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Cowboy Boogaloo

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Bard College

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COWBOY BOOGALOO

A Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of Arts of

Bard College

By

Paris Adorno

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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How'd You End Up Being A Cowboy, If You Don't Mind Me Asking?: Early Beginnings

Before I left to my semester abroad in Berlin, I had little to no idea of what my Senior Project would be. I knew that I wanted to direct in some capacity. In the Fall semester of 2017 I took the Directing Seminar with Jonathan Rosenberg, and the course shifted my focus within theater-making. It wasn't until Directing Seminar that I foresaw the ability to merge my interests in performance practice and dramaturgy through directing. The course not only gave me a solid foundation to move onto other projects, but brought me closer to my peers in the Theater and Performing Arts community.

Imogen Thomas and I shared a common philosophy about approaching theater: that even when dealing with serious topics, humor and lightness can help communicate the essential themes in a productive way. I will admit that I really hoped Imogen would ask me to work with him on Senior Project. Before I left to my semester abroad, I might have even yelled out the window of the car to him: "Don't forget about me!"

My engagement with theater during my semester in Berlin directly shaped the type of work I hoped to make in my final year. While taking a course called "Directing Brecht" I became fascinated with how Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theater impacted works being created through the contemporary moment. In addition to this, I had access to the cutting edge performances being produced in Berlin. One particular performance that struck me was the *Good Person of Szechwan* at the Schaubuehne¹.

What struck me most about this adaptation was the use of humor and self-awareness to highlight key themes within the play. When the actors were not performing they were sitting on

¹ Brecht, Bertolt, and Hans Jürgen Osmers. "The Good Person of Szechwan .", Mar. 2018.

stage, watching and remaining present with each other as an ensemble. Actors moved seamlessly through character, choreography, music, and text. *The Good Person of Szechwan* also utilized spectacle through turning monologues into rock and pop songs to familiarize the contemporary audience and then alienate them. Certain archetypes were examined as well, but all strangely juxtaposed to reveal the theme of capitalism that Brecht had originally intended to underscore the play.

One particular element of the Epic Theater that became very important to me was the concept of *gestus* and how it utilizes clear physical movements to express an “attitude or single aspect of an attitude” that is “expressible in words or actions.”² I was curious about how *gestus* revealed the inner life of a character and also unveiled a sociopolitical hierarchy between characters. Bertolt Brecht would work with his actors to create a *gestus* particular to each individual character. These gestures would be recognizable to the audience as moments when the character is grappling with their identity, asserting themselves, or being challenged. I was influenced by Brecht’s directorial techniques, many of which we practiced in our course. In thinking about Senior Project, I hoped to employ these elements in a future rehearsal room.

I Want To Be The Sun on the Horizon: Unpacking the Figure of the Cowboy

In mid-February, I received a call from Imogen and it went pretty plainly like this:

“Do you want to do a show about cowboys”

“Oh definitely.”

² Willett, John, ed. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. By Bertolt Brecht. Trans. and notes John Willett. London: Methuen, 1964. P. 44

Imogen was curious in investigating the figure of the cowboy because to him, the cowboy reflected the extremes of gendered performance and in turn, violence. He was interested in how the cowboy was an example of hypermasculinity and also a kind of queerness. The cowboy that he was referencing and the one that we interrogated together was a specific kind of cowboy. Not the figure of American past, but the mythological—even glamorous— archetype pulled from history and adopted by Hollywood, cigarette advertisements, and other forms of media. This cowboy is the picture of “coolness”; a representation of unattainable masculinity.

The induction of this cowboy into American culture was a process that began in the late 19th century to the early 20th century. As a performative and heroic figure, the cowboy first made its appearances in Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West Shows”³. These shows glamorized the lives of what might have been true cowboys, or ranchers who moved from town to town. Their lives became fantastical adventures filled with action and conflict. In this process of romanticization, the history of violence inflicted upon Native Americans by cowboys and other pioneer settlers was erased and then reimagined. In this transformation, the cowboy became the lone figure, inhabiting both a conventional and subversive space. The cowboy lives by no ones rules, yet quite often saves the day and returns a certain kind of white-washed “order”.

These plotlines were then adopted by the emerging Western genre of films, which also added to the glamorous portrayal of the cowboy. Spaghetti Westerns helped cultivate the image of the “cool” and even fashionable cowboy by attaching a specific aesthetic to this figure through cinematic elements such as the musical score, color schemes, costumes, and landscapes.

³ Goetzmann, William H., "Review of Buffalo Bill and the Wild West By Peter H. Hassrick, Richard Slotkin, Vine Deloria, Jr., Howard R. Lamar, William Judson, and Leslie A. Fiedler" 1982. P. 252.

Ultimately, these images became rooted in American household culture through their presence in cigarette advertisements. In 1954, Marlboro debuted the “Marlboro Man”, a strategic marketing campaign that sought to help sell filtered cigarettes, previously thought to be a “feminine product”⁴. The phrase “Come to Marlboro Country” became synonymous with the silhouetted figure of the lone cowboy smoking a cigarette⁵. Within these advertisements, the cowboy became the image for ideal masculinity. In mobilizing the cowboy, Marlboro successfully appropriated and merged the historical cowboy with the glamorous and marketable aesthetic from Westerns. The lure of these advertisements became a convincing way to believe one could buy into this attractive and powerful lifestyle. We may never be able to acquire this lifestyle, but we will spend all of our money on trying to.

Our motivation to become and redefine the cowboy in our project came from that same desire. The desire to perform holding power in a capacity that we do not usually have access to as queer people. What attracted us to this figure was the line between hypermasculinity and subversion we imagined the cowboy straddled. He works within conventions and uses them to his advantage, but also has the power to undermine them—and get away with it. In Judith Halberstam’s collection of essays *Female Masculinity*, they remark that “masculinity becomes legible when it leaves the white male body”⁶. Written by a gender-queer playwright and inhabited by a variety of performers, we were curious in the ways this “masculinity” becomes subverted and unraveled. As people with variants levels of privilege, but never white cis-male

⁴ Brandt, A. (2006). *The Cigarette Century*. New York: Basic Books.

⁵ Arrieta-Meraz, Josselyn. “StMU History Media.” *StMU History Media - Featuring Historical Research, Writing, and Media at St. Mary's University*, 10 Dec. 2017, www.stmuhistorymedia.org/for-mans-flavor-come-to-marlboro-country-the-marlboro-man-and-its-advertising-success/.

⁶ “An Introduction to Female Masculinity.” *Female Masculinity*, by Judith Halberstam, Duke University Press, 2019, P.2.

privilege, Imogen and I wanted to explore how these projections of gender and sexuality fall apart at the seams within the performance.

At the heart of our interest in focusing in on the cowboy was the quest for freedom. Imogen noted that when inhabiting the role of cowboy he felt on a metaphoric level he could “fuck anyone, walk-in anywhere, ride whichever way he pleased”⁷. Being a cowboy is an engagement in hyper-performance and possessing the ability to transcend conventional norms. Our cowboy was going to be the coolest, gayest, most powerful cowboy there ever was.

Ridin’ The Range: The Writing Process

My involvement in the writing process evolved over the course of the project. At first, when Imogen and I designated roles as writer/performer and director, I tried to remain as hands-off as possible. I thought that the best strategy in my role as Director was to let the play fall into my lap and then make my own creative choices from the given text. A lesson I learned in Jonathan’s “Directing Seminar” was to avoid altering a text no matter how challenging, and to do the difficult task of interpreting the many layers within it. Although I had the privilege of having the playwright in the room with me, I was motivated to begin making decisions based on my own creative ideas.

