here's the day-by-day:
MONDAY november 8. NEWDICK THEATRE @ 7. ACT2 SC1 (r. t. b)
*special guests: becky, kristen, and nicole!
TUESDAY november 9. SHAFER 204 @7. ACT2 SC1 (r, t, b)
*special guest: peter!
WEDNESDAY November 10. Shaffer 204 @ 7pm Act 2 Sc1-3 (t, b, j, r)

Thursday November 11. No Rehearsal

Friday November 12. Shaffer 201 Act 2 Sc4 (Tillie)

*Erin, when is the best time to rehearse for you? I am free after 11am.

Sunday November 14. Shaffer 204 @ noon Bumps, Dead-Ends & Question Marks (t, r, b, j)

A few "please read" reminders:

*You should be completely and totally off book over the coming week.

*Work should be scored. Please take the time to mark beat changes, shifts in action, etc... This is essential to your own character development.

*For rehearsal tomorrow we will need a pair of gloves (for B) and a hair bow (for T). If the two of you could bring those, pretty please?

Oh, and guess what?

We open in 33 days!

Here's to another week of happy-go-lucky days together,

E

Working with such a small cast, it was very rare to have an act one rehearsal where the women weren’t all called. I found that whether the women were all called or not didn’t seem to matter. They would be there anyway, for support and discovery. Often times Nicole and Virginia would stop in to visit and observe, too. While the classroom was a safe place for these women to take risks and ask questions in confidence, the door was always open to the eight of them, whether or not we were working on a scene they were in. Zindel tightly wove everything together in Marigolds, making it a show for a small, intimate female ensemble. I emphasized this, stressing the importance of knowing one another’s every move and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in ourselves as characters and as humans. This lesson was one of the largest, and aside from falling in love and making messes, reminding my actors to trust one another was fundamental.
With the arrival of burnt orange leaves and pumpkins came rehearsals, desserts, scrapbooking, notes, notes, and more notes. The marigold was making its way through the soil, searching for sun. And as these four women were making discoveries within the equal numbered walls in the rehearsal room, I scribbled my way through the rehearsals.

Having spent October on the first act, we transitioned into November with the emotional roller coaster of the second. My cast had spent the last week in October reminding one another of the chaos about to ensue. In the second half of the show we meet Janice, Tillie presents her science experiment, Beatrice kills Peter, Ruth has an epileptic fit, and an audience fills with heartache.

I reminded the girls that the dedication and work they put into creating the foundation within the first act was going to pay off. They were going to need to rely on the spaces they created and the
With the arrival of burnt orange leaves and pumpkins came rehearsals, desserts, scrapbooking, notes, notes, and more notes. The marigold was making its way through the soil, searching for sun. And as these four women were making discoveries within the equal numbered walls in the rehearsal room, I scribbled my way through the rehearsals.

Having spent October on the first act, we transitioned into November with the emotional roller coaster of the second. My cast had spent the last week in October reminding one another of the chaos about to ensue. In the second half of the show we meet Janice, Tillie presents her science experiment, Beatrice kills Peter, Ruth has an epileptic fit, and an audience fills with heartache. I reminded the girls that the dedication and work they put into creating the foundation within the first act was going to pay off. They were going to need to rely on the spaces they created and the trust they had built to take the audience on the second act’s journey. If the first act played the role of introducing an audience to four characters and their struggle, the second act made a mess of everything.

Rehearsals were heavy and heartbreaking in November. Martha and I tried our very best to pull ourselves together through the tears of lovely evenings, and a few times forced myself to instill a little tough love in the cast. There were nights when committing to a character’s tears and fights wasn’t easy. There were nights when these women fought me to tears. We had a handful of breakdowns, and a healthy amount of heartbreak. I don’t know if there is a more beautiful play to demonstrate the dynamic of a family made of women. I don’t know if there is a more beautiful group of women to do them justice. I don’t know if there is ever a right time to let someone else in. But we did.

November brought us another miracle, and this time in the form of a musician wearing a newsboy cap. I had thought a lot about wanting live music in the show, and knew that Paul Zindel was very specific in his request for accompaniment. I didn’t want an entire band, and I didn’t want anything recorded. I wanted it to be live, just as this theme of living and survival is a
current running through the play. I asked Martha to start asking around to see if there were interested students who had any sort of musical talent. I had dreamt of a string player, but for fear of being too specific and not having a single request, we posted a sign looking for anyone and everyone who was interested in playing for *Marigolds*. John Curry, a viola player, was the first to get in touch. Discovered by Martha as an eager freshman looking for outlets to showcase his musical talent, I sent him a same-day email.

