

An Actor Realizes the Artist and Teacher Within

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Department of Drama

University of Virginia
May 2019

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Abstract

This thesis explores an actor's journey from being an entertainer and storyteller to an artist and teacher. The journey is documented through a reflective statement, teaching philosophy, personal statement, digital performances of three classical monologues, journal of the monologue selection process, acting reel, biography, headshot, acting resume, and production photos of performances produced by the Department of Drama at the University of Virginia.

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Chapter 1: Artistic Statement

I was at an Equity Open Call audition about six years ago at the Colony Theatre in Burbank, CA. I was among several actors waiting to be seen when an actor I had worked with about four months prior walked in to check in with the monitor. We greeted each other, and then he asked, “What are you doing?” I responded that I was keeping myself busy and was currently taking an acting workshop. And then he said, “No, no. What are you doing? As an artist?” I did not have an answer for him. I cannot recall the rest of the conversation we had that day, but his question was something I definitely remembered, and it made me wonder: Am I an artist?

I have had the fortune of working professionally alongside well-known actors in films and popular TV shows. I have done commercials, voice overs as well as stage work. As an actor, I viewed myself as someone who entertained people and helped to tell stories. Those times when I was not working as an actor, my main focus was getting the next audition and booking the job in hopes of getting discovered so that I could get steady work. Along with that, my other concerns were making sure I had good headshots, that my résumé was updated, that I was current on the TV shows that were on the air and that I knew the styles of the different shows, and that I continued honing my craft by taking intensive acting workshops every few months. I did not concern myself with hoping to be cast in a play because it had a message or that the story had something to do with social justice.

There have been those who have referred to actors as artists. But the idea of labeling myself one made me feel uneasy. I always felt that it would be pretentious to call myself an artist, and I will admit that I have thought other actors were being pretentious whenever they called themselves artists. To me, an artist is one who creates and says something about the world we live in with their creation. But when I took part in a staged reading of a play entitled *Just Like Us* by Karen Zacarias in the spring semester of my second year in graduate school, it gave me a certain sense of fulfillment. The play had an important message, and as an actor in that staged reading, I helped to deliver that message. That meaningful experience made me examine the types of projects I wanted to be involved with in the future.

I had a conversation with a professor about what had been bothering me in the last few years. Without any hesitation or doubt, and even before I mentioned to her about my realization with the staged reading of Zacarias’s play, she was already affirming that I am an artist, and she encouraged me to admit it to myself, but it was still difficult for me to do so because I felt that I had not yet earned that title. I was, however, motivated to find a

project that I could present that would help me in my declaration to myself that I am indeed an artist.

In the summer before the start of my last year as a graduate student, I was inspired to find a project when I decided to attend an Asian American Theatre Conference/Festival in Chicago. Upon my arrival there, I had the fortune of meeting up with a Los Angeles director whom I had known for many years. She was also an actor and an activist, and she said to me that even though I am not conscious of it or view myself as an artist, being part of the cast as an Asian American actor says something. It says that Asian American actors have the talent to be part of something special and that we matter, and that as a cast member, I represent all Asian American actors. As someone who has doubted himself as being an artist, I now had a renewed attitude and perspective, and I was determined even more to find a project that resonated with me, and it had to be the right project.

On the fourth day of the conference, I attended a staged reading of a short play entitled *Instrumental Journey: A Musical Migration Story* conceived by Ric Oquita and Bernardo Mazón Daher. It is a play about where instruments originated and how similar instruments can now be found in many different countries. It is an allegory of the people who have emigrated to other countries and their contribution to the countries in which they have now settled. As the son of immigrants, this play had an impact on me due to the political turbulent times that we are currently in, as well as the negativity that immigrants are now having to endure.

Seven months later, I presented this play as a staged reading at the University of Virginia. Initially I wanted to be an actor in this play, however, due to certain circumstances, I ended up being the director. Regardless, I felt strongly about this project. I felt that the work that the actors and I did together and with the work that the writers invested in developing this play, we were able to effectively deliver an important message as well as educate and entertain an audience that consisted of students, faculty, and people in the community.

Now I feel that I am on the path of being able to proclaim with confidence that I am an artist. When I consider becoming involved with a play (since I have more control with this than with film or TV scripts), I now take into account the significance of the play and determine if it is meaningful and if it resonates with me. My journey of realizing myself as an artist makes me think of an anecdotal quote by George Bernard Shaw, "Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."