The script went through a series of changes from the beginning of the process until the final version presented on stage. Originally, Imogen wanted to write a Western adaptation of the Colette novel *The Pure and Impure*. The novel centered around a lesbian queer experience and the first version of the script Imogen sent to me followed suit. The first draft was entitled

⁷ Imogen Thomas from my own personal notes on Sept. 9, 2018.

Fingersmith and took place in some mythological Western setting that is recognizable from T.V. and film. *Fingersmith* featured a cast of stock characters also found in this world: the young ingenue, the hero (cowboy), the brothel owner, sheriff, and so forth. Although these roles were regendered (still existing in a cisgendered binary) the plot followed a similar narrative structure to those that appear within the canon of Western films. An undermined hero, an antagonist out to get the damsel in distress, a fight scene, a love scene and the final moment of riding into the sunset⁸. In this first draft, I was intrigued by the idea of bringing queerness into a heteronormative storyline and setting. However, what I questioned whether or not it was interrogating the cowboy specifically. I believe that this first version never felt true to us because it was not exploring what we were really interested in. We wanted to move forward with our original goal which was to redefine the cowboy as a queer figure, rather than forcing queerness onto the backdrop of a Western.

Before we completely abandoned it, I had begun preparing my work on the script thinking about character and larger themes at play. The script encapsulated a specific world through language and humor. However, once we returned to *Bard in the Fall*, Imogen began to feel detached from it. As both playwright and actor, he didn't believe in the script and therefore was worried he wouldn't believe in the part he was going to play. Because we had so much time, I told him to let it go. I wanted to be a supportive friend and project partner by giving him the space to explore any creative possibilities. I saw him struggle with not knowing how to begin again, how to engage with a non-Western plot, and how to make this more true to what we were searching for. This part of the process was perhaps the most challenging for me because I did not

⁸ Spicer, Jeffrey A., "The Changing Face of the Western: an Analysis of Hollywood Western Films from Director John Ford and Others During the Years 1939 to 1964", 2012.

know how I could provide the most support in this capacity. From my perspective, the biggest overcoming for Imogen during this difficult rewriting time was figuring out that he wanted to confront his relationship to his own gender and queer identity. Once Imogen began to unpack how this association with the cowboy reflected some of his own perceptions of queerness, the new script began to develop. There was still a struggle with plot, but the newly formed scenes were rich with language, gestures, and metaphors. However, I still felt a little bit unsure about how to give him proper feedback and what my role was at that point. In our weekly meetings with Miriam Felton-Dansky, I expressed this concern with her. She gave me some strategies on how to best attempt working alongside Imogen. My primary concern was that I had preconceived notions of what a SPROJ timeline should be. I began to feel like the “Writing Process” was overlapping with the “Rehearsal Process” since at this point we had cast our ensemble and were scheduling rehearsals.

I was initially anxious because I had set up these hard and fast rules concerning when I would step into the process, and this held me back for a while. All of this came to a head when Imogen and I finally had a breakthrough, where we expressed our concerns about the direction the project and script was going in. After this, we both sat down and constructed a basic plotline with the key characters. We developed their names, who Boogaloo was, why Boogaloo was going West, when he would meet the cowboys to bring them with him on his journey, and the following conflicts after that. One exciting moment during this breakdown/breakthrough meeting was brainstorming my favorite scenes within the script which were the various “origin stories”. This productive session, led to a few more productive sessions where we found a few different scenarios the boys would be in, why they would meet Outlaw, etc. Often, it would be begin

placing them in a situation such as: “what if they were down by the river” and seeing where the interactions would go from there.

The writing and editing process went on a long journey until the end of Winter Intersession. Something valuable I learned during this time was to trust the process and to not force unnecessary expectations onto myself. In collaboration, I also learned that I was excited to do something beyond directing which was bringing our conceptual vision into writing. Once I discovered this, Imogen and I were able to solve problems within the script as a team.

Welcome to Our Parts: Casting the Ensemble

Integral to the show, was our trusty band of boys. The cast of *Cowboy Boogaloo* was the strongest and closest ensemble I have worked with at Bard and that was due to both the individual and the culture of the rehearsal room. It was very important that we cast a strong ensemble. For starters, we were thinking of the kinds of “band of cowboys” or “bandits” featured within Western cinema⁹. These archetypes are constantly traveling with each other, supporting each other, providing for and defending each other. And moreover, since we wanted the tone to be comedic, finding a present and an engaged ensemble was essential.

All of these factors were dependent on the casting. Imogen and I hoped to find imaginative performers and movers. During both the auditions and callbacks, we were looking to discover who these characters could be, based on what people brought to the table. One of the ways in which attempted this was by creating a few improvised activities that the auditioners would engage in. This included a “one-upping” exercise using the prompt “I’m so much of a

⁹ Ibid. P. 6.

cowboy that _____” and the variant “I’m the cowboy, I do _____”. The purpose of this exercise was to see each performer create a persona for themselves while revealing some of the gestures, language, and images they associated with being a cowboy. It also helped inspire the scene in the final version of the play when each of the cowboys introduces themselves to the audience such as: “I’m Cowboy Go-Go. I ride quick and talk only when I got somethin ta say”¹⁰.

Another enlightening moment during callbacks was between Tim Halvorsen and Andrew Roberge. Attempting to decide between which of the two to cast, we asked them each to “tell us a story about your journey West”. They both told imaginative stories and encouraged each other when watching the other one perform. After seeing this very true to theme cowboy camaraderie, we decided we needed them both. Thus, Cowboy Righthanded and Cowboy Lefthanded were born. At the end of the day, we had our eight special cowboys including Imogen and were ready to begin playing.

Bein’ a Cowboy Sure Is a Bitchin’ Time: The Rehearsal Room

Rehearsals for *Cowboy Boogaloo* were without a doubt always a fun, creative, and safe space that I looked forward to. Despite any challenges we were having with the script, the cast always came to rehearsal with an open mind and attitude. Additionally, the relationship between Imogen and I was built on a solid foundation of communication. We established that it would be best for the process if our creative choices were respected and attempted with full commitment, but that they were not precious. I would plan rehearsals and lead the room, but I would always inform Imogen as to what the rehearsal plan was if he had any thoughts or concerns he wanted to

¹⁰ Thomas, Imogen. *Cowboy Boogaloo*. 2019. P.4

voice. I believe that the relationship between all of us within the rehearsal room was so generative because we trusted each other, actors and director alike.

Our warm-ups generally functioned to help the actors ease into the world of the play. At the beginning of the process, some of these exercises included devising short pieces. When we were still developing the script, these devising exercises were necessary for inspiring Imogen's writing process. A few of the scenes within the final version of the play directly reflected the work done during this period. The "Sleeping scene" as well as the "Creek scene" are clear examples where some of the gestures and stage pictures the ensemble created during devising became apart of the final blocking. As the process evolved, the warm-ups began to include contextual activities such as: learning the Virginia Reel or Hannah Montana's Hoedown Throwdown (our personal favorite), "flash mob" tableau making, and working on their character's specific "ride" and "cowboy pose".