Hi John,

My name is Eryn Snyder, and I'm directing this Fall's "the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon Marigolds ". I must know you from fdp... Just can't remember all forty four faces!

So, is it true? You'll be Marigolds’ musician? How wonderfully exciting! Would you want to come by this week and meet the cast and I? I'd love to get your schedule so you can come see a rehearsal and maybe even watch a verrrrrry rough run before Thanksgiving.

We are rehearsing tomorrow at 7 in Newdick, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 in Shafer 204...would 630 work on any of those evenings?

You're quite fabulous for doing this. Welcome aboard a nine lady collaboration- we're psyched to have you. And you're going to love the play. Have you read it? I'll bring you a copy when I see you.

Thanks again, John. Enjoy your Sunday evening!

Eryn

John began attending rehearsals the week of Thanksgiving, and brought his trusty viola along. He was bright and curious. He got along well with the cast. He loved *Marigolds*. And he was an incredible musician. I remember the first rehearsal that he came to, and watched him scribbling a few things down and plucking out a note or two on his viola. He arrived the next night and played an entire accompaniment for the cast as they set the stage. It was haunting and hopeful, a combination I could only have dreamt of. Six women fell in love with a string player that evening.
As I drove north to Maine for a Snyder family Thanksgiving, my cast and crew scattered home to their families along the southern coast. We were parting ways on two weeks before the show opened, and that five day break was just what I needed. It was a reminder of the support and love that surrounded me, and of the excitement that was to come. I was confident in the work we had done thus far, and I needed to trust that. Having seen a rough run through before break, I knew that there were two weeks to smooth the edges out. I also knew that twenty hours in a rental car would give me plenty of thinking time.

My collection of female vocalists is always a lovely companion along interstate 95. It was during the long leg of New Jersey that I began finalizing plans for the performances. Up until now I had daydreamed how opening night would go. I imagined my very best friends and family there. I

---

**SANDWICHES**

- lox and a schmear
dill grav lox/ cream cheese/ toasted bagel/ thin red onion/tomato/ capers 8. w/ fried eggs 10.
- camp sandwich
  scrambled eggs/ peppers/ onion/ bacon/farmstead cheese/ texas toast / w/ home fries 9.
- hot brown, red delicious
  hot house made pastrami/ two fried eggs/ mornay sauce/ sourdough / served open-faced 12.
- the freshman
  fried falafel and soft tofu scramble/ tomatoes/ peppers/ grilled onion/ flatbread / w/ home fries 10.
- heritage burger
  ancient breed VA beef/ baby greens/ artisan cheese 10. w/ fried eggs 12.

**HANGOVER HELPER**

- mind - * noodle bowl
  grilled beef short rib/ spicy broth/ napa cabbage/ glass noodle/10. w/ fried eggs 12.
- body - * pseudo menudo
  chili braised beef and pork stew/ posole/ tortilla 11. w/ fried eggs 13.
- soul - * mama loves you
  buttermilk biscuits/ country gravy / house made sausage 9. w/ fried eggs 11.

**MORNING FARE**

- house made granola
  rolled oats/ almonds/ coconut/yogurt/ local honey 6. w/ fruit 8.
- waffles
  maple syrup/ whipped butter 6. w/ fruit 8.
- orange blossom scone
  w/ whipped butter 4. w/ fruit 6.

**BACon MenU**

Side (2 slices) ............... 2.
Plate (3 slices) .......... 3.10
Slice.......................... 1.

