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Creating a Mission
and Entrepreneurial Projects
for Theatre Artists

by Kelsey Rain Palmer

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Committee Approval

To the Graduate Faculty:

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Creating a Mission and Entrepreneurial Projects for Theatre Artists

Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2018)

Research suggests theatre artists may be lacking the vital business skills required in the 21st century. Artists and academics are examining the possibilities of arts entrepreneurship. Most practical accounts relate autobiographical experience in entrepreneurship. This paper focuses on my experiences writing, directing, and showcasing an original musical, and my creation of an entrepreneurial plan. I also analyzed the show as a Contemporary Tragedy using Aristotle's elements as a guide. Business skills should be taught in theatre programs from a practical standpoint to help artists gain autonomy in their careers. I have created my own endeavor through my mission statement, and will continue by bringing the musical *Don't Wake Up Dear* to high schools and Fringe festivals using the skills I have learned in planning, fundraising, and grant writing.

Key Word: Arts entrepreneurship. Aristotelian analysis. Original musical. Theatre career. Fundraising. Mission statement.

Introduction

In my second semester of graduate school, my professor Vanessa Ballam presented us with an assignment: The undergraduate students would perform a self-written monologue. This assignment was inspired by the article *Musical Theatre Students are Becoming Triple Threats* by Maggie Gilroy. Gilroy interviews professors currently teaching at universities with prestigious performance or music programs. These programs are encouraging performers to write and playwrights to become librettists. There is a push towards a larger range of skills. The article opens with Cincinnati Conservatory of Music musical theatre chair Aubrey Berg explaining how unrealistic it is to expect to be able to pack up, move to New York City and be discovered on Broadway in the current market.

“But even the old singing/dancing/acting triumvirate has expanded, as programs such as Pace University of NYC’s musical theatre program are now training their actors to follow the hyphenated lead of Lin-Manuel Miranda and Dave Malloy. And at some playwriting programs, students are being taught to follow the footsteps of writers like Marsha Norman and Sybille Pearson in crafting books for musicals as well as plays. Meanwhile some music conservatories are finding ways for vocal performance majors to expand their skill sets. After all, look at the path of two classically trained singers, Kelli O’Hara and Kristin Chenoweth” (Gilroy).

During the National Music Theatre Institute semester at Eugene O’Neil Theatre Center, students write and produce one act plays or musicals. This can earn them credit at Connecticut College. New York University and Yale university mandate classes on playwriting for performers and

classes on composition and libretto writing for playwrights (Gilroy). These programs attempt to expand students' perspectives helping them create original art.

My assignment as a graduate student was to perform a one act show composed of monologues and perhaps songs. I told my professor that I had a musical in my head filled with story-telling contemporary dance. I wanted to direct a show using movement instead of dialogue. I also had a juke box musical in my head inspired by my distaste for codependency. I spent years with a man who made me feel worthless and codependent. Before meeting him, I had always been a strong woman. After he was gone, I was able to find myself again, but I became more aware of the commonness of my issues. I observed people who had trouble enjoying and defining themselves outside of a relationship. All of these ideas combined into the same show. Ballam encouraged me to write this musical. I had no idea I was even capable. My education prior to this point was all in acting and vocal technique. I was not a composer. I was not a playwright. Yet when I sat down to write the show, songs poured from my hands as if I wasn't really writing them, but they were pulled from the collective unconscious—just as the first-person narrator says in *Don't Wake Up Dear*. I had no idea what I was doing, and somehow, a show flowed onto paper. It wasn't a great show by any analysis, but it was a start.

The show opens with two best friends auditioning for jobs. Alison auditions to be a dancer, while Eden auditions to sing at a lounge bar. Alison reveals her boyfriend has just proposed. The next scene opens on Alison and Eden waiting for the bus curbside—playfully nostalgic, yet ready to start their new lives. Alison's boyfriend, Levi, shows up one last time convincing her to marry him. In the next scene, Eden sings Alison's wedding song at her new job, while Alison and Levi get married. This scene and all other dance scenes occur in the bar. As Eden recounts her memories of working in the bar, she adds in Alison's memories through

dance. The character August makes his debut—playing guitar and singing the final chorus of Eden’s song. He sings with Eden for a moment, but then takes control creating his own riff and singing solo. Eden is annoyed wondering if he makes “a habit of ruining other people’s art” (*Don’t Wake Up Dear*). The two continue to banter and flirt. Before his final exit, August takes a job application. The next scene spans time. Eden trains August at the bar. She chastises him about his overdependence on relationships and educates him on the importance of dreams, self-confidence, and independence. The next scene opens with all four characters present in the same time and place for the first and only time. The characters are drinking and hanging out. This scene is full of humor and fun, but Levi gives a flash of his true colors when he won’t let Alison audition for another dance company. In the next scene, the tone shifts. Eden is upset at Alison for not auditioning for the dance company. She sings the song “Ready for Simplicity,” which depicts Eden’s struggle with love. She is unsure if she is ready for a simple life. “Simple” is consistently how Eden describes love throughout the show. At the same time, Alison and Levi display an abusive relationship through dance. The kind of abuse should be left to audience interpretation. The next scene flashes to present day. Eden shows the audience a painting of an orchid in water and a poem she found while cleaning out Alison’s bedroom. Alison’s art displays her deteriorating mental health, and Eden realizes she ignored Alison’s repeated pleas for help. Eden sings the title song, while Alison dances, finally standing up to Levi. He leaves her by the end of the dance. Alison calls Eden for comfort saying, “I don’t think I can be alive anymore. I need you Eden. Here. Now” (*Don’t Wake Up Dear*). Eden has finally received a record deal however, so she ignores Alison’s pleas. Eden sings the song “I Owe Myself a Love Song” committing to selfish lifestyle without August. Alison dances displaying her own suicide via medication. She leaves August behind remembering how both her mother and best friend were hurt by love. A

false ending depicts Eden imagining she had gone home to help Alison through an uplifting dance, but Eden falls back into reality. Alison is gone. Eden sits on the floor of her empty apartment and begs for forgiveness. She can't do anything but sit, relive memories, and sing song about Alison until she knows she is forgiven. Alison rises giving Eden energy through the dance—the way Eden imagined she should have done for Alison. Eden rises and turns to see her best friend. They smile at each other.

My favorite piece of the project was the way dance-storytelling intertwined with the plot and theme of the show. The song and dialogue became the memories Eden witnessed, and the dancing became Eden's imagination filling in the blanks of her best friend's story—reminiscent of the phrase “no one knows what goes on behind closed doors.” I say, “became” because I did not know this was the concept when I began writing, but in the end, it was this concept that made me fall in love with the show. It was this concept that let me know I had to finish the musical as my thesis project.

However, a thesis project needs a question. I could not simply perform the extensive research that goes into writing, acting, directing, and designing a self-ran passion project, but I had to find a problem that I was addressing in the world of theatre. I met with a couple of professors from Oklahoma University. I told them about my musical, and they told me they were attempting to get some curriculum in place inspired by similar ideals. They used the term Arts Entrepreneurship to describe their changes in the curriculum. This caught my interest, because over the years, I have developed a great interest in entrepreneurship. I am a single mother of two, so my eight years of higher education came with creative money-making measures. I ran a handful of businesses on the side putting myself through school. I ran a boutique and seamstress shop out of my house, I sold health care supplements, and I taught a studio of vocal students. I

was interested in getting better returns on my investments, so I focused on marketing and branding. In my research for this thesis, I found many schools are trying to keep up with the movement of entrepreneurship—both in theatre and in all other areas of schooling. It is simply a skill needed to keep working in most industries. This idea was emphasized in my personal life by a few years of applying for teaching positions I was well suited for. I researched and worked interview skills with career counselors and people who hire educators. I also had those people review my resume. I received universally positive feedback, yet when it came to getting an actual job, I did not. Secondary Education was supposed to be the safe route, yet generally it is difficult for most to obtain a job—even those with “safe” degrees. This is the world we live in. A world where if I want to be employed, I will need to know how to brand myself and create some work for myself. Additionally, my family situation has always kept me tied to Idaho, which isn’t where most people build their theatre careers from. This project taught me my location doesn’t have to hold me back from doing what I love. “Be flexible, creative and a little bit entrepreneurial and you can still make a career in your passion—it just may look different than what you thought” (Hoover).

The problem with the industry of theatre and many others is that there simply are not enough pies to go around. So, every now and again, a theatre artist or more likely a collaborative group of artists are going to have to bake their own pie. Everyone’s an individual. People have different strengths. An individual’s brand and entrepreneurial endeavors should reflect those strengths. How do artists in theatre tailor their artistic brand and entrepreneurial projects to their own strengths and their own personal and professional mission? This is the question I explore through the process of mounting the production *Don’t Wake Up Dear* and the process of creating my own brand and artistic business for a sustainable career as an artist.

Definition of Terms

Arts Entrepreneurship: Using business skills to create autonomy in a theatre artist's career.

There is an increasing volume of literature for actors wishing to use business skills to gain more work from others, but less literature on how theatre artists can create work for themselves.

Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, the goal is not necessarily to make a living off of one idea, but the goal is to make a living off of art.

Mission Statement: A purpose driven statement that guides business-planning, career-planning, and everyday life that draws in the interest of others—artistic and otherwise.

Theatre Artists: People work or wish to work in the world of theatre—designers, directors, playwrights, actors, etc.

Heightened Language: A rich, yet economic use of language which elevates the storyline through mixed diction—language that is sometimes decorative through metaphors and other figurative techniques, but sometimes realistic, and always easily comprehensible.

Tragedy: Aristotle's definition stands:

“Tragedy, then, is an imitation of a good action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By ‘language embellished’ I mean language into which rhythm, ‘harmony,’ and song enter.

By ‘several kinds in separate parts,’ I mean that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song” (Aristotle, 7).

Aristotle’s Elements of Tragedy: Aristotle suggested six elements of Tragedy: plot, character, diction, thought, song, and spectacle.

Review of Literature

While interest in arts entrepreneurship is budding, theoretical writing is sparse. There is a plethora of literature on entrepreneurship, but it was not applicable to my goals of achieving autonomy in my theatre career. However, I found several informative articles addressing how professionals in the arts are urging for universities to emphasize arts entrepreneurship. Also, some of those artists teach classes or write books on business for artists. Some of the literature contains practical application, but most address the importance of education rather than the skills needed. This may be because entrepreneurial skills are best learned through experience. What is most needed is a shift mindset. Artists can understand the power entrepreneurial skills gives them in their own careers.