The latter half of those were crucial in pushing forward the relationship between the actor and *gestus*. In order to create a clear transformation into the cowboy persona, each actor had to cultivate their own specific "cowboy pose". This pose was something that we worked a long time on developing. The "cowboy pose" would be used to show when the characters were trying to actively "perform cowboyness". These gestures were practiced during the "flash tableau mob" activities that we would do, where the actors had 5 seconds to make a random tableau in their "cowboy pose". Expanding on this physicality also helped the actors think about their distinctive character trajectory and how their character thought about performance and presentability. This is most clearly demonstrated at the end of the play. As each of the cowboys leaves, they begin to drop their "cowboy pose" except for Cowboy Boogaloo who desperately attempts to move

across the stage while over-executing his “cowboy pose”. In this moment of self-doubt, Boogaloo relies on his “cowboy pose” to assert himself, even though it is a facade.

Imogen and I were very grateful to have such an imaginative ensemble that brought the world of the play to life. I valued the opinion of the cast and their generosity during the rehearsals did influence specific blocking and choreography. The only difficulty I felt in leading the room was maintaining a level of productivity every rehearsal. Because the cast became close friends, quite often I would have difficulty keeping them focused on the task at hand. Maintaining a balance between the professional and personal was a challenge and ongoing learning process for me. I discussed this dilemma with Miriam in our one-on-one meetings. At the core of my problems with taking charge, was my anxiety over taking up space and unlearning gendered behavior. I often apologized for asking for things that were in my right to ask. I didn’t want the cast to think of me as superior and loved the very friendly environment we had cultivated. However, because our weekly meetings were frequent but short, I needed everyone to be focused from the minute we began. One of the ways I acted on this was by turning apologies into thank yous. Additionally, Imogen and I had a conversation about what his role within the rehearsal room should be. We discussed how the majority of underclassmen cast would look to him on how to compose themselves during a rehearsal and he needed to be a model for them. After this conversation, the following rehearsals felt more focused on accomplishing each task and we moved into our final weeks on a strong note. I am proud of myself for taking action during this time even though I was scared to, it helped me take myself seriously as both a director and a professional woman.

You Got A Real Way About You: The Queer Gaze

Through developing a piece around an allegory of queerness, Imogen and I discovered more nuances that spoke to a truth we were originally unable to articulate. Throughout the process of bringing the piece to life and uncovering our true mission, the original thesis of the show underwent an important transformation. What was originally an undoing of gender, became an exploration of gender through queerness and queer relationships. In redefining the cowboy as the “queer ideal”, we wanted to make a world where gender and desire were not limited to representations of the binary. There is no one way to experience queerness and we hoped to make that clear.

Working on the cultivation of queer friendships between Boogaloo and the boys is a task that brought me great joy in the process. The group of cowboys was referred to as “boys” as a way to deconstruct gender by using language as a performative tool. None of the actors truly represented the typical hyper-masculine cowboy because they each found their own personal cowboy. We never wanted to impose any gender onto anyone that they didn’t feel comfortable with. Because the world we were creating was about exploring any and all possibilities, we left it up to them to decide what their cowboy looked like. Each cowboy character was so fleshed out and made me cry laughter and deep understanding at every rehearsal. At the core of the ensemble’s dynamic was the emphasis on ambiguity within queer friendships. Most specifically this arose in the characters Cowboy Lefthanded and Cowboy Righthanded. In scene work with Tim and Andrew, we strove to blur the lines between platonic and romantic. Who were these two characters and what was their relationship? How did it differ from the rest of the band of boys, or even the connection between Outlaw and Boogaloo? To me, their relationship did not need to be

defined as one thing or another. They existed in some sort of brother-lover-friend dynamic that worked well within the piece. We knew for sure that we did not want to imbue their relationship with any shame or attachment to “no-homo bro culture”. This dynamic also highlighted how queer friendships and relationships are often read and surveilled in the public sphere. The loving manner in which they interacted with each other, their comfort and symbiotic movements in contrast to their constant one-upping attempted to highlight this illegibility. Our goal was to have both the characters and the audience sit in that uncertainty but without judgment.

With all the boys, we aspired to treat each character with incredible kindness, compassion, and intelligence. After *Midways*, one of the points of feedback we received from the advisors was the question of whether the audience should be laughing at or with the characters on their journey. Imogen and I were challenged by this feedback because our goal was always to use self-reflective humor to reveal a certain kind of love. We wanted to make it clear that the characters respected themselves and each other. Their sometimes absurd or silly behavior did not take away from this but was apart of being free to act without negative judgment. Moving forward, during every rehearsal I would remind the actors to approach their characters with love and seriousness. Although they moved together on this journey as an ensemble for the majority of the play, each character needed to find motivation for riding West beyond just following Boogaloo. This was essential for the moment when all the cowboys leave and Cowboy Boogaloo and Cowboy Phil are left alone on stage. Phil and I worked to uncover the textures of Cowboy Phil’s response when Boogaloo defeatedly states he thinks “this West [they are] aimin at ain’t nothin at all.”¹¹ Throughout the course of the play, Cowboy Phil and the other cowboys come to

¹¹ Thomas, Imogen. *Cowboy Boogaloo*. 2019. P. 24

learn a truth about themselves and what is important about going West. In that moment, Phil responds that he “can’t say [he] knows what [Boogaloo] means.”¹² I believe he says this because Boogaloo is now calling into question the validity of going West, and Phil has spent the entirety of the play attaching his own significant meaning to it.

The difference in this journey for Boogaloo in comparison to that of the boys is that Boogaloo believes he is riding towards a goal. This goal is whatever the West symbolizes for attaining a credible and ideal version of queerness. For the band of boys, the journey itself is the destination; a space where they can encourage and support each other. With this in mind, we wanted to show a multitude of queer relationships, something that is rarely represented on stage or in media. When they leave Boogaloo at the end of the play, it is not because they do not care about him, but because they are ready to move on to finding their own path having experienced sharing it with others.

Another challenge we faced was finding the specificity of the relationship between Boogaloo and Outlaw. The character of Outlaw was created in order to show Boogaloo’s unstable sense of self by establishing the “ideal” for him to compare himself to. At first, we weren’t sure if Outlaw’s gender was relevant. However, it became important to Tess’s character development that she identified as a woman and took up this space and power. To Boogaloo, Outlaw was the ideal “queer” cowboy because she was able to adopt and subvert conventions of both masculinity and femininity. When we began to grapple with the connection between these characters, we had to unpack the many nuances this relationship had for both of them. What we boiled down in fleshing out this very complicated relationship, was how the “Queer Gaze”

¹² Ibid.

functioned within this play. Representing only the romantic elements of their relationship would erase the other parts of it. In the scene where Outlaw and Boogaloo first meet the stage, directions indicate: “BOOGALOO watches OUTLAW with admiration, attraction, envy, sorrow, the QUEER GAZE”¹³. The Queer Gaze displays the ambiguity in this relationship and this world, where exploration comes with unexpected twists and turns.

This ambiguity is further complicated in how Boogaloo’s projections onto Outlaw make her a concept to him and not a real person. To him, Outlaw is everything he feels he cannot be, although he makes several attempts to perform it. However, what we came to discover is that the only difference between Boogaloo and Outlaw is how they explore their queerness. Boogaloo longs to be like Outlaw because he wants to be free of his own inhibitions. Outlaw however, encourages Boogaloo to think about queerness not only as an independent journey but one that is connected to community, when that privilege is available. Outlaw admits to her own insecurities and makes attempts to show Boogaloo that the freedom he attaches to her is just a facade: “maybe that’s just how it looks”¹⁴. What Tess and I revealed in finding her character was Outlaw’s inability to see herself integrated into a community no matter how much she desires to belong to one. In turn, Outlaw envies Boogaloo because his journey is closely tied to a supportive group of friends that root for him.