Teaching Philosophy

My ultimate goal as an acting teacher is for the students to have the tools they need in order to break down a script, make choices, and audition with confidence. I strongly believe that, first and foremost, an acting teacher needs to create an environment where the students feel safe to fail. They need to know that it is all right to make mistakes, and they will not be judged by their peers because working on a scene or monologue entails a great deal of trial and error. It is not about getting it right immediately. It is about exploration, falling down, making discoveries, and then finally putting it together. In a safe environment, I have witnessed students, especially beginning acting students, become more willing to fully commit to the choices they have made, whether good or bad, when they are no longer concerned about being criticized by their fellow actors. This becomes evident in the way their voices become fuller, and they stand and move on stage with more confidence. In a safe environment, students develop a level of trust with one another. I regularly remind them to support their fellow actors and not criticize them. I always say, “Don’t judge what you’re doing. Don’t judge your fellow classmates. And don’t judge yourself. Just be willing and commit.”

One activity I find effective in the early stages of the semester is to pair actors together and assign each pair a one-page scene. Their task is to present a fully memorized scene within one week and perform it badly. We do not discuss *units of action*, *objectives*, *tactics*, *given circumstances* or anything else that actors look for in a scene. When they present their scenes one week later, they are successful in their task of performing it badly, and they have fun doing so. More importantly, they discover questions during their rehearsals, such as, who are the characters and what is the context of the scene? Furthermore the overall consensus is that they all feel free to play during rehearsal, which is the main point I want to get across to them. They need to feel this sense of freedom to play whenever they are working on a scene.

An acting teacher needs to guide or coach students rather than direct them in their scenes or monologues. As the guide or coach, I ask questions in order to unpack the scene and provide encouragement for the students to make choices and try different things. As in the old proverb, “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” Directing students in a scene in an acting class may help them perform the scene well, but the direction is specific to that one particular scene. Being the guide or coach provides a model for the students in terms of how to approach a scene and what they need to do for any scene they are given. The goal here is to give students the tools so they can eventually figure out scenes on their own.

One rehearsal activity I assign an actor with his/her partner is the slow process of going through the script line by line and ask each other why their character says what they say. I even have them do this sitting back to back so they are forced to listen to each other. Though meticulous, the students have stated that this process has helped them figure out their character's motivations for each moment and in the scene as a whole. In addition, they have stated that approaching a script in this way has allowed them to determine the *beat changes* as well as the discoveries that their character makes in the scene.

In terms of making choices, I encourage my students to decide on an *objective*, as in, *what the character wants*, and fully commit to it. Too often actors do not make choices or do not commit and instead rely on just trying to be realistic in their behavior without having an *objective*. This results in their acting being general rather than specific, and it does not distinguish them from the rest of the other actors who do the same thing. Moreover, the goal of the actor is to stand out among the others and get the job. One way to definitely stand out is by making choices and then committing to them.

By the end of the semester, the students will have developed an understanding of the rehearsal process: that it is about playing, trying different things and making discoveries, and that it is not about settling for the first thing that works. Another recommendation I give them once they find something that works is to see if they can discover other choices for the scene, in other words, *keep playing*. And if they are unsuccessful with finding other strong choices, they can always go back to what worked before. Also by trying other ways to do the scene, they get to know the scene very well to the point that it will allow them to be flexible with the scene so that they can do it differently if asked to do so. In addition, through the process of meticulously going through the scene, they get an understanding of breaking down a scene to analyze it. As a result of what they have learned in class, the students who decide to pursue acting further feel confident because they feel that they now know or at least have an idea of what they are doing. As someone who understands that honing the craft of acting is a lifelong process, it is very rewarding to take acting students who know very little about the craft on a journey in which they learn and appreciate the amount of discipline, curiosity, and creativity that go into it.

Chapter 2: Journal of the Process

I knew that I wanted to do a classical monologue, and most likely a contemporary dramatic monologue and a comedic one. The contemporary monologues I already knew were all published works, which means I would have to get permission from the publishers and/or playwrights. After a couple of weeks of ruminating on which ones I would include in my portfolio, I finally made the decision to do only classical monologues, and my acting reel would showcase my contemporary work. Also since my reel consists of work from films and shows on television, I decided that I would perform my monologues in a theatrical style, that is, they would be shot as performances for the stage rather than close-ups. Another reason why I decided on classical monologues was that I wanted to showcase that I can do that style of text. In addition, it would eliminate the need to get permission from the publisher and/or playwrights.