Through researching, I found working professionals filling in the artistic business knowledge gap. Andrew Simonet, a choreographer, created a community called Artists U to help all artists, not just choreographers or dancers, look at their career as a business. He teaches others about grants, fundraising, mission statements, etc. He also encourages artists to insist on fair pay and to take whatever jobs necessary to get by. His book written for Artists U, *Making your Life as an Artist*, largely impacted this project. Another inspiration was Seth Lapore—a playwright performer who travels to universities as a guest artist teaching arts entrepreneurship skills. He teaches workshops on a large array of topics including “self-producing your own work,” “arts advocates and networking,” “public relations and marketing,” “grants,” “budgeting,” “crowd funding online and offline,” and touring colleges and festivals (sethums.com). Lapore’s writing wasn’t as applicable as Simonet’s. Lapore simply advocates for the importance of the workshops he teaches. These workshops would be highly pertinent to this applied project, but I was not able to attend one. Gilroy’s article, mentioned in the introduction, delves into the musical theatre

programs of Cicinnati College, Pace University, National Theatre Institute, Yale University, Oklahoma City University, and Baldwin Wallace University. Each program attempts to grow their graduates' skill sets—especially in the area of playwriting. This is to encourage more students to create original art.

“Programs are now aiming to prepare students for the current market, in which actors increasingly write their own shows, classically trained singers must master hip-hop dance breaks, and dancers are expected to act. From performance to playwriting, it is the interdisciplinary artist that is now the goal of educators” (Gilroy).

This article, full of expert opinion, once again advocated for the importance of diverse honed talents and entrepreneurial skill sets, but did not give a lot of applied information. A study was written by Jim Hart and Gary Beckman based on the Artistry and Artistic Innovation, National Conference. Twelve professionals in theatre and professors of arts entrepreneurship emphasize the importance of joining the movement to make theatre artist's entrepreneurs, like the “approximately [international] 130 colleges and universities” currently offering arts entrepreneurship coursework in theatre. Beckman and Hart cite a website analyzing arts entrepreneurship's contribution to world-wide economy:

“When someone says they're an artist or creative, the response usually is: "yes fine, but when are you going to get a real job?" But evidence from around the world shows that, far from being something nice on the side, art and creativity actually contribute significantly to the economy, especially if coupled with entrepreneurship.

According to the South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, the craft industry constitutes 15% of Morocco's GDP; Canadian cultural industries generate \$22billion and generate 670,000 jobs; in Mexico, cultural tourism contributes 6% to GDP; and in Australia, arts and culture contribute 3% to GDP, generating \$36million per annum” (Bizcommunity.com).

Beckman and Hart referenced another article on the creators of “Kickstarter” in Britain. After Perry Chen had to cancel a concert due to fundraising, he met with Yancy Strickler. They developed the idea to assist artists in crowdfunding (Salter, 2013). The platform was created by artists and is used by artists. There is a growing body of evidence arts entrepreneurship is a great way to fund art, make money, and contribute to the economy. Although useful, Beckman and Hart, like the previous resources, emphasized the importance of arts entrepreneurship without practical application. Their research was conducted as an attempt to sway artistic communities and universities to embrace arts entrepreneur education.

“What is this movement? More directly put, it is one of mass autonomy for emerging artists, working artists, and creative visionaries. Autonomy is self-governance, independence, and self-sufficiency. But entrepreneurial skills are that of creativity, imagining, envisioning, all skills that are just like that of an artist...What’s it for? This is a movement to equip our creative artists with entrepreneurial skills. What are entrepreneurial skills? They are skills of self-sufficiency, of autonomy and of business” (Beckman, Hart).

This trend crosses many disciplines with numerous examples of real life successes in the arts. Linda Essig writes the most research-oriented article exploring the origins of entrepreneurship and how it should be implemented in university theatre curricula. Essig specifically suggests entrepreneurship be taught by the specific college of each area rather than by a business school outside of departmental requirements. For theatre, she suggests teaching “negotiation”, “legal and tax issues for freelance artists”, and “venture creation” for those interested in starting their own arts business—i.e. “assessment of risk, development of a business plan, financing, marketing, and management” (120). A newspaper article in 2014 interviewed a number of working artists in all areas: They emphasized the need for artists to accept that their jobs will not always be in the arts (that’s just the nature of the beast), but also, they may need to be creative and create their own opportunities.

“But some recent university graduates and fine arts faculty have words of advice to budding musicians, actors and artists now with high school diploma in hand: Be flexible, creative and a little bit entrepreneurial and you can still make a career in your passion—it just may look different than what you thought” (Hoover, 2014).

Essig emphasizes the importance of implementation, explaining how she implements arts entrepreneurship education at Arizona State University. The school has students write proposals for entrepreneurial projects. If the students are approved, they receive funding to implement their idea (123). Many business programs are beginning to take this approach as well. Students may need the opportunity to experience entrepreneurship, because so much is learned through trial and error.

Arts entrepreneurship represents a new way of thinking. There are many examples of how artists have used these skills to make careers for themselves and many articles advocating for university curriculum in arts entrepreneurship. Most of the applicable writing on arts entrepreneurship is found in books written by working professionals. The handful of books geared towards practical arts entrepreneurship are *Promoting your Acting Career* (Alterman), *Making your Life as an Artist, Acting as a Business: Strategies for Success* (O' Neil), and *Act like it's your Business: Branding and Marketing Strategies for Actors* (Flow). Alterman focuses on auditioning, marketing, networking, internet promotion, etc. for actors in 1999. Three chapters resonated with me: A chapter on producing your own plays, another on one-man productions, and finally a chapter on launching your own theatre company. Alterman, an actor and playwright, has accomplished similar tasks over the years. Additionally, he interviews a group of people with applied experience in each individual chapter. Many discuss how much work it was to learn the business aspect of theatre, but also how empowering it was to be in control of fundraising, budgeting, and hiring. O'Neil's book from 1999 is another one of the first books instructing actors on the business side of acting. His book focuses on the ins and outs of being an actor—i.e. headshots, resumes, actor's unions, finding an agent, and finding work on stage or in film. Flow gets slightly more specific to modern acting business practices in 2017. The first half of the book focuses on branding, but this branding doesn't have a lot to do with entrepreneurship or mission. The brand Flow suggests narrowing down is that of character type. The second half focuses on overall actor responsibilities related to business: auditioning, agents, casting directors, equity, networking, and residential location. The most contemporary theatre entrepreneurship trends suggest an approach closer to Simonet's book, which is focused not on theatre but overall artist entrepreneurship. He discusses how he used day jobs to get by while

creating collaborations with other choreographers for money. In addition to choreographing, they started a studio, eventually they accredited the studio through the local university. This allowed them to charge more for classes. He also discusses other possibilities for making money like touring campuses for workshops. His book is about making connections and continuing to make art no matter what the situation. These books were the most applicable to this thesis.

The research and professional opinion I gathered shows that theatre artists are not always getting the business training they need, but many artists who venture out into the business side are able to build their own careers. This study will focus on the how-to of career planning and career execution for a specific set of talents. Through my own work and observations, I will show one way someone can bake their own pie.

Process of Playwriting

Artists must tailor their own pursuits to their own strengths and mission when working on entrepreneurial projects. My mission was crafted alongside this musical, but it's important to share:

“Focused on weaving the connective tissue through the audience's collective unconscious, creating a space where everyone is one: Using just the right amount of avant-garde to inspire self-actualization beyond ego through writing, directing, acting, and teaching theatre that does not neglect the power of kinesthetic and musical storytelling” (kelseyrain.com).

This piece embodies literally everything I strive to do, which explains why it grew to be so close to my heart. I was given a vehicle to both try to make an impact with art and showcase myself as a musical theatre actress. I wanted people to question their relationship to relationships. Additionally, I was able to portray a role, for the first time in a long time, which aligned with my character type in the professional world and showcased me as an artist. I often play older roles, but in cast calls, I am more suited for edgy, witchy, or powerful adult women. Eden is a little bit younger than me, but much closer to the roles for which I am considered for outside of educational and community theatre. This role allowed for me to express passion for art (Eden has tunnel vision for her love of music) and sing music that showcased my vocal and dramatic range and technique.

I began by reading some playwriting books long before I ever received the inciting assignment in the Problems in Acting course or felt obliged to turn the project into my thesis

work. The one that resonated the most was *Playwriting: From Formula to Form* (Downs & Wright). I used the exercises in the book to outline a show that genuinely looked nothing like what *Don't Wake Up Dear* became, but this was my starting place. This play was inspired by a Mika juke box musical in my head (all music albums become juke box musicals in my head), but I couldn't get the permission to write it. I even attempted contacting Mika through his agents and twitter, but I received no response. This is to be expected. He is a well-known artist, particularly in Europe. In the jukebox musical, a bartender observes his two best friends. One wants to be an actress, and one wants to be a dancer. The dancer chooses marriage over opportunity and eventually, her husband leaves. The actress gives up and becomes a porn star. By the end of the show, they get back to their roots, help each other be more independent, and live better lives. When I went to turn this into a play, it looked much different. The big event the play opened on was supposed to be a wedding. My final influence was a desire to direct a musical that was a bit closer to a dance piece. I wanted the story to evolve from the movement. Then I realized, all of this was the same idea. This was the idea I discussed with my professor, Vanessa Ballam, who encouraged me to write it for my Problems in Acting final. I had no idea how to write music, so naturally, I was terrified.

I started by writing the melodies and lyrics while drumming on my steering wheel in my car. I stole a song I wrote for my own personal expression on my piano earlier that year. All the other songs just poured out in a way that really worked for this show. I wrote the songs emphasizing my own strengths. I wanted Eden to be a character that showcased me as an artist. My own compositional knowledge gaps made the accompaniment simple, but considering the actors have to accompany themselves, it grew to bother me less. What if someone cast has Eden has to learn to play piano for the role? Then my "childish arrangement" allows that (*Don't Wake*

Up Dear). I do intend on developing the musical elements more in the future. I am currently working with someone who has more experience in composing musicals.

