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## The Crazy Frozen Walruses Who Eat You In Your Sleep Because You Forgot To Feed Them Theater

Judah A. Lang  
Bard College

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Judah Lang  
Senior Project Essay  
5/4/2022

### **The Crazy Frozen Walruses Who Eat You In Your Sleep Because You Forgot To Feed Them Theater**

My manager constantly reminds me: “Judah, there are people who would kill to be in your situation”. What he means by this is: turn in your audition tapes on time! Take this seriously! Land a gig so we can get paid! My heart, and I’m sure the hearts of people hearing this tale recounted, go out to my manager, Aaron. Why am I such a slack? Why am I not appreciating his time and labor to get me these opportunities?

Fear not, reader, as Aaron and I are close, and I have given them many a late night call where I tell them that while yes, while I am a slack, I still appreciate him greatly. I take extreme umbrage at anyone saying I don’t appreciate Aaron or my acting career. However, there is a rock solid case to be made that I indeed do squander these opportunities. Through this essay, I would like to explain how these two contradictions exist in my life together, my relationship and background with theater, and the ways in which I see my theatrical past leading up perfectly to create my controversial senior project.

When I was younger I enjoyed theater very much. My parents, being the artsy types that they are, constructed a theater in our home, in my mom’s old art studio. It wasn’t for me, it was for their artsy friends to put on Beckett plays and such, but still I had a lot of fun with my involvement. I used to be the announcer, I would tell everyone to silence their cellphones and to sit back and enjoy the show. It was cute. I am the youngest child of my parents and I would go on stage in front of all their 60+ year old friends and tell them the rules. Additionally I did the lights, and I found lots of fun in these small roles that required no real worry or fear. Oftentimes people would make mistakes in my family’s theater (which my brother aptly named: The Crazy

Frozen Walruses Who Eat You In Your Sleep Because You Forgot To Feed Them Theater). It was lighthearted, and actors would break from character and address the audience if they made a mistake or if they simply thought they could get some laughs.

For my holocaust survivor grandma, who cried at how well I spoke at my Bar Mitzvah and, with tears pouring down her face made me promise her I would grow up to be an actor, the theater in our house fit perfectly into the narrative of who I would become. In my few run-ins with reporters, they always loved the story of my parents' theater, and Aaron would encourage me to tell it, as it tacitly constructed an image of me as a young thespian, who had always known what they wanted, and who had been immersed in Beckett and other hard to interpret playwrights from a very young age. I never minded telling the story, as it's true, and I don't retell it now to say how misrepresented I am. To me, It's just interesting to think about, especially considering what type of theater I do now.

Before I met Aaron (my manager) I was doing plays in school and performing harmonica beatboxing and battle rapping in competitions. All this to say, that performance was clearly something I enjoyed, even before it became a potential career path. I always became close with my theater teachers, (I have a theory that they are mostly good people) and I would spend all my time in highschool in the black box theater. It wasn't my hobby or my job, it just was me. I was a theater kid, I hung out in the theater, my friends were theater kids, it was my whole life and I loved it. However, when I met Aaron and signed to UTA my fervor for performing changed. Not at first, I screamed in delight when I got the call that I had landed my first gig, and I was excited and tried my best whenever I got a job. Nowadays, however, I find it extremely taxing to perform in other people's productions. I still love theater, and my brother (who is a writer), and I, write many a script for works that I would be thrilled to work on. But I have had friends try their very best to recruit me for their student films, which I would inevitably lie to get out of, as I couldn't seem to find a way to tell them that participating would pain me unimaginably.

These auditions that I do regularly for UTA, also pain me immensely, and to tell it truly, I only do a small percentage of them, for the sole reason that when a project comes along that I actually want to do, or if my brother and I want to make one in the future, I don't want to have burned those bridges. I have so many fond memories of acting, and the catharsis and elation that I have gotten after performing is priceless to me. In the few jobs I have done for UTA, however, there was none of that catharsis, just a happiness because I knew im taking a small step forward in this capitalistic world, and maybe i'm one step closer to getting a huge (and painful) movie deal, and then I'll never have to do these auditions again.

