

5-1-2019

## Seven Ways To Say I Love You, a BA Showcase

Erika R. Dampier

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### Recommended Citation

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**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

Seven Ways To Say I Love You, a BA showcase

**A Capstone Submitted to the**

**University Honors Program**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the**

**Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree**

**With Honors**

**Department Of**

Theatre and Dance

**By**

Erika Dampier

**DeKalb, Illinois**

December 2019

University Honors Program  
Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title (print or type)  
Seven Ways To Say I Love You, a BA showcase

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Faculty Supervisor (print or type) Dr. Gibson Cima

Faculty Approval Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Department of (print or type) Theatre and Dance

Date of Approval (print or type) \_\_\_\_\_

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HONORS CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

Entirely performed and directed by May and December 2019 Bachelor of Arts candidates, Seven Ways to Say I Love You showcases the talents within Northern Illinois University’s School of Theatre and Dance. The Bachelor of Arts candidates have a truly unique degree program in the School of Theatre and Dance with the ability to receive a general degree with the choice of an emphasis in performance, directing, playwriting, and more. This allowed each individual involved in the creation and production of this performance to choose an area of theatre that related heavily to the path they want to pursue, and dabble in other areas as well. Several meetings were held with faculty advisor, Dr. Gibson Cima, throughout the Fall 2018 semester to pick a script, assign roles and directors, and plan other factors related to the production. Rehearsals began in February 2019 with each group of plays rehearsing once a week with an all (all-called) rehearsal on Saturday. For this production, I had the pleasure of acting in *Film Noir* and *Smashing Eyes and Little Folded Hands*, as well as directing *The Moment*. Each of these plays within Seven Ways To Say I Love You gave me a different experience and allowed me to develop my craft without the necessity of doing multiple plays.

SPECIAL THANKS

To my fellow graduates:

Courtney Gronewold, Tanya Klein, Nathan Pino, McKinzy Vanderlaan, Vinny Prisco, Katie Dralle

To our technical team:

Tessa Poffenberger, Ryan Burke, Malin Westbye, Rachel Jaco, George Hook, Dave Doherty

To our faculty advisor:

Dr. Gibson Cima

To our second set of eyes and advisors:

Brandi Watson, Joel Ottenheimer, Kay Martinovich

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### **THE REASON WHY**

In the School of Theatre and Dance, the Bachelor of Arts program is the one with the least amount of students enrolled despite the opportunity being a BA presents. With a Bachelor of Arts

degree in Theatre studies, students are able to explore the difference facets of theatre, the possibilities are endless when looking into the many routes that one can pursue with this degree. We are told that we can be playwrights, actors, directors, stage managers and so much more; so how does a program that offers so much variety lack the enrollment that the BFA/MFA programs have? Every single BA candidate will have a different answer to this question, but I believe that a majority of us graduating seniors can agree that it has to do with the lack of cohesive leadership and fellowship. The BFA/MFA candidates travel in a cohort - they attend the same classes (within the program) with one another during their years at NIU. But since the BA offers so many routes, and the flexibility to pursue other ventures, we often only see each other in the core classes or outside of class if we're lucky. One of the biggest ways we thought this bond could be formed for the BAs was through this showcase, suggested by Courtney Gronewold, and proposed to Dr. Cima by the graduating senior class.

We wanted to create a show that was produced entirely by Bachelor of Arts candidates that varied from the showcase that the BFA/MFA candidates do in the Spring semester. This showcase was intended to show how talented each of us truly are in our different facets, while bringing us together as a family. I believe that we achieved each of our goals throughout this process, and enough though we hit a couple of snags, our artistry was presented in front of those who do not normally get to see everything we are capable of.

### **THE FIRST READ-THROUGH & DISCUSSION**

Our first couple of meetings with Dr. Cima involved several discussions of exactly what we wanted this showcase to be, the budget, and eventually the show itself. In our first meeting, we all gave ideas of what we might want to do for the showcase - this ranged from just simple scenes,

scenes along with musical numbers, or a full out play itself. In this *Seven Ways to Say I Love You* was thrown out as a suggestion of a play. *Seven Ways To Say I Love You* is a collection of short plays from playwright Adam Szymkowicz. The plays in the production are as follows: *Ambience Pizza*, *Film Noir*, *Mind of the Critic*, *Moneypenny Waits*, *The Moment*, *Smashing Eyes and Little Folded Hands*, and *John and April*. The group read through the preview on Playscripts and decided we wanted to purchase it for a read-through.