After writing the libretto, the plot I was left with looked a little less like the formula suggested in *Playwriting: From Formula to Form*. However, their suggestions are still what I use when analyzing or writing dramatic material. I reanalyzed the show with the same structure once the project was completed. The stasis is two best friends working towards their dreams. The big event the show opens on is their audition day. Eden auditions for a lounge bar singing position, and Alison auditions to be a dancer in a company. The inciting incident happens before the opening of the show. Right before their auditions, Levi proposes to Alison. We learn about this in the opening scene between Alison and Eden. I consider Alison the protagonist of the show, and Levi or codependency as the Antagonist of the show. Eden is similar to the chorus or narrator with her own subplot. She serves as an antithesis to Alison. The turning point is when Alison decides to engage with the conflict or her codependent love of Levi. He proposes for a second time, and she says “ok.” Alison is more concerned with not being alone and living a happy life with her husband than she is with chasing her dreams. The conflict resides in Levi and Alison having a very unhealthy codependent relationship based in control. This prevents Alison from getting the love and company she desires. Eden is concerned with living her dreams at all costs. This is why she serves as Alison’s opposite. She does whatever it takes to get what she wants. Both girls perhaps go a step too far with their life pursuits, and the audience gets to see this. The rising action is short as this musical is a one act. Eden falls for a man who she feels could keep her from her dreams. Alison’s relationship with her husband gets worse and worse until Levi leaves her, eventually motivating Eden to move for a record deal without her romantic interest, August. The climax is when Eden decides to leave August, and Alison commits suicide.

The musical has a bit of a twist with a false resolution. Eden imagines she had “drove the two hours home, picked Alison up off the floor, and taught her to take care of herself” (*Don’t Wake Up Dear*). This story is told through a dance. Eden lifts Alison up off the floor. Eden uses movement to give her energy and teaches Alison to do this for herself—to be independent. Then Alison stumbles falling back to the floor, and Eden is pulled back to reality. Her best friend is gone, and she didn’t do what she should have. Alison’s last cry for help repeat in Eden’s head: “I don’t think I can be alive anymore. I need you Eden. Here. Now. I need you Eden. I need you Eden. I need you” (*Don’t Wake Up Dear*).

This wasn’t the original story. Alison was supposed to be picked up off the ground and taught to be independent. When I finished writing the script, I thought: Why are all of the songs and scenes completely grounded in realism, and Alison’s dancing totally abstract movement story-telling? My motivations for the movement story-telling was partially inspired by my love for movement story-telling, but I wanted the audience to imprint their own unhealthy relationship experiences onto Alison and Levi. I heard from repeated audience members, from both the workshop in 2017 and the performances in 2018, this was quite successful. Regardless, I still felt there was a reason for this realism and abstract disconnect. I realized Alison’s not here. Eden tells Alison’s story, because she is not here anymore. The dancing signifies Eden attempts to fill in the blanks of memories she did not witness. The dancing is the narrator’s blurred imaginative recreation of Alison’s life. Eden sees Alison now and forevermore as a dancer.

From this, the framework was built. The show now opens with Eden in her new apartment reminiscing about Alison. In my mind, the whole musical occurs in Eden’s head. Eden is at home, singing “songs of Alison,” and reliving memories she feels guilt over (*Don’t Wake up Dear*). She’s telling us Alison’s story, because she has to forgive herself to move on. The

moment Eden asks “God or whatever” to tell Alison she’s sorry is the moment of catharsis (*Don’t Wake up Dear*). Current generations do not feel pity or fear for the same things ancient Greek people did. We may not often fear being victims of our fate destined to us by the Gods, but we do fear ourselves or one of our closest friends committing suicide.

Which brings me to the next work that was critical in the development of this musical: Aristotle’s *Poetics*. I had already completed the first draft and workshop in 2017 when I realized that I was working with a contemporary tragedy. Many argue contemporary tragedies no longer exist, but for my purposes, they do. The tools I use as a writer should be the tools that best serve the story I am trying to tell. In order to strengthen the plot structure, characterization, diction, and musicality of *Don’t Wake Up Dear*, I analyzed the musical through Aristotle’s *Poetics* as a contemporary tragedy. I rewrote the musical using this analysis. The analysis surprisingly helped me feel comfortable with a lot of my choices, but inspired changes here and there. Aristotle defines tragedy in the *Poetics*:

“Tragedy, then, is an imitation of a good action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By ‘language embellished’ I mean language into which rhythm, ‘harmony,’ and song enter. By ‘several kinds in separate parts,’ I mean that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song” (Aristotle, 7).

This definition focuses not only on the action of the Tragedy, but also the embellished language in both dialogue and song: Dramatic musicals which cause the purging of pity and fear are the modern adaptations of Aristotle's definition of Tragedy. By music, he was referring to the rhythms and harmonies in a ritual drone-like quality of the chorus, but this was still music. Also, the choruses would have most likely danced. Now I use music to refer to the contemporary definitions of music. *Don't Wake Up Dear* blends a singer-songwriter style with musical theatre and chords reflecting trends in Jazz.

Aristotle considered Plot to be the most important element of Tragedy—the real poetry in drama lie in the story itself. A listener should be moved by a summary of the plot. The plot must have a beginning, middle, and end with one unifying action—meaning that if an event in the story is removed, the story can no longer stand. While the original script of *Don't Wake up Dear* is episodic (Aristotle defines this as the worst kind of plot), I also based the plot on a formula recommended in *From Formula to Form*. This formula is largely based on Aristotle's "parts of plot" (Aristotle, 14). I analyzed the plot earlier, but I want to take a closer look at Alison as a heroin. The Protagonist Alison's action is interrupted by a marriage proposal from her boyfriend. This action is the reversal: "A reversal is a change in the actions to their opposite" (Aristotle, 14). *From Formula to Form* suggests this also be a Protagonist decision that leads to their downfall. Alison decides to marry Levi, instead of taking this job at a traveling dance company.

Recognition is when the Protagonist changes from "ignorance to knowledge" (Aristotle, 14). This is where it gets tricky. In the original script, there is not a moment for this. The husband leaves the codependent ex-dancer alone and depressed (as a codependent person would be). After the Aristotle analysis, I worked in a more specific reason for Alison's husband to leave. Manipulative people do not like it when someone begins to see through them and take

control of the situation. The dance to the song “Don’t Wake Up Dear” is her moment of clarity. She sees what kind of relationship she is in and fights back. She additionally tries to level with Levi and become true partners. This causes him to leave. He can no longer fulfill his needs with her. Levi is inspired by someone I knew with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. While I did not direct or write the show to depict this, I did write the show to depict some of the characteristics of this disorder. Many women experience gas-lighting or manipulation. Many people experience emotional or physical abuse in relationships. I was most inspired by the overall lack of empathy and codependency I experienced in my own relationship, because it is a relationship dynamic I often see repeated in those I love around me. Levi is dependent upon Alison to be the wife he expects or to accept his abuse or to bolster his self-worth. She fails to do so, and he leaves. His motivations are left open to interpretation. This still leaves the woman who is codependent upon the man broken, but perhaps more humanized and relatable to an audience.

The most obvious connection is Alison’s “suffering.” After the Reversal and Recognition, comes “a destructive or painful action” (Aristotle, 15). The codependent Alison is left without her husband, best friend, or dancing, and she commits suicide. This might seem drastic to someone who has not experienced a codependent manipulative relationship, but a manipulated person can lose sight of themselves. She has nothing left. Sutton and Painter expanded on “Traumatic Bonding Theory” by interviewing 75 women coming out of abusive relationships. The women are consistently strongly bonded to a partner who shows both great behavior and abusive behavior off and on throughout a relationship. This bond decreases slowly over time (1993). This particular study focuses on physically abusive partners, but “Traumatic Bonding Theory” applies to those with emotionally abusive histories as well. Those who have not experienced this often have a hard time grasping the love these women have for their

partners, but the results of these relationships are consistent. These women don't necessarily commit suicide, but I know women who have tried after an abusive man leaves them. Alison succeeds. This moment can strike pity and fear in an audience as many people have had friends commit suicide or worry about their friends committing suicide or have considered it themselves. The Tragedy is in the relevance to a modern audience.

The quantitative parts of Tragedy are harder to pinpoint as the musical does not use a chorus nor does it use traditional forms of processional and stationary songs. The piece of the plot it clarifies is the best friend Eden. I based both the Formula and the Aristotle analysis on Alison. Then why do Eden and August exist in the script? Eden is the chorus. She sings the music that not only comments on her own life, but her best friend's life as well. She is given the sole power of crossing through flashbacks and present time. She sings about moments she was not present for and narrates events. This chorus has a subplot. This gives Eden motivation to sing in her memories, as well as in present time commentary. She lives a dual presence throughout the script, because she is retelling the story of her best friend's death. Originally August did not exist, but I had trouble motivating Eden's actions and songs without another character for her to interact with. I did not want to remove him for clarity, even after the Aristotle analysis showed him as not a part of the Tragedy. Partially because August has been a quite successful likeable character, but mostly because Eden does become the main character after the show is over. Eden's character is so intertwined in Alison's story, the story is handed to Eden. Eden is able to forgive herself and carry the memory of Alison with her. I believe this makes her a better person, but the musical ends with a smile between Eden and Alison leaving the future open to interpretation. Subplots aren't allowed in Aristotle's *Poetics*. This analysis helped me intertwine Eden's subplot even more. In order to still be a tragedy, Eden's story must not be able to be

removed without affecting the main plot. In my rewrites, I made sure Alison really asked for Eden, and Eden's own plot kept her from coming to Alison's aid. It is still a subplot, but Eden's story is necessary for Alison's story to make sense. August is necessary for Eden's story to make sense. Once I had a professor tell me that because Eden comes forward and addresses the audience directly, it must be her story, not Alison's. As a good friend and director said at one of our rehearsals, "that's like saying *Our Town* is about the stage manager." I completely agree.

Moving into character, Aristotle saw character as the second most important component. Contemporary theorists argue character is now the most important component of a show in general. Aristotle suggested tragic characters be good, appropriate, life-like, and consistent. While much of the original intent of this is outdated (we no longer need strive to make women not "so manly or clever"), it also can be used in a modern sense. Alison is a good person with a dependency upon relationships, which is something that can be observed in modern society—making her "life-like." The characters should simply be appropriate to themselves. If the character is a lower class uneducated character, they should act as such. Alison is young and at least middle class. She behaves appropriately within her own characterization. The only character that did not live up to these standards originally is Levi. He fit Aristotle's idea of "unnecessary villainy." In order to add some dimension, his manipulation had to be motivated. I tried to make it clearer that his tactics are simply to fulfill his own vision of a normal life. I wish to go a little further with this as it was mostly displayed in the choreography. In my experience, people who manipulate and lash out at their partners are simply attempting to force them to fulfill their expectations. This doesn't eliminate his villainy, but at least explains his actions.