I'm sure some of you are thinking, as many a teacher and acting coach have told me: you have to find the joy in it for yourself! Sure, they're asking you to play a highschooler whose words sound like they were written by a sexually frustrated middle aged recluse, but can't you laugh about that? And then find a little joy as you work through it and then be proud as you walk away from it? I think that all the time too, and ultimately, it's what I'm probably going to have to do, because capitalism, but I never wanted theater to be my job. Of course, I can get excited about that prospect, as the old saying goes "if you love your job, you never work a day in your life". Unfortunately, in my case, it is not me loving my job, it is me trying to turn something I love deeply, into a job, and in many ways that has ruined it for me.

All of this to lay the groundwork for you to better understand me: Judah Lang, 23 years old, theater major at Bard, considered cis and straight by all but themselves, tasked to make a final project. I knew, when asked years before my senior year, roughly what I wanted to do. It was going to be a one person show, and it was going to be uncomfortable for the audience, because I, the director/performer, wanted to do something vulnerable and good and maybe not actually help anyone watching, but certainly for the purpose of spreading goodness in the world.

Watching Miguel Gutierrez's work in Gender Theater was inspirational. I remember wishing I could just copy what they did. When trying to recount why I loved it so much I find

myself at a loss for words, but when critiquing theater that I hate it makes more sense to me why Gutierrez's work moved me so much.

For such an open ended and artistic medium, theater often feels rigid to me. For one thing, there are countless classical forms of theater, which can make it feel that as long as you adhere to the classical rules of how that theater should be performed, you will be celebrated, simply for showing us ballet in modern times or commedia dell'arte in modern times. Commedia dell'arte and ballet are interesting historically, but I divine no deeper meaning from a play just because the characters and the ways in which they walk have been the same for hundreds of years. Additionally, for lots of theater and things like ballet, when I'm watching these muscular actors, often partially naked or in tight fitting bodysuits, dance around the stage and interact sensually with each other's bodies, it just feels like I'm being gaslit. Is anyone going to address the sexual element? We should watch these scantily clad bodies, who have the physique that is admired and sought after by our society, dance and touch and emote, put on a play in their drawn out sensual ballet style, and I should be thinking somber, deep, pondering thoughts, not one about sex or their bodies, but about the deepness they are trying to express.

It feels like classical theater and ballet avoid sensuality, or deal with it not in a direct way. They seem to be relying too heavily on the mystification of theater and the fetishization of outdated theatrical styles. Part of the reason why I loved the Gutierrez piece we viewed in Gender Theater, I think, is because they invited their audience onto the stage and chatted with them as they set up. Then, with themes that I see as a critique of this Eurocentric theater fascination, Gutierrez dresses up like an English queen, and sings this hard to interpret piece, ending by thanking their audience for coming, time and time again.

The thanking of the audience I particularly loved. Why aren't audiences being thanked for viewing Swan Lake or the Nutcracker? Why is it so weird and revolutionary to thank one's audience? For me, it's weird and revolutionary because theater in America has evolved into this pseudo religious experience. I certainly don't mean that it is deserving of that, but theater in

America is something to be viewed in the dark, in silence, and then contemplated solemnly while you exit and take in just how much you were moved by the performance. You can't critique a ballet dancer making a funny pose, you can't even ask why, all you are allowed as a respectful audience is to be impressed. For me, I must ask, if I don't understand why that ballet dancer made that pose, and it means nothing to me other than now that person's leg is in the air, what am I supposed to be impressed by?

So that's me, pressured by what I feel like is everyone but really is just my family and my manager to become an actor, while hating it because I feel as though the only acting avenues available for me are to play a 17 year old sex addict written by a 63 year old wierdo in hollywood. So, how did that affect me when making my sproj? I was offered by a classmate who does not like my work now that they've seen it, to participate in their sproj, and I politely declined even though it would have been the easier option. Often when I was struggling with my sproj I revisited and regretted that decision, as it would've been much easier to simply let them direct me and receive graduation credit for merely surrendering my body to their vision. While that would have been easier, there was never any option for me to not do what I did. Theater means far too much to me. Allow me to explain.