- house - apple wood smoked plate w/ nutella
- chinese 5 spices
  plate w/ orange marmalade
- red eye - espresso cured
  plate w/ maple syrup
- 30 dove - garlic cured
  plate w/ olive oil
- dragon - red chili rubbed
  plate w/ sweet & sour
- supplemental
- irish - truffle cured 3. / side
  plate w/ demi glace 5. / plate

**PLATES**

- * proper fry-up
  home fries/ surry sausage/ house bacon/ two eggs/ beans/ toast/ grilled tomato 13.
- * smoked bluefish cakes
  home fries/ two eggs/ hot sauce béarnaise/ buttermilk biscuit 11.
- duck and waffles
  crispy duck leg confit/ waffle/ spicy maple syrup/ whipped butter 12.
- surry sausage and grits
  collard greens 9. w/ * fried eggs 11
- zucchini bread french toast
  fresh fruit/ maple syrup/ whipped butter 10.
- shitake and spinach quiche
  local eggs/ shallots/ fontina cheese w/ side salad 11.

**SIDES**

- salad 2.50
- home fries 2.
- grits 1.50
- biscuit 1.50
- * two eggs 2.
- surry sausage 3.
- beans on toast 2.50
- egg in a frame 4.
- fresh fruit 3.

*This dish may contain raw or undercooked foods. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.
I drove north to Maine for a Snyder family Thanksgiving, my cast and crew scattered home to their families along the southern coast. We were parting ways only two weeks before the show opened, and that five day break was just what I needed. It was a reminder of the support and love that surrounded me, and of the excitement that was to come. I was confident in the work we had done thus far, and needed to trust that. Having seen a rough run through before break, I knew that there were two weeks to smooth the edges out. I also knew that twenty hours in a rental car would give me plenty of thinking time.

My collection of female vocalists is always a lovely companion along interstate 95. It was during the long leg of New Jersey that I began finalizing plans for the performances. Up until now I had daydreamed how opening night would go. I imagined my very best friends and family there. I imagined an audience filled with co-workers, students, and strangers. And they would all leave moved and hopeful, with another story in their hearts. With a process so genuine and cultivated, the product wasn't my concern. I did, however, have to include dessert.

During a rehearsal Jeannie mentioned how much she loved cheesecake, just like Beatrice. It seemed fitting for us to coordinate a sort of gathering with our friends and family, considering that so much of the work that went into Marigolds relied on the sticky sweet bonds between us. We spent a few Sundays brunching at local restaurants here in the city. Another week we went on a field trip to my apartment for tulips. Taking over a neighborhood pizza shop with our grumbling bellies and roaring laughter, we later sold them out of cheesecake. And so, Beatrice's dream became our own, and we started drawing up the perfect little tea shop. We'd string white lights, show off our scrapbooking skills and snapshots, brew tea, and fill our audiences with cream and sugar.

It was typical for audiences to gather outside after Shafer shows, but considering the chilly December weather, I wasn't about to have my pretty petals shivering to death outside. We decided to start something new after the show, a tradition that would hopefully carry into future
shows. During intermission I would run upstairs to our beloved 204, lay out a couple of tablecloths, plug in twinkle lights, arrange photos and our scrapbook, plug in the tea kettle, slice a handful of cheesecakes, and fill a mason jar with yellow flowers. The preparations were, like everything else in this show, a little extra work. But as a labor of love, it was worth every last bite.

While the highway north to Maine inspired many final plans for the show, including scattered flowers and posted biographies of the women in the entrance and a tea shop as a detoured exit, the highway south to Richmond inspired my program. I decided that I would write a letter to serve as my director note. And after thirteen hours of driving and traffic jams, my dashboard was covered with post-it notes. Some had the names of people whom I wanted to be sure and include in the program, some were flowery metaphors, and others were a reminder of something still left to do.

for those of us who are doing 587 things, still full of turkey and pie, and need a little reminder of this week,

monday the 29th- 6pm prod mtng, 7pm run
tuesday the 30th- 7pm run
wednesday the 1st- 7pm run
friday the 3rd- tbd
saturday the 4th- tbd
sunday the 5th- LoAd iN NeWdIcK.
monday the 6th- tech (call 630, run 7)
tuesday the 7th- tech (call 630, run 7)
wednesday the 8th- dress (call 6, run 7)
thursday the 9th- IDR (call 7, run 8)
friday the 10th- call 7pm, SHOW 8pm!
Saturday- call 1pm SHOW 2pm* call 7pm SHOW 8pm
sunday- call 1pm SHOW 2pm (strike after)
Newspapers on Rabbit cage

SLOW FIRST SCENE

we need more!

cigarettes need to be thrown out when they run out, ladies.

I like coasters better - do you too, the cig?

scene 2

looks nice

get a rose out of one another.

get the chandelier - awk place for Tom stage

nanny's slippers can be under the sofa.