Aristotle addresses how characters propel the plot. They must seek out what is probable. Character motivation makes this simple to do. Each character must fight for what they want,

what they want is consistent with their character, and what they want is relatable to a modern audience. This motivated fight causes the action in the play. Alison wants to be loved. Levi wants Alison to fulfill his expectations of a wife. Eden wants to become a known singer-song writer. August wants Eden. All four characters spend the entire show fighting for these things with the exception of Alison having the conflicting want, primarily in the beginning, of being a professional dancer.

Reasoning is the shortest section of *Poetics*. Contemporary translations call this the thought or theme, but this is an oversimplification of Aristotle's ideas:

“As for reasoning, what was said about it in my rhetoric should be assumed; for this is proper rather to that enquiry. All that have to be produced by speech fall under reasoning. The types of these are (i) demonstration and refutation, (ii) the production of emotions, and again (iii) importance or unimportance” (Aristotle, 25).

Reasoning includes not only what argument or thought is embedded in the words, but also relevancy and emotional responses produced by speech. An idea for a plot and theme began the development of *Don't Wake up Dear*. I saw in others and myself a dependency upon relationships. The juke box musical in my head explored choosing relationships over dreams or self-actualization and vice versa. This became the concept of the musical. As I wrote the script, it quickly became colored with my own experience instead of just bringing my Plot form outline to life. In the end, the additional theme of responding to suicidal thoughts arose. I used this as a basis for fundraising and creating an important playbill—filled with research based tips for responding to ourselves or our loved ones in these situations.

After the show, I had four separate women tell me afterwards, “I could have been Alison.” Additionally, I had many people tell me they really connected to Eden, because her dreams kept her from wanting relationships, and she had a mentally unstable friend to worry about. They related either to her independence or her relationship to Alison. I had some people say they saw physical abuse, and others say they saw emotional abuse. One man said, “I really saw more of an emotionally abusive relationship, because of the way my parents would fight while I was growing up.” Another man said, “We’ve all been a Levi at open point in our lives.” I hadn’t even considered people could recognize their controlling behavior through Levi. This specific response made me feel the show was worth sharing. My goal was to connect to people, and their own experiences using the story and themes. Many of the audience members were crying as they walked out of the theatre, so this seemed to be successful.

Aristotle does not necessarily emphasize diction (despite it being the second longest section of the *Poetics*): He instead emphasizes how the patterns of action in a story create poetry more than words do. While Aristotle makes it clear the plot is what drives the purgation of pity and fear, it needs to be examined how the ordinary and strange word choices add to plot, character, and audience Catharsis. Aristotle did address the need for believable speech within poetic verse: “Diction to be good should be clear without being common.” Aristotle discusses the need for mixed diction:

“What we need is a mixed diction. On the one hand, the use of unusual, metaphorical, ornamental words, and of the other kinds mentioned above, avoids commonness and colloquialism; current vocabulary, on the other hand, makes for clarity. Lucid yet noncolloquial language results in large part from using nouns in lengthened, shortened, or

altered forms, for these, while avoiding the colloquial by being unusual, yet remain near enough the usual to retain clarity” (Aristotle, 47).

In viewing diction as needing the dual function of clarity and beauty, Metaphor becomes an important component. “Metaphor intentionally combines the two [the ordinary and the foreign, strange, and exotic] by using the ordinary in a strange or exotic way. Metaphor is a transfer or displacement of the ordinary” (Davis, 124). Therefore, good diction rides the line between decorative and clear in order to add to the story. If Tragedy is action that allows a purging of pity and fear in the audience then language is the vehicle at which that action often occurs.

In observing *Don't Wake Up Dear*, I noticed a good start on mixing the ordinary with extraordinary in language. Most of the extravagant and metaphorical language choices were in the music, but I kicked that all up a notch in the rewrite. Eden, August, and Alison all swear and chit chat like normal friends, but have moments of heightened language for a specific reason. Eden uses some of her songs to tell stories and other songs to create metaphor. The biggest metaphor in the show resides in the title song: “Dear Alison please rest/You’ll dance again tomorrow/But for tonight dream in peace one more night/Don’t wake up dear/Don’t wake up dear/Sleep in peace” (*Don't Wake Up Dear*). Eden begs Alison not to wake up. And to sleep peacefully. In this scene, she both quotes lines in Levi’s final letter to Alison and sings to Alison in her present state—gone, but remembered in Eden’s apartment. She asks her not to wake up and to remain in peace. Both in the moment of the break up, but also in the afterlife. Eden sings in metaphors in two other songs “Lift Me Up” and “Being the One.” The metaphors always painting Eden’s negative vision of love clearly. “So lift me up/And make me blind/Lift me up/And close my eyes/Don’t let me fall/And help me rise/Oh it’s not stupid/I’m just lonely”

(*Don't Wake Up Dear*). The song "Being the One" was added partially to fill in the joy of the show. My second rewrite included a lot more love and comedy, but this song was also inspired my analysis of diction. It was written almost entirely in metaphors: "In the walls of my room I feel it/I can't open the door/But it's here...If people are trees than we are oak/'Cause we are made the same/And maybe needing someone there/It isn't quite that lame" (*Don't Wake Up Dear*). The heightened language extends into the dialogue however. Whenever Eden gets excited about something, she gets slightly poetic. The ideas that excite her are music and independence. Eden expresses her opinions on relationships a lot more eloquently than she normally speaks in a scene between her and August:

“August

Yeah. That one. She seemed nice enough at first, so I followed her to college.

Eden

Just a typical codependent lovesick boy. I thought you might be better than that?

August

Oh so you don't care about anyone but yourself then?

Eden

I care about other people. I just also know that if I don't take care of myself, no one will. And if I don't believe in my talents and aspirations, no one will do it for me. The world is full of nonbelievers and lovesick people who don't know their own worth. I won't be one of them.

August

Well that explains a lot. I don't see love as weakness. Right move. Wrong girl.

Eden

I don't mean it like that. I don't think you're weak. I just think you have to take care of yourself first. Find your own peace. Create your own world. Then worry about everyone else. You cannot pour from an empty glass" (*Don't Wake Up Dear*).

Eden also gets excited about music referring to the "collective unconscious," which later translates into my mission statement. Eden also reads a poem by Alison, which I added after analyzing the diction of the musical. I wrote the poem earlier in my life, when I wasn't as mentally sound as I am now and was going through similar experiences to Alison's. Alison discusses walking through a stream and the stream shifting to reflect her own state of consciousness:

"...The peaceful waters begin to change:

They look more like me.

The water bubbles as it stirs in the rocks

And begins to move upstream.

The sounds of the stream mindlessly buzz

The same buzz I hear when I can't remember where I am.

I splash against every rock inside myself.

I'm in here somewhere" (*Don't Wake Up Dear*).

Alison is using the stream as a metaphor for her mental instability. This metaphor, and/or my presentation of the metaphor as Eden, seemed to have a powerful effect on the audience. I saw a

handful of people tear up each night. That is the power of diction. The story needs a vehicle to present itself. That vehicle is movement, but also words.

Aristotle says the least about music in the *Poetics*. He basically addresses that music is a one expression of language, and that music is the element of Tragedy that brings the most pleasure to an audience. Yet, the power music has on the emotions is universally accepted, even though the exact causes of this continue to be studied. “Nearly everyone enjoys listening to music. Why? Undoubtedly, because music moves the emotions” (Johnson-Laird, 13). It’s interesting contemporary performances of Greek Tragedy ignore this element. It may have a lot to do with Aristotle’s down playing of music’s role in Tragedy. Yet, if music is the mainly pleasurable part of a Tragedy, it may be needed to help the audience’s attention and to help move the audience’s emotions—particularly if the music can be used to drive plot and character. Repeated studies have shown music is a huge part of self-regulated emotional discharge in people’s everyday lives. In Qualitative Interviews and questionnaires, they found in several studies, “Listeners employ music to regulate, enhance, and change qualities and levels of emotions. They show considerable awareness about the music they need to hear in different situations to induce particular emotions.” Brain imaging research shows people reacting emotionally to music. Hanslick addresses music’s “pathological effect.” Music moves people emotionally particularly when the music relates to personal experiences *or* when the listener is already in a particular emotional state (Kivy, 111). According to even “the arch enemy of musical emotions” (Kivy, 111), when the audience is led to a particular emotional state by the way the tragic plot is presented then the related music should increase the emotional release. When used correctly, music adds to Catharsis. The power of musical theatre productions is they can put the audience in a specific emotional state, then use songs emphasizing that emotional

state, all while still propelling the plot to reach the audience on a deeper human level. The area of music is now the weakest component of *Don't Wake Up Dear*, and I will continue to add to it as I further develop the show. I would like to hire a composer to write better piano parts for Eden. However, the music is effectively used to stir emotions by relating to both Alison and Eden's story and by giving the dancers emotionally associated background to dance to.

Aristotle says little on spectacle. While this section of *Poetics* exists, it is not an important element. Aristotle thought those who used the spectacle rather than the plot to trigger the audience had no business writing tragedy. "For Aristotle, pity and fear in response to tragedy should not arise principally from how things *look*, but from the dramatic action, which need not be seen, but need merely be contemplated in order to be effective" (Dadlez, 354). This seems reasonable, but in this musical, the spectacle is also the plot. After my first workshop of *Don't Wake Up Dear*, I knew the spectacle was the most successful aspect. While the technical aspects were highly simplistic, the movement was eloquent and evocative. The movement also was a vehicle for the action to occur. In my musical, the movement is a huge piece of the plot and the theme. This makes the spectacle monstrously more important than Aristotle imagined it would be. This worked well immediately, so I did not make any changes to the script based on this area of analysis.

Dramatic critiques and playwrights continue to argue about whether or not Tragic works are still being written. Can it really be a tragedy if the show does not follow the structure Aristotle wrote about or if the show is not discussing royalty? Aristotle's writings were not a set of instructions, but rather an observation of the greatest works he'd seen. Additionally, many contemporary works still follow most of what he wrote about—including *Don't Wake Up Dear*.