Firstly, when I say "Theater" there is no definition that we agree on. You might think that there is, but as I know from Miriam Felton-Dansky's class, the on stage performances and ideas that come to mind when we think "theater" in America are arbitrary and mean nothing. Theater, is storytelling, and storytelling, to me, is vulnerability, compassion and care. I feel as though I owe my life to performance. It is one of the few things that gives me joy. Performing makes me feel good, not because I want the audience to know how cool I am, but because I am putting my body to good use. At worst, it's entertainment, bad entertainment, and at best, which it certainly has been for me, it is therapy, a way for people to relate to each other. I took refuge through performing. I have a birthmark on my face, and I remember all sorts of bad things that relate to that which I'm sure you can imagine. It's funny to me that I perform, something so public, given

that when I was a child if anyone acknowledged that they could see my face, my birthmark, it was a point of irredeemable shame for me. What I'm getting at with this point, is that through performing I found myself. I am the kid who couldn't acknowledge what I looked like and I am also the kid that invited everyone in every institution I've ever been in to look at me. All of this to say, it would have felt like a disservice to myself to mark the end of my time in school by simply surrendering myself to be rewarded for how well I was a canvas for someone else.

For whatever reason, selfish and untrue or not, I feel much anxiety over my peers scrutinizing me. I have lots of social anxiety, even though no one believes me when I tell them. Vulnerability is really hard and really valuable to me. I share much about myself easily, and to some they see that as vulnerable, but to me I see it as the opposite. My parents, and many others, have encouraged me to write essays about my birthmark and the hundreds of surgeries I've undergone for it. I have no problem talking about it, it doesn't make me feel uncomfortable really, but to put it in my works or essays disgusts me. I think it's because that isn't how I show vulnerability. It is not vulnerable, to me, to tell you about my surgeries and my bullying. Why? I don't know, but if I had to hazard a guess, it would be that it's my birthmark, anyone with half a brain could look at me and guess my childhood dealt with that, it doesn't feel vulnerable asking for pity or to be heard about something that everyone could already assume. It feels gross to ask for a reward for my birthmark. I never asked for it. I only ever dealt with it, it has less to do with me and more to do with others, and I've never even seen it with my own eyes! I want to be vulnerable, because I want to end my time at Bard with an homage to what I love and what made me, but I can't talk about my birthmark or anything that explains itself. What to me heals and means so much more, is not the story of my birthmark but the story of me. Any birthmark that gets brought up is just gonna make people fearfully respect that I'm sharing my difference. I don't care that I'm different, I have depression like everyone else, focusing on my difference is not vulnerability to me.

What does feel vulnerable to me though, extremely vulnerable, is my sexuality and gender. I hate the political nature of gender and sexuality, I am not trying to make any statement about my values when I say im super queer, but it certainly sounds like im making one. Right there, through identifying that uncomfortability, it means something important to me to be vulnerable through it. I can only hope to do good work for others by doing good work for myself, and if no one was moved by my piece it still meant the world to me. Let me tell you, I was scared. Scared of being misinterpreted, scared that the straights would be uncomfortable around me once they saw that I'm not afraid to play with gender, and scared that the gays would say I did it wrong and wasn't gay enough.

My piece was not about gender and sexuality, pointedly so, because my piece is about me. Gender and sexuality happened to be present, because they are present in me, but, for similar reasons to why I feel disgusted talking about my birthmark, I was wary of making any direct statements about queerness. You can see my birthmark, you can see my queerness, do I need to outline it for the audiences so that they can know exactly which political party they belong to if they liked it or not? My sproj, was perfect, because it was the homage to me. I could talk about play and comfortability through cringe and demystifying theater, which were all present in my piece, but those are all small potatoes compared to what this piece meant to me. There was play in my piece because that's what I like, not because I wanted to make the audience think "wow, play in theater, so different, so brash, so bold", but because I enjoyed it. The fact that theater can be really uncomfortable with actors enjoying themselves is not my problem, I'm not making work for theatrical thinkers to analyze, I'm making work for me.