Gettin’ The Fire Goin’: The Technical Elements

When it came to imagining the world of the *Cowboy Boogaloo* both Imogen and I agreed that it should be highly visualized and choreographed. The technical elements worked together to

¹³ Thomas, Imogen. *Cowboy Boogaloo*. 2019. P. 19.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 21

create a fully-fledged spectacle, that was also self-aware of its relationship to genre. Apart of this was making clear and sharp choreography. Influenced by the Marlboro advertisements, stills from Western films such as *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* by Sergio Leone, we wanted to incorporate some of those physicalities into the blocking. This influence was reflected in both the blocking of the “shootout” scene and especially in the final scene of the play. Written into the stage directions of the “I want to be the cowboy (smokes)” scene, was the suggestion that actors would be doing some sort of movement while speaking their lines. I was excited by this prospect with my interest in a gestural performance and wanted to create strong gestures referencing the most iconic images.

One of my main goals was to create captivating stage pictures that would display dynamic tableaux. This goal came to life when working in collaboration with the brilliant lighting and sound designers the Fisher Center provided us. Some of the adjectives I kept in mind when conceptualizing the visual components were: cartoonish, fantastic, colorful and cinematic. Apart of referencing the films we were inspired by and bringing that world into *Cowboy Boogaloo* was finding a powerful soundtrack. Music was an integral part of weaving the world of the West into our rehearsals and in the final product. One of the first “homework” assignments I asked the cast to do was to create a playlist describing their cowboy. The soundtrack also functioned as a conceptual gesture by setting the tone of the play.

When it came to the set and props, I envisioned them being as minimal as possible. With the set, I was attempting to evoke the feeling of being consumed by a vast landscape such as a prairie. But more true to heart, I thought it would be best to maintain a level of self-awareness. We were putting on a play within Luma Theater and I wanted there to be a balance between

immersion and alienation. Production assistants would come on stage and hand the Cowboys their hats but other props such as horses and guns would be mimed. The only set piece was a neon cactus reminiscent of the neon Marlboro Man advertisements. The single cactus on stage reminded me of child-like imaginative play where suddenly simple objects embody an entire universe when meaning is attached to them. Adding to this meta-theatricality was the use of the tumbleweed. Within the stage directions, Imogen indicated that a tumbleweed would randomly roll by a few times. I pushed this idea of childlike play even further by having someone literally walk the cactus across the stage like it was a kind of pet. Julia Rosen executed that perfectly and made me laugh every time.

Another technical element that brought the world of the key themes of the play to light (literally), was the incredible work done by our lighting designer Stacey Boggs. When meeting with her, I emphasized how we wanted to create the aesthetic of our ideal queer landscape: a colorful and bold one. The backdrops of color were influenced by the work of photographers such as Petra Collins and Ryan McGinley who have an aesthetic of oversaturation and indulgence in their photographs. In addition to the aforementioned advertisements, I was also inspired by cartoons such as *Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner*, *Looney Tunes*, and the 1956 Disney produced short *A Cowboy Needs A Horse*. Stacey and I collaborated and brainstormed on how the lighting would carry the audience through the journey with Boogaloo and the boys. The warm sunsets, cool night tones, and romantic shades of purple and pink would contrast the bleak lighting behind Boogaloo when he stands alone. I almost cried when I saw the final moment, the cowboys movements seen only in silhouette. The dream had truly become a reality. From the

minute the play began until it ended, I was overwhelmed by how many elements came together to make the world of *Cowboy Boogaloo* so specific and heartbreakingly beautiful.

Love You Forever: Conclusion

Before the show opened, Imogen and I planned what his coming out would look like over and over again. I knew that writing *Cowboy Boogaloo* was apart of this coming out and showing the complicated, scary, and exciting process that was. Unlike the world of the play, this had actual real-life ramifications, so we went through several versions of what it should be. Most of our production was about spectacle and although this coming out engaged in that gesture, nothing felt quite as truthful to him as just saying it plainly. As both his director and friend, I admired his bravery and felt overwhelmed with gratitude that he trusted me to help him shape this vulnerable minute of his life. He trusted that we would create that safe space together. Every night that the lights came up and I saw him walk towards center stage, I knew that this story wasn't just a play but it was a moment.

In telling the story of *Cowboy Boogaloo* Imogen and I longed to build a world where one could explore their desires freely and fantastically, something so rarely offered to queer people. In making our fantasy a reality, we hoped to create a space that allowed us to process the inner parts of ourselves we are usually too scared to. Despite any of the challenges we faced, this was always the most important part of making this piece. The show is about learning how it is possible to embrace vulnerability. No matter what someone's origin story is exploring one's identities, anxieties, joys, dreams, is a complex and deeply individual journey. Creating *Cowboy Boogaloo* was such a rewarding experience because it pushed me to confront my fears about

taking up space, learning to trust myself, and collaborating with intelligent artists. *Cowboy Boogaloo* has a place in my heart forever and hopefully a place in our future as we continue to develop it.

Epilogue: What The Heck Is A Boogaloo Anyway?

Near the end of our journey together, I sat down with the cast and asked them one of the most essential questions of the piece. A question that I don't even have the answer to myself: what the heck is a Boogaloo anyway? I've shared their responses below:

1. To Boogaloo is to make believe, to say yes and trust.
2. Boogaloo: A very sexy, very savvy, very hip person. More specifically a Cowboy. In a sentence: "That man is a regular Boogaloo".
3. Boogaloo, noun. Someone on a journey for self understanding and to overcome confidence issues.
4. To have a good time, to be what you always wanted to be or someone different, to be part of the team.
5. I don't know, Boogaloo just made it up because it sounds good/cool.
6. Boogaloo, verb.
 - a. To follow in the footsteps of Cowboy Boogaloo.
 - b. To find purpose in the West.
 - c. In a sentence: "If you ain't here to boogaloo, you shouldn't be here at all."
7. Boogaloo:
 - a. Noun: A ruckus, usually one with positive connotations.
 - b. Verb: To ruckus, with positive connotations. I.e. to celebrate, bash.

COWBOY BOOGALOO SCRIPT:

CAST

COWBOY BOOGALOO

Imogen Thomas

COWBOY OUTLAW

Tess Noble Strohm

COWBOY BUFFALO

Manny Williams

COWBOY PHIL

Phil Carroll

COWBOY GO-GO

Anya Petkovich

COWBOY MESQUITE

Maeve O' Brien

COWBOY LEFTHANDED

Andrew Roberge

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

Tim Halvorsen

Lights Up.

IMOGEN:

Hey, everyone. I'm Imogen and that's Paris out there. Mom, Dad? I'm gay. What really matters is: I wanna be a motherfucking cowboy. Welcome to the to the west. I'm riding out to be the coolest goddamn queer there ever was.

Gallops offstage. Actors enter in western garb.

[ANYA]

Manny, I gotta get outta here.

[MANNY]

Yeah? And go where, Anya?

[ANYA]

I don't know man, I'm searchin.

[PHIL]

Searchin for what?

[ANYA]

Dunno, Phil.

[TIM and ANDREW and MAEVE]

Just... searchin....