While the show is episodic, which Aristotle says is the worst kind of theatre, it does follow all of the structural guide posts. When each piece of Aristotle's definition of tragedy is broken up, it still applies to *Don't Wake Up Dear*. This musical is "an imitation of a good action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" (Aristotle, 7). While this is exceptionally vague, the action of a talented kind girl choosing love, which becomes unhealthy, over her dreams is imitated. While we no longer have Gods and Princesses to speak of, we do have large moments in our everyday lives. Huge decisions that affect us and everyone around us. Alison is an overall good person who made a choice to engage with something that led to her downfall. Her one gaping flaw being a need to not be alone. This imitation is displayed through ordinary and embellished language, and also, song and dance. This piece leads to a purgation of pity and fear in the audience. This is the purpose of Tragedy. Theatre evolves in structure, but not always in purpose. Instead of critiquing structure, the purpose of the piece of theatre must be observed. Joseph Wood Krutch who I felt made a compelling argument *against* tragedy's continued existence said: "Tragedy is essentially an expression not of despair, but of the triumph over despair and of confidence in the value of human life." The final scenes confirm this musical's position as a Tragedy. In the moments where Eden begs a God she doesn't necessarily believe in for help, the audience sees themselves either as the person who is gone and couldn't handle life or the friend who didn't do what she needed to do for a suicidal friend. Then Eden imagines or sees Alison forgiving her. They smile at each other. They are able to move on in peace and with hope. "Though its conclusion, by its premise outwardly calamitous, though it must speak to those who know that the good man is cut off and that the fairest things are the first to perish, yet it must leave them, as Othello does, content that this is so" (Krutch). Alison is a good person who makes a few poor choices. In the end, she has committed suicide, and her best friend is left

behind blaming herself. Although this seems awful, the show leaves the audience with hope through a simple smile. A contemporary audience feels fear and pity for different conflicts than an ancient Greek audience would. Artists have to accept this to move on with the genre, because audiences still need to see the triumph over despair, the value of human life, and purge these feelings they don't always want to think about. Arguing about Tragedies existence in contemporary theatre defeats the purpose of the Tragedy. We still need theatre that helps new generations see the power of human life.

I will continue to consider *Don't Wake Up Dear* a Tragedy. The societal norms and dramatic expectations change, but drama's ability to help us purge pity and fear are universal. And again, I use the tools best suited for a particular story-telling when analyzing my own work. Alison knocked on my door and told me, "I didn't make it, and my story's a tragedy," so I listened.

Process of Directing

Directing the piece was not my main intent, but in a busy department and amongst busy artist careers, sometimes small passion projects have to be self-governed. I attempted to find a co-director with shared responsibility and a lightened work-load. No one was available. I asked a friend for help, but she became more of a stage manager. The biggest challenge was wearing so many creative hats at once. I headed directing, marketing, and design. I would have been able to cover more ground in every area if I had less responsibilities, but I did what I had to to get the piece up and out there. I was happy I did this at the end of the day. Directing the musical allowed me to realize I enjoyed writing and directing, but not acting in anything I had any part in writing or conceptualizing. I have long known I feel a stronger desire to write and direct than to act, but my talents and experience make me more likely to gain work as an actress, so I keep acting as an area of my resume. Additionally, I worked around my overly full plate by experimenting with an incredibly collaborative directing style. I loved collaborating. I hated not being able to watch the show.

For this production, I was only able to watch and adjust the choreography/movement storytelling. I prerecorded all of the music prior to choreographing, so I could have a stronger presence in the movement story-telling aspect. We still choreographed in a highly collaborative way, but I was able to give specific feedback on story-telling. For a few rehearsals, I called in guests to help by watching the show, asking questions for clarity, and helping with scene work. It was quite difficult to wear the director hat when I couldn't see, and it was quite difficult to act when my mind was in a hundred places at once. In continuing work on this production, I will probably continue to play Eden for convenience's sake, but hopefully this will be the last, not monologue based drama, I direct and perform in.

The first challenge of this piece is the casting. Each character needs to be multi-talented. Eden must be able to play the piano, play the ukulele, sing, and act a fairly demanding role. I played Eden in this production. This was difficult, but it helped with the limited rehearsal time to not have to teach anyone Eden's large repertory of song and accompaniment. Levi was the only other actor carried over from the workshop performance in 2017. The original Alison and August were either busy or relocated. Levi has to be able to dance, lift women, and give some humanity to a difficult role. I found him by asking a dance faculty member to recommend a man who could dance well and do crazy lifts. I had confidence in myself to help along his acting. She recommended Aaron Peite. I had never met him, but when I contacted him through Facebook, he was excited and jumped on board. He has stuck around on the same project for a year now. I am blown away by his talent, passion, and commitment. I was probably over confident that I could get good acting out of dancers, but he did come quite a long way after I got way more specific with my feedback than I've ever been with actors. We helped him along by finding different ways to get him to fight for what he wanted. I used a couple motivation exercises from Vanessa Ballam. Chandler Fehr and I restrained him while he fought to get away and delivered his proposal. I also had him turn tactics into movements—matching his words with the movements he was doing. He finally reached a breaking point once I started talking to him more specifically about the control Levi needs to have. He also gained energy once he had an actress playing Alison giving him a lot more to work with.

Alison needs to be able to dance, but also bring life to a character who might be difficult to play without falling into a stereotypical depressed character trap. The audience has to see her go from lively and loving with a big dream to someone who is so codependent and capable of taking her own life. I struggled to get this out of each Alison I worked with until the actress I had

the last week of rehearsals before opening: Cami Dougal. The actress who developed Alison dropped the show right before opening night due to severe illness. Cami came to me as a friend of the actor playing August. She was just someone willing to learn a role in a week. She was not a dancer, but I got lucky, and she did a fabulous job.

August must be able to act, play guitar and Ukulele, and sing. The actor who offered to play the role after a couple possibilities fell through was a fellow playwright. He had read my show to make suggestions and just enjoyed the story—particularly August. He also is a great musician. I ended up collecting actors instead of having auditions because of these diverse and specific needs. Ideally, someday I would be able to offer compensation and better experience credits to hold auditions and get performers who could meet these demands.

After casting, we moved into rehearsals. I began with character exercises based in movement and questioning. I wanted my cast to have a really solid understanding of who they were, where they came from, and what they were fighting for before the rehearsal process started. I had the cast travel around the theatre as their chosen character animal, travel around the theatre in a personified version of that chosen animal, and randomly draw body parts and types of movement to pair with their chosen descriptive words for their character. We also sat in a circle discussing our character's back stories and motivations. For this rehearsal, I had yet another Alison that did not continue on with the process, but I feel this rehearsal informed the actors playing Levi and August greatly.

A big part of rehearsals was choreographing. I was inspired by Merce Cunningham's chance dance, but the final product had nothing to do with the main ideas of his choreography. I would tell the actors/dancers what my vision for the story of each song was. We would brainstorm descriptive words or steal Eden's song lyrics then pair the words with a randomly

drawn body part and movement type or quality of movement. The actors and I would all draw and create a few phrases. An example from the show would be when the original actress playing Alison drew the words manipulate, knees, and flick. The movement she decided on was Levi pushing her from behind with two hits to the air. Then buckled one knee with each hit. Then they repeated a flick-like movement from a previous solo—as if Levi was controlling her as a puppeteer. Another example was when I drew the words: drowning, drag, and foot, while we were choreographing “I Owe Myself a Love Song.” This is the song where Alison commits suicide. The movement became Alison dragging her foot and moving her arms like she was swimming. Then her foot would drag through and kick in between each stroke. We would create movement together, and I would tweak it to be more specific to the story-telling. Then, I would use their phrases to create the plot of each specific song by placing them in logical with connective tissue movement needed at times.

In a few songs, Aaron Peite was instrumental in developing or connecting ideas in the movement. I would say I need something percussive and intricate here; he would come up with a phrase to fill that need. He also is a traditionally trained dancer. As the dance captain, he was helpful in developing each Alison’s dance technique. It was wonderful teamwork from everyone. The experience of choreographing collaboratively was completely positive. I am sure I will implement it again in the right situation. In the end, each song became a descriptive dance story telling.

We blocked the show. We did this mostly together as well. I gave the actors entrances, exits, and general stage areas. The rest of the blocking developed from there. Then I had guests, Vanessa Ballam and Sam Lyle, come in to give me notes on clarity of story-telling and scene work. The show needed a little more rehearsal time right before opening, but we were in good

shape to get there. The final challenge I encountered was the loss of an Alison in my cast due to illness. I had to cancel opening night and find a new Alison. Cami learned the whole show in less than week. Luckily because everything had been staged and choreographed, it was easier to input her as the lead. However, I am incredibly lucky to have found a hard-working actress committed to learning a role so quickly. She put on a beautiful performance giving Alison all the life I had been asking for from each previous actress.

Don't Wake Up Dear allowed me to paint a story as Eden. Despite my struggles, it definitely showcased me as an actress and a writer in alignment with my mission in both life and theatre. Alison and Levi used counterbalance lifts, jumps, isolated movements, and character/story based bodily connections to tell a story. I witnessed tears in the audience during the show when Eden addressed the audience directly and after the show as the audience exited. Several women told me how they could have been Eden or Alison afterwards. The connect ability of the piece seemed to be a success.

As I continue to work on this piece, I have some challenges I am facing as a director. I want to continue working with myself and the other actors on listening and responding. They must hear the lines for the first time every time. We also can continue fighting for what we really want in each scene. This all was definitely close to where it needed to be. I especially enjoyed the light-hearted sections of the show, but there is still some basic fine tuning in the acting needed. Additionally, I didn't not infuse enough passion into the show as a director. I was passionate about the project, but I did not emphasize the importance of the story we are telling and the depth of that story. Actors become more connected with a piece when they feel it is important. It felt egotistical to emphasize the importance of a piece I wrote myself, but it was needed. The biggest issue is I need the audience to realize the musical is Alison's story. I want

the audience to focus on the dancing when there is more than one story happening at a time. This could easily be done with a great lighting designer, but since the production will hopefully be taken on the road, I will continue to be limited in that department. A choice I'd like to work with is letting Eden see the abstract dance world. I want her to watch the movement and create that story with her words—living even more of a dual presence. Hopefully then when the audience would look to Eden, they would see her looking at and empathizing with Alison. This would redirect their attention to the story's main character: Alison.

Creating and Executing a Plan of Action

This project paved my way into an entrepreneurial interest in theatre. I used it as a launching point to plan my career more like a business. One of my biggest inspirations and resources for tools was Andrew Simonet. His philosophy of art matches mine quite well:

“I think of artists like scientists. Just like scientists, we begin with a question, something we don't know. We go into our studio and research that question. Like scientists, at the end of our research, we share the results with the public and our peers... In art, as in science, there is an element of faith. Scientists don't enter the lab saying "I will cure cancer." They say "If I join the thousands of researchers asking rigorous questions about cancer, discoveries and breakthroughs will be made." In science and in art, you cannot say this experiment will lead to this result. But we as artists know that if we join the thousands of people asking rigorous questions, the world will change.