The monologues I first selected were four Shakespeare pieces and one by GB Shaw. The Shakespeare monologues were Launcelot Gobbo from *Merchant of Venice*, Francis Ford from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Lewis the Dauphin from *King John*, and Trinculo from *The Tempest*. I have worked on all of these monologues before when I took a few Shakespeare workshops in Los Angeles. I used to be afraid of doing Shakespeare but the workshops opened up new possibilities for me. I discovered that I really like Shakespeare, and I hope to be acting in Shakespeare plays in the future. It would be a thrill to take part in Shakespeare festivals all over the country! The one by Shaw is Charles the Dauphin from *St. Joan*. I know this monologue because we recently had a workshop on Shaw and this is the piece that I worked on, and it is another character that I believe I can portray.

When I started working on the Shakespeare pieces, I began by writing them on a yellow pad. It is amazing to me that I still knew the monologues verbatim because it has been a few years since I have worked on them other than the two monologues: I used the Launcelot Gobbo monologue when we did the Alexander Technique workshop in our third semester, and I auditioned with the Lewis the Dauphin monologue a year ago when we were required to do a verse speech from Shakespeare. And it had only been a couple of weeks since our Shaw workshop, hence, I still knew the Charles monologue.

As I worked on the Shakespeare monologues, I made sure that the arguments I was making were clear. One thing that I find unsatisfying is seeing productions of Shakespeare and not understand what the actors are saying. I have learned that not only does the actor need to know what he/she is saying, but the actor also needs to know

how to say it so the audience will understand it. This is one of the challenges with the text that I actually enjoy figuring out. However, I have a tendency to rely too heavily on making the argument clear and not focusing enough on the character itself.

An example of this is Launcelot Gobbo. The main feedback I received when I was working on this monologue was that I was being too logical in terms of my portrayal of the character. I needed to find the confusion he was going through.

For Lewis the Dauphin, the character knows he has the better argument. Layering too much anger here would diminish his powerful argument.

When I worked on Charles the Dauphin, I wanted to find a sense of acceptance by the character of his situation and that his people do not care what he does so long as he does not get in their way. However, there also needs to be a sense where the character becomes introspective. Though he has accepted his situation, there is regret as well.

I recorded the monologues on my own, and I discovered that there was an advantage to doing so. I could take my time and do each piece as many times as needed. After each one, I could review it and see what adjustments I needed to make.

Later when I was preparing the files to submit, I decided on three out of the four monologues I recorded. They were Launcelot Gobbo, Lewis the Dauphin, and Charles the Dauphin. I felt that these three were enough to showcase me: two Shakespeare pieces (one in prose and one in verse), and one by GB Shaw.

Chapter 3: Copies of Portfolio Materials

Lewis the Dauphin from *King John*: Act 5, Sc. 2

Your grace shall pardon me. I will not back.
I am too high born to be propertied.
To be a secondary at control
Or useful servingman and instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world.
Your breath first kindled the dead coal of wars
Between this chastis'd kingdom and myself
And brought in matter that should feed this fire.
And now, tis far too huge to be blown out
With that same weak wind which enkindled it.
You taught me how to know the face of right,
Acquainted me with interest to this land,
Yea, thrust this enterprise into my heart,
And come ye now to tell me John hath made
His peace with Rome? What is that peace to me?
I, by the honor of my marriage-bed,
After young Arthur, claim this land for mine;
And now, it is half conquered, must I back
Because that John hath made his peace with Rome?
Am I Rome's slave? What penny hath Rome bourne?
What men provided? What munition sent
To underprop this action? Is't not I
That undergo this charge? Who else but I
And such as to my claim are liable,

Sweat in this business, and maintain this war?
 Have I not heard these islanders shout out,
 “Vive le roi,” as I have banked their towns?
 Have I not here the best cards for the game
 To win this easy match played for a crown
 And shall I now give o’er the yielded set?
 No, no. On my soul, it never shall be said!

Launcelot Gobbo from *Merchant of Venice*: Act 2, Sc. 2

Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew, my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me, saying to me, “Gobbo. Launcelot Gobbo. Good Launcelot.” Or, “Good Gobbo.” Or “Good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away.” My conscience says, “No, take heed, honest Launcelot. Take heed, honest Gobbo.” Or as afore-said, “Honest Launcelot Gobbo, do not run. Scorn running with thy heels.” Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack. “Fia!” says the fiend. “Away!” says the fiend. “For the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,” says the fiend, “and run!” Well, my conscience hanging about the neck of my heart says very wisely to me, “My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man’s son,” or rather an honest woman’s son: for indeed my father did something smack; something grow to; he had a kind of taste. My conscience says, “Launcelot, budge not.” “Budge!” says the fiend. “Budge not!” says my conscience. “Conscience,” say I, “you counsel well.” “Fiend,” say I, “you counsel well.” To be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; And to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself; Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation; and in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives more the friendly counsel. I will run fiend; my heels are at your commandment; I will run.