SONG PLAYS. THE COWBOY rides in.

COWBOY:

Y'all searchin? Lookin fer adventure? [*Tumbleweed rolls across stage.*] You wanna be cooler? You wanna be bigger and better? Then look no further. The west is callin! Grab yer stud and yer ten-gallon and let's beat dirt.

[ANDREW]:

Who are you?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I'm the Cowboy. Cowboy Boogaloo. Now let's ride!

COWBOYS ride in formation.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

I'm Cowboy Buffalo. I'm hot like a summer's day and distrustin' like a spooked stallion.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

I'm Cowboy Mesquite. I'm a lover and a fighter, and I'll ride till the cows come home.

COWBOY PHIL:

I'm Cowboy Phil. I love my mama and I love my friends.

COWBOY GO-GO:

I'm Cowboy Go-Go. I ride quick and talk only when I got somethin ta say.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

I'm Cowboy Lefthanded. I bite like a snake and hug like a hog.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

I'm Cowboy Righthanded. I bite like a poison snake and hug better than lefthanded!
Whoops and Wails.

COWBOY BOOGALOO

C'mon boys, follow me! I'll get ya where ya need to go

(The Cowboys ride together. After a short ride, they re-enter exhausted, they come to a stop.)

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Wooooooweee, I'm busted like a wagon in the mud!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Aw ya goof. You aint no wagon in the mud; Yer more like a fly that's spent too much time on yer horse's ass!

COWBOY GO-GO:

Aw, shit Mesquite, it don't matter what he is! He's beat, ya barrel boarder!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah, Boogaloo, could we take a rest?

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Yeah Boogaloo, I'm right tuckered.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

You would be ya buffalo sleeper!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

Why you..!

These two get to wrasslin for a moment. They stop when GO-GO tells them to.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Aw, quit your wrasslin' you two!

COWBOY PHIL :

Boogaloo, would it be ok if we bunked down and filled up?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I 'spose it wouldn't do no harm. Alright boys, tie up yer girls fer the night, this looks like a fine place to roll out.

All cowboys get off their horses and tie em up. End up in a semi-circle, as if they're around a fire. Maybe Righthanded and Lefthanded bump into each other and begin to almost wrassle.

COWBOY GO-GO:

I'll get the fire goin.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah, it's bean time!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Real good deal, y'all.

Fire lights (The cowboys eat for a while in 'silence' (sounds of eating and small sounds of mmm and such can be heard, but no vamping of dialogue). Phil breaks silence.

COWBOY PHIL

Say, Boogaloo, how'd you end up a cowboy? If ya don't mind me askin'.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Aw, Phil, I dunno if that's a story y'all wanna hear. Ain't all that exciting

Lines overlap

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Aw c'mon Boogaloo!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Yeah, I don't buy that not exciting junk fer a second!

COWBOY GO-GO

Can't be boring when yer a cowboy!

RIGHTHANDED and LEFTHANDED start a western chant. OTHERS join in. Finally BOOGALOO acquiesces.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Alright alright alright. If y'all really want it, I won't hold it back. But like I's said, it ain't all that much.

[COWBOYS continue encouragement]

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Well, I didn't start as no cowboy. But I ain't too far from no country, ya dig? Ok, so's one night, I'm walkin along, jus mindin my own, an I see an orange light in the distance. I thought maybe it was some hoe down or something, so I made my ways over towards it. But when I get there, it ain't no wild bat, it's a great blaze; reachin up into the night sky. There's a crowd a people there, an one of em is weepin an wailing. He grabs me an he says, my my sister and her family are trapped inside and no one can get em out! So I say, 'that ain't no way ta think'! An I push my

way through the crowd, past the lawmen and fire quellers; they try ta stop me but ain't no one keepin me down. I run into the buildin, through the flames and smoke and clamber towards the sound of their screams. And I find a lady, holding her family, tears streamin down her face. She looks up at me, and says, "God? Is it time?" An I say...

[All the cowboys lean in.]

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

[Gulps] What did ya say?

COWBOY BOOGALOO

I said 'HELL NAH!' and kissed her, and then I grabbed all three of em, man on my back, lady and her girl in my arms and I git on outta there. When I emerged from the smoke, family in hands, the onlookers kept their distance, jaws hangin open like a barn door flappin' in the wind. I laid the family down real careful like, and stared right back. Finally, the lady looked up at the crowd and cried out "This hottie is a regular boogaloo! You're a cowboy hero!" An I lifted my hat, which I happened to be wearin, waved it, and I rode on outta there and never looked back.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Ho-ly shit, Boogaloo.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Boogaloo, that's the baddest tale I ever did hear.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Yeah, real rugged like.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Did ya get burned?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Nah, just a lil rub here an there.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Boogaloo, is that true?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Sure as the sun risin in the east

COWBOY PHIL :

An what about the family, Boogaloo? Were they ok?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I 'spect so.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Wow Boogaloo, You're MY Cowboy hero.

[COWBOYS start to tell what they wish their own origin stories were, or perhaps what heroic action they will do. BOOGALOO looks on, maybe w some clapping and such as one would clap and stomp while lookin over a hoe-down.]

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Guys, you wanna hear a tale near good as that?

[Cowboys react positively 'oohs and aahs', maybe they get that western chant going]

COWBOY MESQUITE

When I became a cowboy, I was just groovin down the street, when I saw a little boy, stranded on a rock in a river, cryin out fer rescue.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah! And that river was full a SNAKES!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Yeah, yeah, the poison kind!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Yeah! So I saw this baby! And the snakes were getting up on the rock he was standin on!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Yeah, he was was gettin more an more scared

COWBOY PHIL

Uh oh

COWBOY GO-GO:

So I's jumped right in there, and started swimmin.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Yeah, yeah, and I jumped in there on Go-Go's back so's we could get to the boy

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Yeah, an I jumped in there too, so's I could get some of them snakes!

[LEFTHANDED and RIGHTHANDED jump in together in the pantomime]

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah, an I got out my barker, ready to shoot those damn snakes away from the boy!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

So we're swimming, an suddenly a big snake jumps on us, and tries to get us!

COWBOY GO-GO:

Yeah, so I drop Mesquite *[MESQUITE should be seen struggling in the 'water']*, and I grab that snake, an I take him, and I RIP HIM APART. *[should look like the devising]*

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Yeah! An then another snake comes, and he's goin fer the boy, so I grab him! And I take his body and I whip him from side to side *[as if he's holding a rope and arcing it over his head on both sides]* and then I RIP HIM APART *[Same rip/toss gesture]*

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah, an then another snake makes a pass at Go-Go, So I grab him, and I'm a vegetarian, I don't relish this, but I beat him inta the ground OVER AND OVER and over and then I tore him in two *[same rip/toss gesture]*

COWBOY PHIL:

An, then, uh, I got in there too because I dont like snakes tryna get my friends so I got in there and I'm pickin em up and just tossin them outta there! *[toss]*

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

And then one actually gets the boy *[assumes part of Boy, gets bit, collapses]*

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Righthanded!!!!

Goes to his side in panic, RH tries to shoo him off as it is just part of the game. All COWBOYS flock to 'boy'

Sad fiddling.