It always has” (18-22).

Don't Wake Up Dear is my attempt at contributing to an awareness of suicide and an awareness of over dependence or independence. How do we react to statements of suicidal ideation? Can you be too dependent or too independent? What is self-actualization? Why do people attach themselves to those that hurt them? Additionally, this musical is my contribution to the world of original musicals. I deeply long for success of original theatre to return. I want contemporary questions to be thrown in the mix of artistic experimentation successfully. It doesn't matter that I succeed: Only that I contribute to the rigorous questions being asked. Simonet also said “Entertainment distracts our attention. Art focuses it” (30-31). This statement brilliantly defines something I've spent years

trying to define. This is why some art feels important to me and some art doesn't. What are they asking here? What am I calling my attention to? If the answer is nothing. It's all in good fun. I am generally not a fan of the work.

After Simonet defines his philosophy of art beautifully, he delves into actual business strategies. The first big thing I took away from him was crafting a mission statement. Now I had a mission statement before this read. It was something not so catchy about teaching the world through playwriting, directing, acting, singing, and teaching. Simonet gives examples of mission statements that embody the artist's personality and work—containing values that transcend art and bleed into everyday lifestyle. This led to my previously mentioned mission statement:

“Focused on weaving the connective tissue through the audience's collective unconscious, creating a space where everyone is one: Using just the right amount of avant-garde to inspire self-actualization beyond ego through writing, directing, acting, and teaching theatre that does not neglect the power of kinesthetic and musical storytelling” (kelseyrain.com).

This is also a big part of my mission in life. I always work to help others connect with the world and their emotions more productively. I want to help others and myself become better people. I do this even when I am not making art. It is something I study. I love reading on spiritual and positive psychology, because these things help us become more aware and capable. This is something I work to instill in my children, students, and friends. This is an honest mission statement for me.

Additionally, Simonet suggests goal setting. He said if you focus your attention on a small amount of really huge things, your time will be better spent. Artists are workaholics. There is always more to be done. But in planning, the goals should reach for the stars in very few areas: “A big goal catalyzes our energy and excites those around us” (Simonet, 105). He discusses how him and a friend wrote goals for two years on a piece of paper. Two years later when they pulled the paper back out, all of the goals had been met. They thought, this is a magic piece of paper. “Make the dreams bigger and the steps to get there smaller” (Simonet, 109).

So I followed Simonet’s suggestion. Brainstorming the biggest most truthful goals I could think of. He also suggests choosing the three most important goals in the areas of personal, professional, and artistic; then he says to create a plan of action with small achievable steps. For this project, I am focused on taking an improved and high school friendly version of *Don’t Wake Up Dear* on the road to high schools and fringe festivals—continuing to use the project for suicide awareness and original theatre exposure.

In order to achieve this large goal, it needs to be broken down into smaller easier steps. I researched grant writing to help me prepare to write grants for funding festivals. I want to be able to use this project to raise awareness and discussion around suicide. We don’t like to talk about it, so when the situation arises, it’s hard to know how to respond. If I rewrite the script so Eden works at a coffee shop, whilst August and her take expresso shots instead of liquor shots, then the show is high school appropriate. My cast and I would also teach a creating original art workshop the morning following performances to any schools wishing to participate. I will apply for the quick fund from Idaho Arts, as well as grants this project is eligible for from the following foundations: Alexa Rose Foundation, Idaho Community Foundation, Idaho Humanities, Art Deadline, and Steele Reese Foundation (Allen) (Arts Idaho). These grants

would all be for the following year as 2018 deadlines have passed. Additionally, the quick tour would need to be funded in different ways as well. In order to this I would like to register a nonprofit name. This would allow for easier access to grants in the future, allow for easier crowd-funding, and more importantly, allow the actors to use this production as professional experience. Donors are given a tax write off if the company is registered under a nonprofit status. I've purchased business names for myself and others in the past. There is a non-profit option for every business, so it shouldn't be very different than what I have done in the past. The company may grow into a more official nonprofit with a board of directors and future prospects for original projects, but for the purposes of this thesis, I just want to be able to give the actors professional experience and a paid artistic vacation. The mission of the nonprofit would be to create exposure for original theatre, new performance artists, and creative human perspectives.

This is how I become a producer. That may seem overinvolved and crazy. I definitely intend on finding people who believe in the same mission as me to be a part of the team (I know I have one fellow playwright/actor who believes in the mission and wants to help), but in this time, it is not unusual to have to give yourself a little boost to be noticed. A Broadway Producer wrote "A producer's job is to make an idea happen. But I'm going to change that just a little bit for you. Because honestly, "producer" is just another term for entrepreneur... and I believe that every artist is an entrepreneur (especially in the 21st century)" (Davenport, 46). Artists are entrepreneurs. This Broadway producer and literally every working professional that's discussed it, agrees. If I want my writing to be seen, I'll make that idea happen.

Ken Davenport has created a website full of information for those who want to produce or even make any big idea happen. This is a great resource for me in continuing this project. In reality, Davenport of course wants viewers to buy a big expensive series of classes, but just his

free e-book: *How to Succeed in the Arts or Anything* was quite helpful. He tells a story about meeting with Hal Prince before Davenport was a producer. He had all these big huge completely different ideas and talked at Hal Prince in a barrage of quick speaking about every single one of them. Hal Prince told him:

“Don't try to come out of the box trying to produce *West Side Story*. *West Side* was my third show. Be happy if you get *The Pajama Game*. It made money, it made people laugh...and more importantly, Ken, it got me started. Ken, just start. Produce something. Produce anything. But start. NOW” (Davenport, 24).

This is the beginning. I want to create and produce more original theatre written by a number of playwrights—not just myself. There is no reason I can't do what many others before me have done. According to Ken Davenport, the key is in actually executing your great ideas other people might see as crazy. Davenport echoes Simonet's sentiment that the ideas spring to life with steps of achievable action. “You don't accomplish a big goal by focusing on the big goal. You accomplish a big goal by forgetting about it and focusing on the small ones instead” (Davenport, 67).

I found this to be true in every area of my life, but especially in this project. I've put one foot in front of the other, researching as I went, creating a musical—something I never dreamt I was capable of. I wrote out the show in one sentence plot points following a formula, I wrote music without accompaniment, I wrote the libretto based on that formula, I refreshed my music theory and added accompaniment, I rewrote the show after analyzing the genre and structure once more, I directed the show one dance or scene at a time, and eventually after countless small

steps there was a production. As self-deprecating as I can be about my own art, I was extremely happy with the result. Now that this production is over, I start a new to do list. I don't just want to write theatre: I want other people to see it. Musicals don't get published the same way plays do. Generally, they require popularity and a following to even be published. So even if *Don't Wake Up Dear* never gets published, at least I will get to spread my message and share our art. My new smaller steps include rewriting the show to be high school friendly, revising a couple scenes that weren't quite working in the performance, hiring a composer to recompose Eden's accompaniment, applying for grants, registering a nonprofit name to provide my actors with better experience, and finally running a crowd-funding campaign.

I found one text particularly helpful in this area called *The Simple Art of Fundraising* by Damion Sinclair. Sinclair is another choreographer who writes towards artists in general. This text is all about funding artistic endeavors. He discusses how donors are all around and come from all walks of life. His book outlines creating a proposal, preparing for all questions the donor might ask, then asking for donations. "The only way to guarantee you won't receive a donation is if you don't ask" (Sinclair, 27). He also emphasizes the importance of a timely, sincere Thank You letter before closing out the book. This book helped me formulate a basic proposal for *Don't Wake Up Dear* High school/Fringe Tour.

Don't Wake Up Dear is a passion project I've worked on for several years. The musical explores codependency, self-actualization, and the response to suicidal thoughts through dialogue, music, and song. I had a psychology doctoral candidate create a section of the Playbill addressing suicide awareness and how to respond to those with suicidal thoughts. I was told by a detective the Playbill's tips were high quality: "This could be distributed at police stations. It's very straight forward and applicable. You could even take this show to high schools. It would

start up conversations between parents and teens just by watching it, because really this show is about young people.” I would love to take both this information and a beautiful production that’s really moving people around to both high schools and a couple of fringe festivals. I will offer the performance to high schools in the area free of charge—accompanying the show with a talk back and a workshop on creating original work. This portion of the project is community service. In addition to creating important discussion, this project provides the opportunity to give original theatre and young artists exposure. Any money would go towards taking the musical to a couple Fringe festivals (paying for fees, housing, and a small living stipend so the actors could count the production as professional experience on their resumes).

If I can crowd fund at least part of the production and use part of the project as community service, then the tour is more likely to receive grants. This is what people sometimes forget as artists: If huge goals are broken down into small steps, daunting big ideas can happen. I see artists doing exactly the kind of work I would want to do, *and* they are making it happen for themselves. Artists are not confined to the work other people provide for them. If they were, my career as a professional artist would be over before it even began.

Conclusion

Summary

Don't Wake Up Dear lit a fire inside of me. I want original art to be seen. I first wrote the show for a class project, but developed it to be my Master's Thesis. I used Aristotle's analysis of tragedy to strengthen the libretto, before directing a performance of the script. The cast and I collaborated well to create something that belonged to the whole cast. The story, choreography, and blocking was done as a team. I used the musical and Simonet's recommendations to develop a mission statement that encompassed my work. I readjusted my website to include all of my skills as an artist to better showcase myself: "Kelsey Rain: Actress. Writer. Teacher" (kelseyrain.com). I also purchased the URL for my stage/pen name. I developed stepping stones to keeping the project moving: grant-writing, crowd-funding, sponsorship, re-writing, hiring a composer, and gaining non-profit status. If I break down this list into small daily chores, it will be accomplished.

Other Artists can follow the same process. Despite entrepreneurship and art being individualized, this project can help others. Crafting a mission statement that has personality and applies to an artist's everyday purpose, not just their artistic purpose, guides their career. They can brainstorm the biggest goals they can possibly think of. Pick the one that calls out to them the most—no matter the size. Then break this goal down into smaller chores. For example, a recent goal was to post to websites and ask around to find a composer. That's a simple small chore that lead to bigger actions. I am now working with a composer to rewrite the music. It allows me to get something productive done and satisfies the lazy doubter that lives inside of every person. Since resources on entrepreneurship are so wide-spread, each idea or step towards the idea will require research. Theatre artists just need to know that everything they want to do,

someone has done before them. Look to those who have already accomplished the same goals.