VOLUME!

find your humor, Mr. Goodman like you

shorty Naïve

ask them, pub don't need them
The last two weeks of Marigold's rehearsals were a whirlwind. My cast and crew ran all over campus in their yellow and orange screen printed t-shirts. Having been in a sorority for three years in college, I was left with two trash bags full of screen printed shirts and knowledge of all the best inking companies. I decided to surprise them with a personalized little something. I hung posters on campus, putting a few in my favorite coffee shops and restaurants. I saved my pennies to fly my best friend, Joanna, and college professor, Raina, south for the show. My two sisters and mom had confirmed flights into Richmond for opening night. Another best friend and her fiancé were going to stop in on their way to St. Louis.

Tech week tore my stomach apart and hair out. I had to give over to the possibility of everything falling apart and a forgetfulness from my actors. It happened. And above it all, we were left

B needs to fight - her body doesn't match her voice. Take some quiet time for B. Do an activity. Voice in your head.

Nice mark.

Re-read the script. But you know that you're always not what you're doing.

The playing starts C baggy and

It's midnight.
Exhales.
Beautiful exchange between you.
Be careful of whispers, B.

What makes this moment different for you, B? You're not alone.

Beautiful touches to Ruth.

We need a (flashlight.)

Get rid of her.

Have you seen her cry before?
The last two weeks of Marigolds rehearsals were a whirlwind. My cast and crew ran all over campus in their yellow and orange screen printed t-shirts. Having been in a sorority for three years in college, I was left with two trash bags full of screen printed shirts and knowledge of all the best inking companies. I decided to surprise them with a personalized little something. I hung posters on campus, putting a few in my favorite coffee shops and restaurants. I saved my pennies to fly my best friend, Joanna, and college professor, Raina, south for the show. My two sisters and mom had confirmed flights into Richmond for opening night. Another best friend and her fiancé were going to stop in on their way to St. Louis.

Tech week tore my stomach apart and hair out. I had to give over to the possibility of everything falling apart and a forgetfulness from my actors. It happened. And above it all, we were left without without a reliable set designer, with painting, stenciling, and building to do. Thanks to several women's apartments, and most of all Jeannie's, we filled the stage with chairs, tables, rugs, a coat rack, wall art, a bench, a chest, a lamp. And then there was the refrigerator.

This 1950s refrigerator had actually been sitting in Shafer's paint room, used only once before for a show in the Newdick Theatre. Weighing several hundred pounds, it took a dolly and six people to carry onto the stage. But once it was placed next to the piano (a piano disguised as a kitchen counter with cabinets), stage right came together beautifully. Two flats and a set of four stairs with a landing were painted, creating the level that led to the second floor on stage left. Thirty dollars later, I got my banister only to be disappointed in it and drape a quilt over top. And once any and every piece of furniture found their place on the stage, it looked as though the Hunsdorfers were transplanted from Staten Island to the Shafer Playhouse.

After two back to back dress rehearsals on Thursday the 9th, we were ready for an audience. The many bumps and bruises that arose during tech week were healed with sewing kits, duct tape, and an ice cream cake. Having smiled my way through a love story since September, by
December 10th I was beaming. These women and I had fallen head over heels with one another. We cried, laughed, jumped, asked at least a thousand questions, and were now connected by heart. Not even an empty audience on opening night could keep Marigolds from being a success. It had already become a beaming nine petaled flower. Hundreds of programs were placed into ivory envelopes. Each was sealed with a flower stamp. Posters with the womens’ pictures and biographies sat in the background. And an hour before the doors opened on Friday night, I scattered a bouquet of fresh daisies across the table. The love story had come full circle, tied together with petals, stems, roots, soil, and seeds.
the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds
by paul zindel

directed by eryn snyder
assistant directed by martha johnson

hearts.

tillie humdinger... erin adelman
beatrice humdinger... jeannie melcher
ruth humdinger... lie earnest
sanny/janie... sarah wilson
peter... lou

hands.

music... john carry
costumes... nicole slaven
lights... virginia varland & andrew
rolinson
board op... will walker
set... becky brooks & kristen keeler

hugs.