COWBOY GO-GO:

An I thought it was too late

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Thought that boy a gonner!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

No! *[sucks poison out]*

COWBOY BUFFALO:

So we lifted him from that rock

COWBOY PHIL:

An we brought him back to shore

[Carry him downstage as group, place on next line]

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

An as we cradled him in our arms

[Freeze for image, Boogaloo at center, cradling Righthanded w/ all cowboys gathered round, Lefthanded very close and concerned, see Pieta]

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

He took a great breath

[All inhale sharply]

And said YEEHAW!!!!

[Cowboys all cheer and there is a moment of general chaos]

COWBOY PHIL:

Boogaloo, bein a cowboy sure is a bitchin' time.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

It sure is. Alright boys *[cheers]* that was darn tootin excitin. But I think it's probably time to chase some dreams and lay out. We got a big day a stompin prairie tomorrow.

[Cowboys agree and make to lay out, all in spooning line w/ Phil and Buffalo on either end. Boogaloo falls asleep separately, maybe with straw in his mouth. The Cowboys lay for a second before Cowboy Phil calls out]

COWBOY PHIL:

[sitting up on elbows, over and leaning on the other cowboys] Buffalo! Psst! Buffalo! You still up?

COWBOY BUFFALO:

[also sits up on elbows, also leaning on other cowboys] Yeah, no thanks to you, Phil.

COWBOY PHIL:

Ya know, Buffalo, just the other week I was tryna talk ta my mama, and she asked me wheres I was goin, and I right couldn't tell her.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Well Phil, I guess we ain't goin much a nowhere are we?

COWBOY GO-GO:

Aw, will you boys shut up? I'm tryna sleep!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Then sleep ya dang blue belly!

COWBOY GO-GO:

Aw, shut it Buffalo!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

[Rouses and sits up too.]

Blame it, y'all. Can't get a minutes rest!

[RIGHTHANDED AND LEFTHANDED wake and sit up too]

COWBOY GO-GO:

Look, The ways I figure, we're goin just beyond nowhere. Like look, look up! See that star there?

COWBOY PHIL:

Sure do.

COWBOY GO-GO:

That there star is the western star. That star points directly nowhere.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeahs, an we been followin that, so as I said, we's goin nowhere.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Right, but we're still ridin! Well, we ride long enough, we'll be past nowhere.

COWBOY PHIL:

And that's somewhere?

COWBOY GO-GO:

Dunno. But it's just beyond nowhere. That's what you oughta tell yer mama.

COWBOY PHIL:

I'm not sure how she'll be takin ta that.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Well, it's all we got.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

That ain't all that much...

COWBOY BUFFALO:

I dunno, sounds kinda hip...

[a quiet moment passes]

Say Boogaloo, what do you think? Where's all this headed? Is this it?

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

You don't like it?

COWBOY RIGHT HANDED:

C'mon Buffalo!

[Buffalo stands sheepishly, shrugs]

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Aw, Buffalo, *[Slaps BUFFALO on the back]* I understand. Nah, this ain't it. The buck don't stop here; we got more prairie to beat! C'mon, don't look like we're getting much rest here anyways. Hop on yer boys and let's fly!

All exit/ride

Re-enter. Tumble weed rolls past. Fog fills the prairie.

COWBOY PHIL:

Boogaloo? Where are we?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I don't quite know, Phil... Awfully foggy...

COWBOY MESQUITE:

I gotta bad feelin bout this...

COWBOY PHIL:

A bad feelin?

[LEFTHANDED and RIGHTHANDED move into hug. BUFFALO inches closer to PHIL, who's inching closer to GO-GO, who's inching closer to MESQUITE]

COWBOY GO-GO

Boogaloo?

[From the fog, COWBOY OUTLAW emerges, looking bad as heck. Damn, OUTLAW! OUTLAW walks slowly downstage, gives audience chance to take her in]

COWBOY OUTLAW:

What in the blazes is a damn boogaloo?

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Who in the blazes are you?

COWBOY GO-GO:

Yeah, And what brings ya to these parts?

[CIRCLES OUTLAW IN WIDE STANCE. GETTIN' READY FOR A REAL INTIMIDATIN'. OUTLAW walks back till she is at top of circle upstage.]

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Seems ta me like these parts are as good as any. I'm here on a whim.

COWBOY PHIL:

You can't just come in here like milkweed on the breeze! This here's OUR parts!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah if you ain't here to boogaloo, then you shouldn't be here at all!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Now, now fellers, don't get yer chaps in a tangle. Ain't no need to go makin rules.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Actually, I live fer breakin rules. And I didn't come round fer no boogaloo.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

You lookin fer a fight!

COWBOY GO-GO:

Aw, hell, are we lookin at a good ol fashion shoot out?

COWBOY OUTLAW squares up.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

If a tussle is what yer lookin fer, I won't disappoint. Draw Boys!

[ALL draw their guns, pointed at each other. Everyone has 2 guns, everyone has at least one gun on them, they slowly circle, like in a nice dance. But a duel.]

COWBOY PHIL:

I, I don't like this!

[Guns shaking]

COWBOY GO-GO:

You better watch yerself real careful, Outlaw.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Seems to me it's you who should be watching

Breaks from line w/ Roll, or maybe a quick groovy dance move, shoots guns in the air twice, whirls on group, and takes aim at GO-GO first. PHIL sees this, and cries out No! And throws himself in front of GO-GO. PHIL is shot, goes down. GO-GO drops, to cradle PHIL. OUTLAW whirls again, this time taking aim at MESQUITE. BUFFALO Shoves MESQUITE out of the way, into RIGHTHANDED and LEFTHANDED. The three get tangled. OUTLAW shoots BUFFALO, he falls. OUTLAW then turns on Boogaloo while the remaining cowboys are still tangled.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Looks like it's just you an me.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Not for long

[OUTLAW shoots BOOGALOO. BOOGALOO falls dramatically]

COWBOY GO-GO:

Boogaloo!

[All COWBOYS jump up and run to Boogaloo in panic]

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

[groans]

I'm fine boys. I'm fine. Mighty fine shot ya got there. *[preparing to get up]*

COWBOY OUTLAW:

[Walks to BOOGALOO, give hand to help him up.]

That was mighty fine shootin.

COWBOY BOOGALOO

[Accepts hand and stands]

Nothin compared to what you pulled. That was really somethin. I'm the Cowboy. Cowboy Boogaloo.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Real nice to meet ya Boogaloo. I'm Cowboy Outlaw.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Welcome to our parts, Outlaw

COWBOY PHIL:

Outlaw, that was real cool.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Yeah, Outlaw. Damn.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

You need anythin Outlaw?

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Some water?

RIGHTHANDED/LEFTHANDED:

I'll get it!

[Start to argue (no, I'll get it.. etc).]

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Actually, I could use some provisions

COWBOY GO-GO:

Beans?

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Bean time!

COWBOY PHIL:

Let's go get some guys! Fer Outlaw!

[the band of cowboys (all except OUTLAW) excitedly ride offstage. BOOGALOO hangs behind, but out of view of OUTLAW. BOOGALOO watches OUTLAW w admiration, attraction, envy, sorrow, the QUEER GAZE]

COWBOY OUTLAW:

When I was kid, my momma wanted me to be something real special. She thought maybe I could be was always talkin about a doctor, or an architect, or even a big screen star: something real good. She made big plans for me. And I thought maybe I was something big too, but all these plans she was making just never sat right with me. I'd sit an look out my window and just dream about what else could be out there. So one day, I jus kissed her goodbye, grabbed my hat, my stud, and my trusty barkin irons (*holds up gun hand*) and gave leg bail. I split and rode on west. I wasn't really lookin for anything other than what was out there and boy oh boy did I find it. I been strikin on my own, stoppin here and there, meeting who's and whats, seeing all i can, thundering across the landscape like a storm. Now, I ain't big or small or nothin except that I am. I figure the ground's gonna run out soon, but I haven't hit the edge yet.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Aw, shit, Outlaw. That's beautiful.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Boogaloo! I didn't know you was around.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Out here, I'm always around. I'm the Cowboy, remember?