Once the script arrived each of us took turns reading the different plays - by the end of the read, we were so pleased with the script and ready to get started on the showcase. In order to determine who was cast in or directed each piece, we went through each of them one by one and stated if we were interested in the character or being the director of it. By the end of it, we successfully cast and assigned directors as follows:

*Ambience Pizza*

Director(s): Courtney Gronewold

John: Nathan Pino

April: McKinzy Vanderlaan

*Film Noir*

Director(s): Tanya Klein and Nathan Pino

Jessica: Erika Dampier

Dick: Vinny Prisco

*Mind of the Critic*

Director(s): Courtney Gronewold and Nathan Pino

Critic: Nathan Pino

Melinda: Courtney Gronewold

*Moneypenny Waits*

Director(s): Vinny Prisco

Cat: Tanya Klein

Moneypenny: McKinzy Vanderlaan

*The Moment*

Director(s): Erika Dampier

Jane: Tanya Klein

George: Vinny Prisco

*Smashing Eyes and Little Folded Hands*

Director(s): McKinzy Vanderlaan

Trina: Erika Dampier

Jamie: Vinny Prisco

*John and April*

Director(s): Courtney Gronewold

John: Nathan Pino

April: McKinzy Vanderlaan

Doctor: Courtney Gronewold

Note: in order to use rehearsal time wisely, not everyone was called to each rehearsal. Two groups were formed and rehearsed one day during the week with an all rehearsal on Saturdays to show the progress made through the week and give feedback.

**TIMETABLE OF EVENTS & REHEARSAL CALENDARS**

The following is the initial timetable of events that outline how responsibilities are divided and what said responsibilities are. There is then the rehearsal calendars for the

Activity:	Implementation Time:	Responsibility:
Initial meeting with Dr. Cima to discuss & propose plans for the showcase	November/December	Senior BA Candidates
Read through the script	November/December	Senior BA Candidates, Dr.



	January/February	Cima & Stage Manager(s)
Distribute responsibilities and assign cast & directors	November/December	Senior BA Candidates & Dr. Cima
Begin reviewing script & forming characters of director concepts	December/January	Senior BA Candidates, Dr. Cima & Stage Manager(s)
Form rehearsal schedules & rehearse	January/February/March	Senior BA Candidates & Stage Manager(s)
Attend production meetings	February	Senior BA Candidates, Dr. Cima, Stage Manager(s) & Technical Directors
Fundraise & Advertise for showcase	February/March	Senior BA Candidates & Stage Manager(s)
Finishing touches & showtime	March	Senior BA Candidates & Stage Manager(s)

## BA Showcase Rehearsal Calendar

Group 1: Pizza, Critic, John/April

Group 2: Noir, Moment, Moneypenny, Smashing

# February 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Rehearsal 7:00-10:00 Acting Lab Group 1	5	6	7	8 Rehearsal 7:00-10:00 Acting Lab Group 2	9 Rehearsal 12:00-2:00 Group 2 12-1 Acting Lab ALL @ 1
10	11 Rehearsal 7:00-10:00 Acting Lab Group 1	12 Production Meeting 6:00-6:50 PM SB 241	13	14	15	16 Rehearsal 5:00-9:00 5-7 Group 2 ALL 7-9 Acting Lab
17	18	19	20 Rehearsal 7:00-10:00 Acting Lab Corner Theater	21	22	23 Rehearsal 10:00-12:00 Group 2 12:00-2:00 ALL Corner Theater
24	25 Rehearsal 7:00-10:00 Corner Theater Group 1	26 Production Meeting 6:00-6:50 SB 241	27	28		