alex fulton, keiley schoger, ted carter,
kevin nagranian, lee williams, tori
straus, carla joseph, rebecca from love's,
lucie refino, tonya callan, aasen
barnes, rhia amos, starbucks, sugar,
pam donahoe, josh cheesed, ron keller,
sharon melcher, ann williams, smlf!

marigolds’ love story began, as many of my own do, with a letter. a letter that i’ve carried with me for the past eight months, it’s nestled into the back of sharpie-bright planner, a handwritten four pages, this letter is both a thank you and a confession, i sent the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds to a young woman who was a student of mine last spring, in hopes that she’d find a faraway home, a nearby escape, and a little bit of hope in its story. marigolds is the most thoughtful play i’ve ever worked on, and paul zindel knows the ways in which we let fear leave us wilted and hope bring us to full bloom. this fall i have had the gift of working with beautiful women and beautiful words, in hopes of sharing something meaningful with the world, our journey together has been one formed by strong hands and hopeful hearts, as i say in every rehearsal, the most wonderful thing we can do as actors is fall in love, we tell a story, we live its pain, and we love it for everything it hopes to be, and this december i no longer have to carry jeannie’s letter with me. each of these women, and not just her, have written their own letters all over my heart, and i am left with both a thank you and a confession.

thank you, marigolds, for this three month love affair. it was better than any blueberry pie with i’ve ever made.

adoringly,

eryn

ps, here’s an envelope, and here’s to hoping you’ll find inspiration to write your very own letter of love.
Chapter Seven: The Bloom

On Sunday evening, after the four shows were over, I mopped Fez's raisins, Beatrice's feathers, and buckets of tears off the Newdick stage. Saying goodbye to Marigolds was one of the hardest things I had ever done. I had stayed awake countless nights scribbling notes to myself, spent every last penny on sugar, flowers, t-shirts, paper, props and set pieces, autumn afternoons comforting and creating with eight young women. And when the stage was empty and the house lights went dark, the nine of us sniffled around a dinner table.

Marigolds stands on its own as a lesson in strength and love. Hand these four women any script, and they will be sure to make it beautiful. That is what I hoped to accomplish as their director. And that is what every director should hope to do. By creating an environment where actors can let go of fear, bring the wall of judgement and insecurity down, and be fully prepared to take risks and fall in love, a rehearsal process is made complete. But until then, an actor’s fear gets in the way of the real work.

The beauty of life and art is the effort and love you put into it. It is the planting of the seed, the cultivating of the soil, and the water and sunshine that allow it to grow. Hand these women Paul Zindel's The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds and they will create a piece of theatre that brings out the dreamer, the lover, and the survivor in all of us. Just remember to reward them with a slice of cheesecake- and yourself, a slice of pie.
Epilogue: One last love letter

barry,

i hope this holiday is a relaxing, peaceful, and joyful one.

at first i thought that it wasn't my place to be sending you an email about marigolds. and it isn't. i really don't know why you weren't there, and shouldn't need to.

but i will say something, on behalf all the heart and hard work that went into this show. these girls were beautiful, and you would have been very proud. erin adelman has a simplicity about herself that is genuine and captivating on stage. liz earnest is one of the most commited young woman ive worked with. and sarah wilson was side-splittingly funny. the dynamics, layers, and commitment of these women is rare and unique.

but there's another young woman, too. one who, along with me, would look for you each night in the audience. her monologues, and minutes of silence on stage were deserved each and every time. her character development was something you don't always see on the shafer stage. jeannie put everything into this production, barry. her heartfelt and honest bio on the board in the lobby, my director's note about our journey together, slipped inside stamped envelopes, and the determination and raw talent that she has was a gift to be a part of. she brought me to tears every time, and did some really wonderful work.

thank you for encouraging a heart for theatre in these woman. i wish you could have been there. it was so much more than a play, but rather an invitation to an autumn love affair.

eryn
Appendix A

Additional love letters
Jeannie Melcher is a sophomore, first year Theatre Performance major at VCU. Her previous credits include the Psychiatrist in Baby Talk by Doug Wright (directed by Meghan Keleher) in FDP in 2009, and Mrs. Asquith in The Way of All Flesh by Elaine May (directed by Tommy Callan) in Newrick’s One Act Festival in the spring. She is tremendously excited to be a part of this incredible experience and would love to thank everyone who has taken part in creating this beautiful show.