Charles the Dauphin from *St. Joan* by George Bernard Shaw: Scene 2

Yes, I am afraid. It's no use preaching to me about it. It's all very well for these big men with their armor that is too heavy for me, and their swords that I could hardly lift, and their muscles, and their shouting, and their bad tempers. They like fighting: most of them are making fools of themselves all the time they are not fighting. But I am quiet and sensible; I don't want to kill people; I only want to be left alone to enjoy myself in my own way. I never asked to be a king: It was pushed on me. So, if you are going to say, "Son of St. Louis, gird on the sword of your ancestors and lead us to victory," you may spare your breath to cool your porridge; for I cannot do it; I am not built that way. And there is an end of it.

Supplemental Materials



Michael Miranda sag-aftra/emc

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Reel: resumes.actorsaccess.com/michaelmiranda
HT: 5'4" WT: 140 Hair: Black Eyes: Brown



THEATRE (partial)

TARTUFFE
SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE
LOVE'S A BITCH
KEN LUDWIG'S BASKERVILLE
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
EPIC PROPORTIONS
FREE
WHY MARRY?
ONE WEST WACKER
COLORS: HOLIDAY ONE ACT FESTIVAL
THIS LAND

TARTUFFE
NOL / BENVOLIO
FATHER
ACTOR I
BIONDELLO
DROMIO OF EPHEBUS
SNUG THE JOINER
BENNY
FREE
THE BUTLER
BEN
MULTIPLE ROLES
FRED

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA / SABIN EPSTEIN
VIRGINIA REP / JEN WINEMAN
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA / DAVE DALTON
HERITAGE FESTIVAL / COLLEEN KELLY / MARIANNE KUBIK
LOVERS & MADMEN PRODS, LOS ANGELES
LAS VEGAS SHAKESPEARE CO / STEVE SHADE
THEATRicum BOTANICUM / MELORA MARSHALL
NEO ENSEMBLE THEATRE / JOE OCHMAN
FORD THEATRE / WENDY WORTHINGTON
THEATRE NEO / DAVID CHEANEY
THEATRE NEO / JOE OCHMAN
COMPANY OF ANGELS, LOS ANGELES
MEWSTHEATRE, SCOTLAND / CORKY DOMINGUEZ

FILM / TV

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN:
DEAD MAN'S CHEST (OPPOSITE JOHNNY DEPP)
HYDRA
OCEAN'S 13 (OPPOSITE AL PACINO)
41 YR OLD VIRGIN KNOCKED UP SARAH.....
THINK TANK
NCIS LA
MY NAME IS EARL
FAMILY GUY
THE NINE
PINK COLLAR (OPPOSITE ALICIA SILVERSTONE)
LET BOB DO IT (w/ JASON ALEXANDER)
WENDELL & VINNIE
INCREDIBLE CREW
HAUNTED (OPPOSITE MATTHEW FOX)
GREEK
CSI
DRAGNET
GIDEON'S CROSSING

SUPPORTING
SUPPORTING
SUPPORTING
SUPPORTING
LEAD
GUEST STAR
GUEST STAR
RECURRING
RECURRING
RECURRING
RECURRING
CO-STAR
CO-STAR
CO-STAR
CO-STAR
CO-STAR
CO-STAR
CO-STAR

JERRY BRUCKHEIMER / GOREVERBINSKI
HYDRA PRODS, LLC / ANDREW PRENDERGAST
JERRY WEINTRAUB / STEVEN SODERBERGH
STEINBECK, LLC / CRAIG MOSS
ALCHEMIST PRODS / BRIAN PETERSEN
CBS / JAMES HANLON
NBC / EYAL GORDIN
FOX / MIKE KIM
DISNEY-ABC / ALEX GRAVES
DISNEY-ABC / ALAN POUL
G. ROSENTHAL / JASON ALEXANDER
NICKELODEON / VICTOR GONZALEZ
CARTOON NETWORK / DANNY J. BOYLE
UPN / VERN GILLUM
ABC FAMILY / PATRICK NORRIS
CBS / ROB BAILEY
DISNEY-ABC / JEAN DE SEGONZAC
DISNEY-ABC / LESLIE LIBMAN