Use these people to build a chores list. If all of the steps are small, they will lead to the big picture. Once these steps build momentum, the crazy out of reach goal becomes reality.

Implications

After I finish my degree, I intend to keep writing/funding this project (and others) and develop an original theatre company with a small touring season and community service responsibilities. I also want to produce other playwrights in these tours. I intend to keep writing. I have other ideas for productions that would require more actors and other resources I hope to be feasible in the future.

The implications of this project are that theatre artists need more applicable resources for creating original entrepreneurial art projects. Most of what I found was written by choreographers. They may need to shift their mindsets about art. This will allow them to create an opportunity for themselves when they need to. Perhaps what should be taught in schools along with basic business skills is the entrepreneurial mindset. Artists are capable of innovation and self-sufficiency. They can create opportunity in between official jobs.

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Appendix A

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Don't Wake Up Dear

Librettist and Composer: Kelsey Rain
 Additions to Composition: Chandler Fehr &
 Philip Murphy
 Created for my final thesis project on Arts
 Entrepreneurship for completion of a
 Masters of Arts in Theatre.

Cast List

Eden: Kelsey Rain
 Alison: Cami Dougal
 August: Chandler Fehr
 Levi: Aaron Peite

Crew

Director: Kelsey Rain
 Stage Manager/Light board
 Operator: Deanna Cook
 Dance Captain: Aaron Peite
 Choreography: Aaron Peite, Alisha
 Madison Hunter & Kelsey Rain

If a friend or family member tells you that he or she is thinking about death or suicide, it's important to evaluate the immediate danger the person is in. Those at the highest risk for suicide in the near future have a specific suicide PLAN, the MEANS to carry out the plan, a TIME SET for doing it, and an INTENTION to do it.

Level of Suicide Risk:

Low – Some suicidal thoughts. No suicide plan. Says he or she won't attempt suicide.

Moderate – Suicidal thoughts. Vague plan that isn't very lethal. Says he or she won't attempt suicide.

High – Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. Says he or she won't attempt suicide.

Severe – Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. Says he or she will attempt suicide.

If a suicide attempt seems imminent, call a local crisis center, dial 911, or take the person to an emergency room. Remove guns, drugs, knives, and other potentially lethal objects from the vicinity **but do not, under any circumstances, leave a suicidal person alone.**

When talking to a suicidal person

Do:

Be yourself. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone. The right words are often unimportant.

Listen. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.

Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting.

Offer hope. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Let the person know that his or her life is important to you.

Take the person seriously. If the person says things like, "I'm so depressed, I can't go on," ask the question: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?"

But don't:

Argue with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."

Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or morality of suicide

Promise confidentiality. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy. A life is at stake and you may need to speak to a mental health professional in order to keep the suicidal person safe..

Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.

Blame yourself. You can't "fix" someone's depression. Your loved one's happiness, or lack thereof, is not your responsibility.

Notes from the Director

This original musical has been a wild ride stemming from an assignment I got back a year and a half ago in my Problems in Acting course. I began writing something with no real training in composition or playwriting, but somehow something I really believe in came onto paper.

"It's like I don't really write the songs. They're just playing my head like they're pulled from the collective unconscious" (Eden).

The musical hints at some key questions: Can we self-actualize and be dependent? Who are we in relationships? But more than anything this a story of friendship and forgiveness. The dancing was choreographed collaboratively. Half the story is told through dance simply because Eden is telling Alison's story. And she doesn't know what goes on behind closed doors, so she makes it up

To Write Love On Her Arms

To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting home and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and invest directly into treatment and recovery.

We believe:

- You were created to love and be loved.
- People need other people.
- Your story is important.
- Better days are ahead.
- Hope and help are real.

You are not alone, and this is not the end of your story.

Profits from the show will be donated to this organization working towards awareness and recovery. They support various organizations and will funnel the money into multiple places.



Suicide Warning Signs:

- If a person talks about:
 - Killing themselves
 - Feeling hopeless
 - Having no reason to live
 - Being a burden to others
 - Feeling trapped
 - Unbearable pain
- Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change:
 - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
 - Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for materials or means
 - Withdrawing from activities
 - Isolating from family and friends
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
 - Giving away prized possessions
 - Aggression
 - Fatigue
- People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Loss of interest
 - Irritability
 - Humiliation
 - Agitation
 - Rage

Appendix B

August (Chandler Fehr) pictured left plays his guitar joining Eden singing "Lift Me Up"
Levi and Alison dance signifying their wedding day



Eden sits thinking of Alison before reading Alison's poem
Alison pantomimes writing and painting the art
Eden now presents in the background



Levi (Aaron Peite) attempts to leave Alison (Cami Dougal) before she leaps onto his back causing a temporary reconciliation. Eden (Kelsey Rain) sings the title song "Don't Wake Up Dear" at the piano



Alison looks into the distance contemplating her future after Levi's departure



Eden informs August of her new record deal and inevitable move to LA
August slips in the idea of him coming with her



(Left) Alison lays on the stage after a musically underscored suicide attempt
(Right) Eden imagines she had come home and taught Alison independence in a dance



(Left) Eden begs for Alison's forgiveness in present day
(Right) Alison rises and gives Eden the energy to move and live again



Eden rises with Alison's help
Alison and Eden smile at each other

Appendix C

Scene 1: Eden and Alison get ready for their auditions. Alison tells Eden Levi proposed. She is worried this will mess up her audition. Eden sings her audition, while Alison dances hers. Levi appears in Alison's audition and drags her into a duet. He is haunting her audition, just as she feared.

SCENE 2

EDEN and ALISON sit waiting at a bus stop with their duffle bags. A bus stop sign in a slightly separate location from the bar represents their location.

Eden

Do you remember stealing that sign off of Eden street?

Alison

I do! What did you end up doing with that anyway?

Eden

Eh. My mom found it. Made me put it back.

Alison

What about when we climbed that fence and ran across the interstate and got yelled at by that cop?

Eden

Oh yeah... And you cried!

Alison

Umm... because you were lying to the cops. You gave them the wrong number.

Eden

Duh. I'm not gonna willingly get into trouble.

Alison

I'm gonna miss this. Us.

Eden

Me too.

Alison

I can't wait to get to the airport.

Eden

Why is your new boyfriend waiting there for you?

Alison

What?

Eden

This is the longest you've ever gone without a boyfriend.

Alison

Oh shut up. I just barely broke up with Levi.

Eden

Yeah. It's been like a whole two days. I mean I'm not complaining. He's always given me the heebie jeebies. (*Shudders*) He's just way too nice.

Alison

Leave it to Eden to dislike someone for being nice. Levi's fine. I'm just really excited to start our adult lives working doing what we love *independently*.

Eden

What we love? I'm a lounge singer.

Alison

But you will be the greatest lounge singer New York has ever seen! And our company tours through New York all the time. I'm going to see you again in like three months.

Eden

I can't wait.

LEVI enters.

Alison

Levi. Hi. What are you doing here?

Levi

I had to say goodbye.

Alison

Ok.

Levi

Are you sure you want this?

Alison

What do you mean? This is all I've ever wanted.

Levi

You want to live life as a nomad? You said you wanted to get married one day and have a family. Traveling companies are not going to allow you to have what you really want.

Eden

This. Is what she really wants.

Alison

Eden. Shut-Up. I said someday. Not today.

Levi

We live near New York City. There will be other companies. Companies that will allow you some stability. We could get married and have a family. You don't have to settle Alison. You can have everything. I will only ask one more time. If the answer is still no, I only wish you good life. Marry me, my Orchid.

Alison

Okay.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3

EDEN sits at the piano at her new job. She sings for the lounge.

Eden

I KNEW FALLING FOR YOU WOULD MAKE ME STUPID
BUT ONE TOUCH
AND I DROPPED TO THE FLOOR
AND ONE KISS
AND I COULD NO LONGER SEE
IT'S NOT STUPID
I'M JUST LONELY

AUGUST enters the bar with his guitar.

SO LIFT ME UP
AND MAKE ME BLIND
LIFT ME UP
AND CLOSE MY EYES
DON'T LET ME FALL
AND HELP ME RISE

IT'S NOT STUPID
IM JUST LONELY

I KNEW MARRYING YOU COULD MAKE ME LOOK STUPID
BUT YOU WERE
ON YOUR KNEES WITH THAT RING
AND SHOWED ME
THERE'S NOWHERE I'D RATHER BE
IT'S NOT STUPID
I'M JUST LONELY

Eden and August

SO LIFT ME UP
AND MAKE ME BLIND
LIFT ME UP
AND CLOSE MY EYES
DON'T LET ME FALL
AND HELP ME RISE

August

OH, IT'S NOT STUPID
IM JUST LONELY
I'VE FOUND THE WORLD'S JUST A BIT LONELY

ALISON walks down the aisle to LEVI. They kiss at the start of the chorus "So Lift me Up." They slow dance during the second verse. They dance representational of their wedding day full of love with occasional bleeding in of the manipulative nature of their relationship being foreshadowed in the lyrics of their wedding song.

August

I like that song. Did you write it?

Eden

Do you make a habit of ruining other people's art?

August

Oh ruining? Ruining. Okay. I think I added some complexity to your childish arrangement.

Eden

I'm working.

August

So... I should pick you up when you get off?

Eden

Does this normally work for you? Insulting women then asking them out?

August

No. Not usually.

Eden

Good. I'm not interested though. Sorry.

August

Why not?

Eden

I don't date.

August

You write beautiful poetry for someone who doesn't believe in love.

Eden

Did I say that?

August

Didn't have to.

Eden

I thought my song was "childish."

August

The arrangement. Not the poetry.

Eden

It's a song for my best friend. We talked about her love life and I wrote her a wedding song. It's Alison's song not mine.

August

So.... You didn't want to write her a wedding song?

Eden

I did... a little bit... Not really.

August

You don't like him.

Eden

I hate him, but I can't figure out why. There's nothing wrong with him. He just rubs me the wrong way. She way too sweet to be married to anyone. I don't trust him.

August

You should trust your instincts. You should tell Alison how you feel.

Eden

I'm Sorry—who are you?

August

I'm August. And you are?

Eden

Working.

August

So... how was the wedding?

Eden

I didn't go.

August

Ouch.

Eden

They ended up eloping: I didn't ditch out on my best friend's wedding.

August

I would. I mean if my best friend was marrying a douchebag.

Eden

He's not a douchebag. *(Amused by his word choice)*

August

I think you're a better judge of character than you give yourself credit for.

Eden

Okay. Why?

August

You're still talking to me, despite the fact that I may have come off as an asshole.