Erin Snyder was my TA for two classes I took last semester. I remember at some point during the semester my demen started coming back, and my depression crept up on me harder than ever before. Erin one day slipped me a play in class with a post-it note on it. The note basically was a little reminder that even in the darkest times, there is still beauty. I was taken aback by the gesture, and when I came home that night, I cracked open the play and started reading it. Each time I turned a page, I got more and more sucked into the story. The moment I finished it, I read it again. And again.

I was waiting for class to start the next day, and knew that I had to wait to talk to her about it in class, but I couldn’t wait, so I tore out sheets from my notebook and started writing her a note. The note ended up being 4 pages, front to back, every inch covered. I think I went through two different pens just trying to get everything out. It was like I was venting, not just telling, about it. I couldn’t get over how beautiful the story was. I folded up the note and put it with the play in her mailbox.

I got the play again, but this time, it wasn’t her copy. It was mine. And I had been cast as the role of Beatrice.

Every one of us has something to learn from each one of these incredibly powerful women. The strength in this family, the love for one another, and the will to survive is beyond beautiful. I absolutely love each and every one of these women, and the actors chosen to portray these lives are exceedingly perfect. I couldn’t have asked for a more remarkable cast and show to be a part of. It’s been a wild ride, and one that I will never forget.

I am absolutely in love with Beatrice. I am in her. And she is in me.

At first, I couldn’t stand the thought of this experience ending. But, then I realized, it doesn’t have to. It will live on in my memory.


To the cast and crew of Marigolds:
Thank you for giving me my life back.
I have never lived more or harder than I have while working on this show.
I will never forget you.
I love you.
Forever yours,
B
Dear Eryn,

Thank you so very much for allowing me to be a part of this show. I've learned so much and loved working with you throughout this process. Thanks.

Despite my sarcasm and the occasional joke about scrap booking, this has been a more than wonderful experience for me. You have inspired and supported all of us with your dedication, creativity, intelligence, and passion.

I am so proud to be a part of such a beautiful product. And none of it would have happened without you. Thank you, thank you.

Love,
Sarah (Jenna)

P.S. I know you're the stationary queen, so I didn't even attempt. Hope that's okay.
Appendix B

Biographies
Nicole Slaven is a Sophomore in the Costume Design program. She loves the color marmalade and her family. She would like to thank Neno Russell for all of his help.

She fully endorses any project associated with Eryn Snyder.

Being a Marigold has been:

* Empowering
* Strong
* Safe
* Special

Nicole would like for you to know that Marigolds:

* Are beautiful girls and flowers
* Is a slumber party
* Is the best part of her semester

Nicole will continue to be a Marigold by:

* Loving the other women and loving herself
* Gardening
* Eating cheesecake and drinking tea
* Going on a road trip with Martha Johnson
Erin Adelman (Tillie) is currently a second year performance major in the Theatre VCU program. She was previously seen on the Newdick stage in Decent Sketch Comedy’s “It Could Be Worse...” and performs long form improvisation regularly with Four-in Exchange at Shafer Street’s “No Shame” variety show. She sincerely hopes that you can all get lost in the bittersweet world of the Hunsdorfer and that you enjoy your not so bittersweet cheesecake after the show! There is no way she could have grown more, struggled harder, or learned as much as she did without the entirety of this talented group of Marigolds :). A million thanks to Eryn Snyder, Martha Johnson and an amazing cast and crew for a most unforgettable opportunity.

What it has meant to be a Marigold:
In the few and thoughtful words of Matilda Hunsdorfer, “This experiment has made me feel important.” and I hope it does the same for all of you.

Sarah Wilson-Nanny/Janice Vickery

Sarah is a second year performance major at VCU. She has previously been seen doing stand-up comedy in Gallery 5’s SayLove and as The Girl in SALT’s production of “Hello Out There.”