## B.A. Showcase Rehearsal Calendar

Group 1: Pizza, Critic, John/April

Group 2: Noir, Moneypenny, Moment, Smashing

# March 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Rehearsal 10:00-12:00 Group 2 12:00-2:00 ALL Corner Theater
3	4 CREW VIEW 6:00-10:00 Corner Theater	5 TECH 1 6:00-10:00 Corner Theater	6 TECH 2 6:00-10:00 Corner Theater	7 TECH 3 6:00-11:00 Corner Theater	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 TECH 4 6:00-11:00 Corner Theater	19 FINAL DRESS 6:00-11:00 Corner Theater	20 OPENING NIGHT 7:30 Curtain	21 PERFORMANCE 7:30 Curtain	22 PERFORMANCE 7:30 Curtain	23 PERFORMANCE 2:00 Curtain 7:30 Curtain
24 PHOTOSHOOT 11:30-12:30 CLOSE 2:00 Curtain STRIKE	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## **ACTING IN FILM NOIR**

*Film Noir* was arguably one of the most difficult scenes in *Seven Ways To Say I Love You*. This piece follows the story of Jessica and Dick, providing a twist on the classic love story. It reminds me of all of those campy old time movies, and it was difficult to maintain this campy tone of the piece while developing a relationship and motives for the characters in the piece. My character, Jessica, yearns for Dick's apology and statements of his wrong doings in their relationship; but, there was so much more in the subtext of this piece. Initially, I played Jessica with a lot of anger and sass (something that is often found in the characters I have portrayed) - I figured those emotions fueled Jessica's fire, but there was so much more to that and I was only at the beginning of her journey. I found that in *Film Noir*, there was so much more than just the anger and sass that drove Jessica to make the choices she made in the piece - there was also a lot of hurt and sadness that I believe she masked with that anger and sass.

The motivation and emotionality of the piece was not the only difficult part about the piece for me. Just getting the lines memorized and memorizing the blocking created challenges for me as well. Between classes, homework, rehearsals for *Wonderfully Alice* (the mainstage production I did right after the showcase) and more, I had a lot on my plate. I was on-book and/or calling for line for this scene up until our dress rehearsals the week of the show. I worked on memorization and blocking throughout the process, and over spring break. I had multiple times of blanking on lines or stumbling through the blocking, but I never gave up on that piece. After defeating these small issues, *Film Noir* was a blast to work on and I am grateful to experience that ride with Jessica.

## **DIRECTING THE MOMENT**

*The Moment* is truly a special moment for me in *Seven Ways to Say I Love You*. This piece was my directorial debut for a production bigger than my directing classes. I have to say that I was anxious to take on this role because I am so used to being on the opposite side. For this piece, I really got to explore my style of directing and I learned that I really enjoy collaborative works. For instance, not every moment was from my own mind, my actors helped provide several different aspects of the blocking including my favorite part - Jane sitting on George's desk trying to seduce and persuade him.

Directing is not an easy process, but I definitely can say that I have more respect for it after *The Moment*. I realized that, as a director, my biggest thing is having my actors play and feel comfortable because that's how I as an actor. Directing this piece was challenging because we had to work with the relationship between Jane and George, as well as the stakes that each character had to lose. I also really wanted my actors to live in the truth of their characters. Overall, I am overly proud of

the scene we all put together and I am grateful to have this experience directing. It gave me a little more confidence in my abilities and I am looking forward to directing more in my future.

### **ACTING IN *SMASHING EYES AND LITTLE FOLDED HANDS***

*Smashing Eyes and Little Folded Hands* is my absolute favorite piece in *Seven Ways To Say I Love You*. At first I struggled with this piece a little bit, in memorizing the lines and understanding the abstract idea behind the text of the play. But with help from my director, McKinzy Vanderlaan, I found the beauty in the abstract. There were a couple of rehearsals where it was just she and I, and in those rehearsals we really dissected the text and tried to find the imagery in it. My character, Trina, has these naive qualities to her but you can tell that she really goes for what she wants - she was truly a character different from those I have played before. This scene felt so different from Film Noir, and I am honored to have been in this scene because it helped McKinzy find her calling in directing.

For *Smashing Eyes and Little Folded Hands*, I also got to work with the same scene partner as Film Noir, and it was interesting to see how we worked differently on this scene. I could tell that we both had an easier time learning the lines and blocking for this one. The chemistry was a little hard to gage through the abstractness of the piece, but overall I really enjoyed working on this piece.