VOICE OVER

PATH TO 9/11
THE GREAT RAID
PAC BELL: CALLER ID

COMMERCIALS

DIET DR. PEPPER
ALERO
GEEK SQUAD

TRAINING

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA - MFA ACTOR TRAINING (CANDIDATE 2019)
ACTING: COLLEEN KELLY, JENNY WALES MOVEMENT/STAGE COMBAT: MARIANNE KUBIK VOICE: KATE BURKE
ANTAEUS THEATRE CO - SHAKESPEARE STUDY: ELIZABETH SWAIN. ARMIN SHIMERMANN
THEATRicum BOTANICUM - SHAKESPEARE INTENSIVE: SUSAN ANGELO, ELLEN GEER, MELORA MARSHALL, ALAN BLUMENFELD
STEPHEN BOOK WORKSHOP: BETH DEMENT
ACTING WORKSHOP, WLY THEATRE, SCOTLAND: SCOTT JOHNSTON
CSU, FULLERTON - BA IN THEATRE ARTS (ACTING EMPHASIS): DONN FINN, G. KANNE, MICHAEL KANE, LEONARD MEENACH

SKILLS

VOICE - BARITONE/BASS. SPORTS - BASKETBALL, CHESS, PING PONG, TENNIS. IMPERSONATION - BRANDO AS THE GODFATHER.
BREAKDANCE (POPPIN'), MOVEWELL. BEAT BOX, SOUND EFFECTS, SPIN TRAY ON FINGER. DRIVE 5-SPEED MANUAL

Bio

Michael Miranda was born in Detroit, MI and has lived in the Philippines and Los Angeles. After earning a BA in Theatre Arts from California State University of Fullerton, he pursued his passion for acting and has worked professionally in film, television, commercials, voiceovers and stage and is a member of SAG-AFTRA. He has worked with such notable actors as Jason Alexander, the late James Avery, Orlando Bloom, Tim Daly, Johnny Depp, Matthew Fox, Seth MacFarlane, Ed O'Neill, Jaime Pressly, Alicia Silverstone, and Al Pacino. Stage credits include: *Tartuffe* (UVA); *Ken Ludwig's Baskerville* (Heritage Theatre Festival at UVA); *Shakespeare In Love* (VA Rep); *The Taming of the Shrew* (Los Angeles); *The Comedy of Errors* (Las Vegas Shakespeare Co); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theatricum Botanicum in Topanga, CA); and *This Land* (Scotland and London). Film/TV/Commercial credits include: *Diet Dr. Pepper*; *Geek Squad*; *CSI* (CBS), *Dragnet* (ABC); *Greek* (ABC Family), *Haunted* (UPN); *Let Bob Do It* (Sitcom Pilot); *My Name is Earl* (NBC); *NCIS-LA* (CBS); *The Nine* (ABC); *Pink Collar* (Sitcom Pilot); *Wendell & Vinnie* (Nickelodeon); *Ocean's 13*; and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*.

Personal Statement

My name is Michael Miranda. I'm about to graduate.

As a graduate student in the acting program here at UVA, I was introduced to all kinds of theatre, such as, physical theatre, devised theatre, masks, character masks, neutral masks, and even a little bit of puppetry. And I also got to work in different kinds of spaces, such as, a thrust stage and a box theatre, which was challenging for me in the beginning in terms of figuring out what those angles were because most of my experience was on a proscenium stage, and so, my natural tendency was to play to an audience sitting just on one side. But one of the big realizations that I had during my time here was that whenever I'm cast in a role that would traditionally go to someone who was not a person of color, as an Asian American actor, as a Filipino actor, I realized that I had both an opportunity and an obligation. Basically whenever I'm cast in any role really, I am representing Asian American actors, which is a big responsibility, and so, I need to make sure that I'm doing the best that I can to live up to that responsibility.

My name is Michal Miranda. I'm an actor.

Production Photos

Tartuffe by Moliere
Ruth Caplin Theatre, Fall 2018
Photo credit Michael Bailey



Ken Ludwig's Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery
by Ken Ludwig; Ruth Caplin Theatre, Summer 2017
Photo credit Michael Bailey



New Works Festival: The Lookout by Oliva Comm
Helms Theatre, Spring 2017
Photo credit Michael Bailey



Love's a Bitch an adaptation by Dave Dalton
Ruth Caplin Theatre, Fall 2017
Photo credit Michael Bailey



Blood Wedding by Federico Garcia Lorca translated by Langston Hughes
Culbreth Theatre, Spring 2017
Photo credit Michael Bailey