Eden

You most definitely, definitely did.

August

Truce?

Eden

I guess. I have to play this piano. I'm at work.

August

Okay. Maybe I'll pop in another night? Say hi?

EDEN ignores the question and goes back to her piano.

August

Okay.

AUGUST goes to leave.

Eden

My name's Eden.

AUGUST exits and reenters.

August

So...the sign in the window says they're hiring another bartending performer. Would it be weird if I asked for an application?

EDEN hands him an application.

Eden

(Teasingly) Well I hope you don't get it.

August

You mean that?

Eden

I don't think so.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 4: Eden trains August to be a bartender. They take shot. Eden chastises August about his desire for relationships. She encourages him to be more independent and self-actualized. She discusses her determination to live life free from boyfriends and roommates. At the end of the scene, Eden has August teach her to play the Ukulele. Their faces get a little too close, and they make out aggressively.

Scene 5: All four characters are hanging out in the bar. They are drunk after hours. August sings a humorous song, while Eden and Alison hold hands on the floor. They discuss their friendship playfully. Eden impersonated an agent to get Alison an audition for a dance company. Levi is discouraging. He attempts to lighten the mood by asking Eden to sing and Alison to dance. It is made clear, in reality, Levi is not a good dancer.

Scene 6: Alison calls Eden. Levi told Alison she hasn't been paying rent. Alison knows she has and remembers all the times he's convinced her that she's the one who is lying. Alison also tells Eden that she feels unreal and dried up. Eden is upset when they hang up. August attempts to cheer her up by discussing her new demo album. He asks Eden to play her new single. During

the song, we see Alison and Levi's unhealthy relationship unfold. He switches between loving husband and abusive man. There is a lot of manipulation, Alison trying to win him back in this dance.

Scene 7

Eden

This weekend while I was home, I helped clean out Alison's room. And I found this painting. Of an orchid. And this...poem.

Green branches mark the clouds above me—
 Demonstrating just how small I am.
 Cold water trickles and weaves,
 Tracing my toes—reminding me of the heat I hold.
 Soft breezes brush my arms and legs,
 While my insides swirl into an uncontrollable storm.
 The peaceful waters begin to change:
 They look more like me.
 The water bubbles as it stirs in the rocks
 And begins to move upstream.
 The sounds of the stream mindlessly buzz
 The same buzz I hear when I can't remember where I am.
 I splash against every rock inside myself.
 I'm in here somewhere.

I didn't know she was a poet.

(EDEN crosses to the piano)

MY DEAR ALISON
 DON'T YOU CRY
 DEAR ALISON
 SLEEP TONIGHT
 KEEP LOOKING UP
 AND PLEASE DON'T DROWN
 JUST SLEEP PEACEFULLY ONE MORE NIGHT

DEAR ALISON
 PLEASE REST
 YOU'LL DANCE AGAIN TOMORROW
 BUT FOR TONIGHT DREAM IN PEACE ONE MORE NIGHT

DON'T WAKE UP DEAR
 DON'T WAKE UP DEAR
 SLEEP IN PEACE
 SLEEP IN PEACE

DEAR ALISON
 YOU ARE LOVED
 AND YOU ARE WHOLE
 YOU'RE BETTER OFF ALONE
 DON'T WAKE UP DEAR
 DON'T WAKE UP DEAR
 REST IN PEACE
 REST IN PEACE
 AND I'M SORRY ALISON
 I'M SORRY
 I'M SOR-

DEAR ALISON
 YOU WERE LOVED
 AND YOU WERE WHOLE
 YOU WERE BETTER OFF ALONE
 DON'T WAKE UP DEAR

EDEN is in real time singing to ALISON while telling her story. ALISON and LEVI dance a duet together. LEVI is abusive (whether he is physically or verbally abusive should be left to the audience's imagination). ALISON starts to fight back. This motivates LEVI to leave her. ALISON repeatedly tries to hang onto LEVI. He gives up and puts her to sleep in the middle of the stage. He leaves a note and exits after she falls asleep. Eden breaks down by the time she sings "I'm sorry." The final verse is sung directly to ALISON.

Scene 8

EDEN sits at the piano working on writing the chords for the upcoming song. AUGUST enters. EDEN jumps up and hugs him.

Eden

August!

August

Woah what's the occasion?

Eden

I got a call from one of the record companies I sent my demo to today.

August

Wait. So-

Eden

I'm being signed.

August

Holy- Just- Aaaaaahhh.

Eden

(Overlapping) Aaaaaahhh. There is one thing though. I do have to relocate to LA.

August

LA huh? There's a lot of creeps out in LA. And it's way too hot. And I really love my hot dog stands... but I mean I've always wanted to try surfing. So...when are we moving?
EDEN's phone rings.

Eden

Uh... I gotta get this. You know. Alison.

August

Yeah. I'll just finish getting ready to open.

Eden

Hello?

Alison

"My dear Alison, I am not happy. The way you have been behaving is too much for me to take. You are sleeping right now. And instead of seeing your beautiful face and my beautiful delicate Orchid, all I see is this woman. And she's not you. And I'm not me. I can't do it anymore. But I don't want to wake you. Sleep peacefully for one more night. Goodnight. I loved you... I think."

Eden

Holy shit. How are you holding up?

Alison

I haven't moved for a few days. I just keep calling him over and over again hoping he'll come back.

Eden

Why? *Pause.* I don't mean that in a rude way, but shit. The last time we talked it sounded like he was being awful to you.

Alison

I haven't been a great wife either. I know that. But I need my husband.

Eden

You were better off alone.

Alison

No. That's you. I made a commitment to someone I love. That means something to me.

Eden

Well recommit to yourself.

Alison

Yeah I should know you of all people wouldn't understand.

Eden

Alison wait I'm sorry. I love you. I am here for you.

Alison

You're not though. You're too far away.

Eden

I'm always with you even if I'm not with you.

Alison

I don't think I can be alive anymore. I need you Eden. Here. Now.

Eden

I actually have a flight to catch in the morning for LA. *Pause* I'll work something out though.

Alison

I gotta go.

ALISON hangs up. EDEN sits down at the piano and starts to sing the song she is writing.

Eden

I THINK THE WORLD IS COMING TO AN END
AND SOMEHOW, I HAVE FOUND YOU
BUT I CAN'T FIND THE WORDS TO SAY
AND IF THE WORLD IS COMING TO AN END
AND PEOPLE AREN'T REALLY MEANT TO LOVE
THEN YOU MUST BE A TRICK FOR ME

AND I CAN'T FIND A REASON TO BE LOVED
AND I CAN'T FIND A REASON YOU WOULD FIT
I MUST SAY GOODBYE TO YOU
BUT IF I WERE TO LOVE SOMEONE
AND IF I COULD CHOOSE LOVE
IT'D BE YOU
IT'D BE YOU

AND I'D LIKE TO SAY I'M SORRY
'CUZ I KNOW YOU CARE FOR ME
I'D LIKE TO SAY I LOVE YOU
BUT I OWE MYSELF A LOVE SONG
BEFORE I DIE

ALISON dances a solo showing her internal struggles of depression and longing for her husband.

ALISON struggles with whether or not to take her own life. The solo ends with ALISON committing suicide via pantomimed pill bottle.

August

So...you owe yourself a love song?

Eden

I didn't mean for you to- You know what, yeah. I guess I do.

August

And you want to go to LA without me, huh?

Eden

I really do. Not because I don't care about you. But there's some things I need to accomplish on my own.

August

That doesn't make a lot of sense.

Eden

I can't want my own life?

August

You can want whatever you want, but don't lie about why.

Eden

How am I lying?

August

Just because you care about someone doesn't mean you can't accomplish things on your own. You just strung me into your little Eden world without any intention of ever opening yourself up to someone. Good luck in LA. I hope your life is anything but "simple," and you get everything you've dreamed of.

Eden

Thank you. I think. Hey, will you cover for me tonight? There's somewhere I really need to be.

August

Sure, I guess.

EDEN exits. AUGUST picks up the paper EDEN was writing her song on. He reads over the lyrics before crumpling the paper and tossing it. He thinks. Takes out his Ukulele and begins to play.

SHE OWES HERSELF A LOVE SONG
AND LEFT ME HERE TO CRY
SHE OWES HERSELF A LOVE SONG
AND WENT OFF IN THE NIGHT
I'D LIKE TO SAY I'M SORRY
'CUZ I KNOW YOU CARED FOR ME
I WISH YOU'D SAY YOU LOVED ME

BUT I OWE MYSELF A LOVE SONG
FOR ALL THE TIME I'VE LOST
I OWE MYSELF A LOVE SONG
I GUESS THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT
I'D LIKE TO SAY I'M SORRY
CUZ I KNOW YOU CARE FOR HER
AND PLEASE DON'T SAY YOU LOVED HER
BECAUSE YOU OWE YOURSELF A LOVE SONG
BEFORE YOU-
DIE...

EDEN reenters from the other side of the stage seeing ALISON still laying where she first fell. EDEN rushes to her aid checking her pulse, etc. EDEN stand ALISON up. She dances to try and

give ALISON some strength and independence. She gathers energy into ALISON (the energy causing ALISON to rise more and more) until ALISON can gather energy into herself. At the end of the dance, ALISON reaches desperately for EDEN as EDEN walks away. ALISON falls to her original laying spot on the stage. AUGUST fades vocally and playing the Ukulele. ALISON's final lines overlap with the Ukulele.

Alison

I don't think I can be alive anymore. I need you Eden. Here. Now. I need you Eden. I need you Eden. I need you.

Eden

I wish I could say that's really what happened. That I drove the two hours home, picked Alison up off the floor, and taught her to take care of herself. That I wasn't so fucking selfish. Please. Please if there's a God, tell her I'm sorry. Please forgive me Alison. I can't do anything but sit here until I know you know how sorry I am. I knew you needed me. If I'd just been there. I love you. Forgive me.

THERE WAS A GIRL I KNEW
AND HER NAME WAS ALISON
SHE WOULDN'T HURT A FLY
AND SHE WAS MY BEST FRIEND

NOW MY DREAMS ARE HERE
WAITING FOR ME TO GRAB THEM
BUT ALL I DO IS CRY
AND SING SONGS OF ALISON

ALISON stands as EDEN sings "Alison." She performs the same dance to gather energy for EDEN. The giving of energy is specific and each thrust of energy causes EDEN to rise more until she realizes who is giving the energy. She turns to see ALISON. They smile at one another. There is renewal, hope and forgiveness.

BLACKOUT.