COWBOY OUTLAW:

I'll buy that deal. Were ya always the Cowboy?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Nah. Not me. But I 'spect someone was. It came easy though; soon as I said it, I was the Cowboy. Didn't take nothin else. Came real natural-like, I guess.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

And that was it?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I 'spose there was more. I wanted to be somethin bigger than I was. But I wasn't so *open* as you. I guess bein Boogaloo was what I was dreamin bout.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

And the others?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

They were lookin fer somethin else, like you. But this is what they got an I don't reckon no one's complain or nothin.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

So you found em out here?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Nah, I brought em with me. What's a cowboy without his trusty band of boys?

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Somethin like me, I reckon.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Well I like that just fine.

The two sit a second.

Loads.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

I know I said earlier that I didn't come here fer no Boogaloo, but I didn't mean nothin by it.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Don't worry nothin'. What the heck is a Boogaloo, anyway?

COWBOY OUTLAW:

I 'spect it's somethin like this (*does a lil cowboy dance*) *OUTLAW pulls Boogaloo into the dance. The two dance wildy*).

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Outlaw, yer free as a bird on the wind.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Ridin like a lone mustang flashing through the dusk!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Bright as a yellow winged bird. Outlaw, Would you ride with us? I think you'd make a real lovely addition to the gang. Could use a new pardner...

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Shit. It would be a bucket o' beans and a barrel a gin!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Aw damn! Boys! Come on out here! Looks like we've got ourselves an outlaw!

COWBOYS run out in celebration

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Aw heck yeah Outlaw!

COWBOY PHIL:

Would ya teach me how to ride in like you? Real dark and mysterious like?

COWBOY MESQUITE:

(playfully tackling OUTLAW) YEAH!!!!!!! And you'll have to teach me to square off like you do.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Outlaw, you know about the western star? I can teach ya!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Alright boys, lets strike dirt! We got more to see!

COWBOY OUTLAW:

More to do!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

More to wrassle!

LEFTHANDED/RIGHTHANDED:

YEAHHHHHHH!!!!!!

Wild riding around stage. Outlaw should lead group offstage, Boogaloo hangs back, watches wistfully but also w admiration? Goddamn this queer gaze

Tumbleweed rolls past. THE BAND OF BOYS re-enter on the opposite side of the stage (run fellas!!!) There is a river!??

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Woah!!! A creek!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Turning to Boogaloo and Outlaw

Feel how cool it is? [looks at O/B longingly--- he wants in that crick!]

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Ain't it a beauty? Y'all wanna hang here for a while?

RIGHTHANDED AND LEFTHANDED say some kind of excited chatter about that. All split off, MESQUITE, BUFFALO, GO, and PHIL go off and play in one section, THE HANDS in another location (we're looking for a fun and interesting stage picture here), OUTLAW and BOOGALOO sitting real close to eachother downstage right-- feet dangling over as if in the water?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

How do you do it Outlaw?

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Do what, Boogaloo?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

You got the boys hangin on yer every word! Heck, even the horses!

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Boogaloo, you know they're followin you, right?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Yeah, but it ain't quite the same.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Why do ya worry about it so much? Dontcha just wanna be sometimes? Ya know, live in the moment?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I wish I could! It's real impressive the way you do it...

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Yeah well maybe that's just how it looks...

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

No really, ya sure a real way about ya

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Boogaloo, you got a way about ya too

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Hey Boogaloo!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Hey Boogaloo!

COWBOY MESQUITE:

Hey Outlaw!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Yeah Outlaw!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Outlaw!

COWBOY OUTLAW

Yeah?

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

If I was a mountain I'd be 10,000 feet tall

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

If you was a mountain you wouldn't be you no more

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Yeah, but I'd be strong and hard and old. And I'd live forever!

COWBOY RIGHANDED:

But you wouldn't live at all! Mountains don't breathe or think or nothin!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Well how do you know that?

COWBOY PHIL:

Well... They ain't got no brains or lungs or nothin!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

Yeah, can't think without no brains!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

Yeah! They ain't nothing but a big ol rock!

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Well I LIKE THAT!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

WELL that's fine but I like you just the ways you is

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Aw shit.

COWBOY PHIL:

Yeah! I like you just the way you is too

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Well I'll be darned guys. I like me alright too. I was just talkin

COWBOY PHIL:

Oh well I can just talk too! If I was somethin else I'd be that cloud up there!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

That's just as dumb as the mountain!

COWBOY PHIL:

It's not dumb I aint no gump! I like that cloud cuz he gets to look down at all of us and I think that'd be a mighty fine view. And if I was up there y'all could wave to me.

COWBOY MESQUITE:

I like that. (looks up and waves)

(all wave)

COWBOY PHIL

See. And then I'd be gone with the winds and rains.

COWBOY BUFFALO

That's kinda sad.

COWBOY MESQUITE

Yeah. Do you think we'll be gone like the winds and rains?

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED

Well, sure, eventually.

COWBOY GO-GO

Life and death, ain't nothin but that out here.

COWBOY OUTLAW

Nah. That ain't true.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

How do you figure?

COWBOY OUTLAW

Well life and death sure that's nothing we can outrun, but out here, that ain't what it's about. We come and go soon as we ride through.

COWBOY BOOGALOO

You sayin once we ride on we're dead?

COWBOY OUTLAW

I'm saying that's a life an a death right there. We come in, we come out, we fade into the horizon ahead. Can live a thousand lifetimes like that.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

That sure is a lot

COWBOY PHIL

So we go fast.

COWBOY MESQUITE

Goin.. Goin.. Gone.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Yeah but we leave a cloud of dust behind us, lingerin in the airt

COWBOY OUTLAW:

That's right.

COWBOY BUFFALO:

That's nice, Outlaw. Sounds like a real excitin way to be, Outlaw.

COWBOY OUTLAW:

It is...

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

To himself Kinda scary

COWBOY OUTLAW:

Sometimes. It's one heck of a wrassle.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

It's a heck of a wrassle with you here too

COWBOY OUTLAW:

It really was... But I think it's bout time for me to ride out. I love y'all and I had a wild time, but I gotta strike back out on my own. Hit that open road, cross the prairie, and ride down into my own canyons. I really like ya, and lord knows I love a good wrasslin, but when the sunrise comes, an Outlaw feels best with that growin' shine striking on a fresh horizon. It was a mighty fine ride y'all. But I gotta stir up new dust.

[Outlaw leaves. All watch in sorrow. Turn to Boogaloo]

COWBOY MESQUITE:

What'll we do without Outlaw?

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Yeah, what'll we do now?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

It's OK. We'll keep riding! Keep beating dirt! We'll find something! We'll get somewhere!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

I dunno Boogaloo. I'm feelin like a bag a nails. We just been ridin and ridin. Dont get me wrong, it's been a romping good time, but sooner or later this road's gonna run out. Maybe mine's runnin out now. I think it's about time for me to ride of into a new life-time, like Outlaw was talkin about.