It has been a joy and an honor to work with such beautiful and intelligent women. Marigolds has blossomed (pun!) into a truly gorgeous flower (metaphor!). I would like to thank the cast and crew, especially the effervescent Eryn Snyder, for their support, laughs, and love throughout this process. I would also like to send a very special thank you to the very handsome John Curry, who provided a beautiful soundtrack and kept me afloat in the estrogen ocean.
Liz Earnest - Ruth:
Liz is a third-year performance major on the B.F.A. track at Theatre VCU. She has most recently been featured in the 2009 and 2010 cast of “Student Voices” and in “Psycho Beach Party.” Liz has adored getting to know and love her fellow “Marigolds” over the past few months, and hopes that they will always carry the laughter, passion, and memories that they have shared.
Martha Catherine
Assistant Director

I approached Eryn over the summer, asking her if she “knew of any shows this upcoming semester that need a stage manager, a dramaturge, an assistant director, ANYTHING.” Knowing full well that she was directing a show that fall, I played my card well and she fortunately gave in and extended to me the invitation.

We met for our first coffee and crumb cake soon after and she slid across the café table a huge binder with a Marigold’s world blooming inside of it.

This was the project I’d been waiting for.

More soup and salad sessions followed throughout the summer. Our excitement began to grow together. Buzzing ideas, images, colors, creations, propelled us throughout the remainder of our separate summers. And then, advertisements, auditions, cast lists, rehearsals begin. Boom, boom, boom, boom. We were here.

Dramaturgical sessions came into play. This process of research, writing, and communication to my actors was something I fell in love with. We took our time. I was granted a month of getting to know these girls as people before I was introduced to their characters. I was unfamiliar with most of these women, and therefore found it vital that I learned who they are and how they worked before I could ever understand them within their roles.

Once we jumped up on our feet those textures, sights and scents found their roots. It has been three months since then and I have lost count of all the blooms. I am so grateful that this cast has allowed me the chance to share my ideas, to take in consideration my thoughts and direction. I am simply so proud of this production.
Appendix C

Images
Excellent, exit.

Something to look at.

May say it persists - ask.

Emplacing gaze into skeletal cadet - love is always getting lost.

Is your normal feeling of guilt or shame?

She’s so much like that. Herself a bit? Ideas?

Try to in.

Give N’s room before half that.

EMT ECO PLAC.
Appendix D

Desserts

**Maine Wild Blueberry Pie**

**Pie Crust**

- 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup shortening
- 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon cold water
- 1 egg yolk mixed with 1 to 2 tablespoons water for glaze

Mix flour and salt, then cut shortening into flour. When blended, add water and blend into dough. Roll crust to fit 9-inch pie plate.

**Filling**

- 5 cups Maine wild blueberries
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1-1/2 tablespoons butter

Wash berries, remove stems, and mix with dry ingredients. Sprinkle with lemon juice to taste. Place berries in bottom crust. Distribute dots of butter over the berries. Cover with top crust.
Brush on egg wash and cut air vents into top crust. Crimp edges and bake 40 minutes at 400 degrees F

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**Pumpkin Cheesecake**

**Crust:**
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
4 Tablespoons melted butter
1 Tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar

**Filling:**
2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese
2/3 cup brown sugar
1 (15 ounce) can pumpkin puree
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
3/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
2 eggs
1/4 teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Combine graham cracker crumbs, cinnamon, butter and brown sugar and press onto the bottom and halfway up the sides of an 8" springform pan. Bake for 5 minutes.

2. Beat cream cheese in a large mixing bowl until fluffy. Gradually add brown sugar, the pumpkin, the vanilla, and the spices.

3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after adding each one.

4. Add the salt, beating until creamy, then pour the mixture evenly into the prepared crust.

5. Bake for 50-60 minutes, until top is browned but cheesecake is still slightly jiggly.
6. Transfer cheesecake to a wire rack and cool 10 minutes. Run a sharp knife around the edges of the pan sides to loosen cheesecake.

7. Cool completely, cover and refrigerate overnight.
Erin Colleen Snyder was born, herself a seed, on September 27th, 1985 in Iowa City, Iowa to Colleen and Don Snyder. She spent nearly every summer of her baby years, childhood and adolescence collecting sand dollars along the beaches of Maine with her sisters, Nell and Cara, and brother Jack. Erin graduated from Scarborough High School of Scarborough, Maine in June of 2003. Receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Theatre from The University of New Hampshire in Durham, Erin graduated from college Summa Cum Laude in May of 2007. And after a summer in Oregon, three seasons in New Jersey and a year in Spain, she found herself a student again, this time in an old Southern city along the James River. Erin received her Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia in May of 2011. She is a devoted sister, avid scribbler, and one heck of a baker.