COWBOY GO-GO:

Yeah Boogaloo. I think I gotta go too. Just don't know which way's west no more. I think maybe it's that way! *[turns, looks around, chooses a direction and looks that way before riding off in that direction]*

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Wait! Boys! There's more than this!

COWBOY BUFFALO:

I 'spect there is!

COWBOY GO-GO:

Bye, Boogaloo.

[Boogaloo turns to the remaining boys]

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Well, boys, that's ok *[it's not]*. We can still keep goin!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

Actually Boogaloo, I think Buffalo's got a point. I've loved the ride,

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

We loved it!

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

But now that Buffalo mentioned it, I think I'm ready to ride out to. I think there's something real cool just past another horizon.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Yeah I'm thinkin so too.

[Together] We're thinkin so.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

I think it's about time fer us to strike out on some different dirt.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

But what's there?

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Well what's here?

COWBOY MESQUITE:

And Boogaloo? Since they're at it, I guess I best be ridin out too. I should be findin Buffalo and whatnot.

COWBOY RIGHTHANDED:

C'mon, Mesquite. Lefthanded? Let's ride out.

COWBOY LEFTHANDED:

Bye, Boogaloo. Love you!

COWBOY MESQUITE/RIGHTHANDED:

Love you forever!

[Exit.]

[Boogaloo and Phil left onstage alone, standing real close together. Tumbleweed rolls past again.]

COWBOY BOOGALOO

Ya know Phil, sometimes I wish I wasn't nothin at all

COWBOY PHIL:

Don't talk like that Boogaloo! Look out here, look at the grass and the sun and the dirt! You got lots. No reason to wish yerself dead.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I didn't say nothin about dead, Phil. It's just that sometimes when I'm sitting up on my trusty horse here, lookin out at the horizon, sun in my eyes, I get ta thinkin that maybe there's somethin more than this

COWBOY PHIL:

Yeah! The frontier!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Maybe, Phil. But I keep ridin and there's nothin but more ground. I'm startin ta think, that maybe this West we're aimin at ain't nothin at all.

COWBOY PHIL:

I cain't say I know watcha mean, Boogaloo.

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Well, how come you're out still here beatin ground with me?

COWBOY PHIL:

I came out here to be the cowboy, like you said!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

And?

COWBOY PHIL:

Listen, I said I was searchin, and you told me to head out here. I wanted to be somethin bigger. Bigger than a cowbug and bigger than a donkey's behind! And now I got my horse here, and I've got you, and I'll always have Buffalo, and Go-Go, and Lefthanded, and Righthanded and Mesquite! And I guess now I got Outlaw too. Ain't that it?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

I dunno, Phil. I guess I was lookin fer more. I wanna be as big as the sky above.

COWBOY PHIL:

Like Outlaw?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Yeah, but she does it without doin nothin at all. Does it a different way every damn day. She sure is something, aint she?

COWBOY PHIL:

I reckon so... You think yer gonna find it Boogaloo?

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

Dunno, Phil. Guess there's nothin to but to keep riding.

COWBOY PHIL:

West!

COWBOY BOOGALOO:

West!

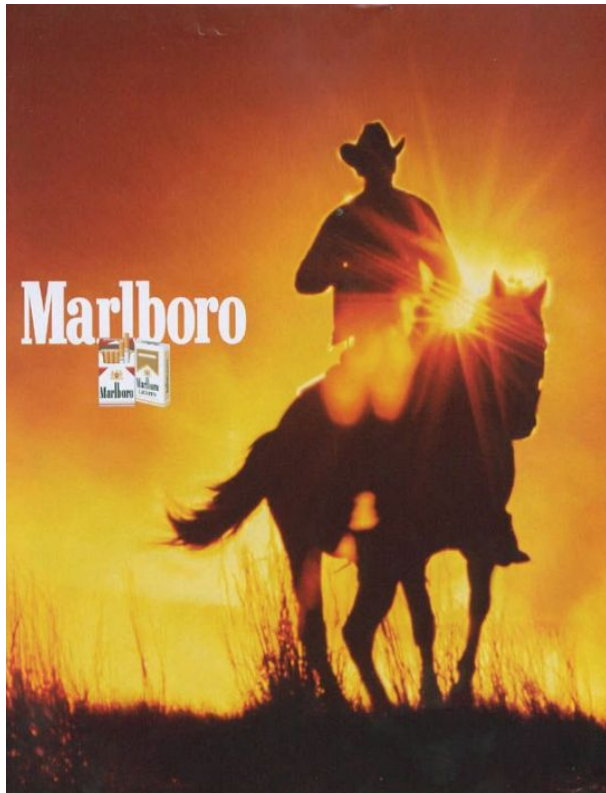
[Lights shift. Other Cowboys return to stage and form clump. Text is delivered together, in tableaux. By end, all exit except BOOGALOO, who says last sentence and is left onstage alone. Lights fade.]

I want to be cool. (pose). I want to be the cowboy. (smokes). I want to fuck. (pose) I want to be the cowboy. (smokes). I want to ride (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be a star (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be no one (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be a hero (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be dirty (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be the sun on the horizon (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be hot dirt on your haunches (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to sex sex sex (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to smoke (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to shoot straight (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to shoot crooked (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to die in blaze of glory (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be thrown up up up into the sky and dropped down down down into the ground so that I am here forever (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smoke). I want to win (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to kiss goodbye to my mama and be only a swipe of red streakin' across the prairie (pose). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). I want to be the cowboy (smokes). (rides).

END.

APPENDIX: IMAGES

Inspiration



1960's USA Marlboro Magazine, *Advertising Archives*

Production and Promotional photos by Chris Kayden and Allegra Tsao Robinson.



Mom, Dad, I'm Gay. PC: Chris Kayden



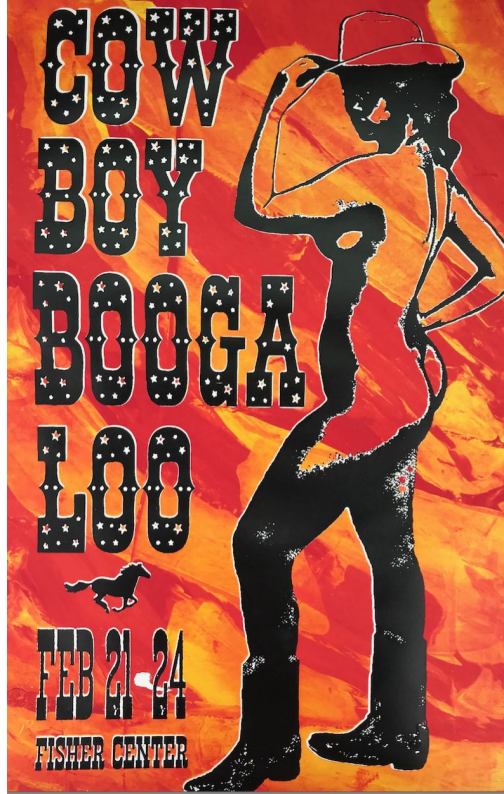
Big As The Sky Above PC: Chris Kayden



Maybe That's Just How It Looks. *PC: Chris Kayden*



I Wanna Be The Cowboy: *PC: Chris Kayden*



Cowboy Boogaloo Promotional Poster, *Artwork by: Imogen Thomas*



Cowboy Lefthanded and Cowboy Righthanded Promotional Photo: *PC: Allegra Tsao Robinson*

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