The thing about me, is I'm a bit of a troublemaker and I have issues with authority. Because of that, I love work that challenges the frame it's in. Many of my peers, while not speaking directly to me, took offense at my work because they felt as though I wasn't taking it seriously, and that it was transphobic. I understand how people could jump to those conclusions, and while I disagree, I think it's interesting the critique I got.



Here is what I did in my piece: Initially the lights come up and there is just my chair and a small table. I walk out from the wings and look and smile at the audience as I do so. Then I apologize as I sit down, and ask if I can do my warm up exercise and if Sophie (the lighting person) can raise the lights. After nervously, yet confidently, accepting that the audience will allow me to warm up, I walk around the stage twice and then say the first thing that pops into my mind. Then I sit back down and explain how that is an exercise that I, Judah Lang, have created, and how it allows you to free yourself in a space. This, to me, is an absurdist, over the top joke, poking fun at the self importance of theater. It was always met with laughter. Then, immediately addressing why I made that joke, I start monologuing about the self importance of one person shows, and about how I'm not nearly self centered enough to have you listen to me for 15 minutes. (But of course I am!) After explaining the self centered type (that I am not) that would make a one person show, I level with my audience. I tell them, "when I got the call from my manager to do this job, I'm gonna be honest, I was not excited". But I explain, "they" pulled some strings and secured me for this performance, and then I go on to talk about how much I'm ready to be looked at and analyzed and viewed and have people jump to intense conclusions. There's lots of little jokes and I can't retell them all, but I talk about how everyone is looking at me and how, yes I'm in a dress, and then I tell them to prepare for my performance! I get up and stand in the middle, and call for Sophie to hit the spotlight. What follows is me performing a crawling, hyper sexual, strip tease, as I moan into the microphone in between loud and dramatic narrations of "THEATER" "ART" and "SEX". I then stop with my butt in the air and do a stand up comedy routine, slowly, with addressed yet unanalyzed self importance. The jokes are all intended to be hilarious, but none of them are real jokes. One of them is me yelling "Where am I?" until someone says "Luma Theater?" and then I get up and stop and invite them to ruin my project some more considering they're just yelling stuff out of the crowd now. After this, I get up, call for the lights to be raised, sit down and address the audience. That was fun wasn't it? Then, in my nervously asking for approval yet confidently continuing on way, I say that the audience is

all thinking that this is about gender, but no it's not! And I hate how I can't come on stage in my dress without people thinking so much of it. I correct them, "its not about gender, it's about the way I want to be fucked". This is met with gasps as well as laughter, and to this I smile and reassure them nervously, "I know I know, embarrassing! I didn't want to say it but you guys, jumping to your conclusions, you'll see, I had to say it or else you'll misinterpret". Then I prepare for the finale. I instruct them to prepare themselves, as I will only do this once. I give a brief background of this finale, the understudies it has worked to exhaustion, the intense level of training needed to put it on, and the title, which is always something along the lines of: "the bible, revisited, HUH?". Then I get up on my knees with my hands behind my back right on the edge of the stage, and call for the lights again. With me in this spotlight, right on the edge of the stage, I focus my eyes off into the crowd and begin half of a fully scripted conversation with my lover, my partner, my dom, named Bard. In this conversation, I beg for my degree, promise Bard I'll be good for them, and agree to beg half naked for my degree on stage in front of all these people, if and only if Bard promises they'll give me my degree after. Once I beg and assure everyone I'm thrilled for the opportunity to academically stimulate them, I call out for Bard but it appears they're nowhere to be found. I then begin struggling, as my hands are tied behind my back, and I struggle and fight all while yelling for Bard to please not leave me like this, I've done everything they've asked. Alas, it is to no avail, as Bard has left, and eventually because of my turbulent struggle I fall over and I can't pick myself up again because my hands are tied. Then, in a small character break, I tell the audience not to feel bad for me, I assure them it's just like anything else, you disassociate through it and then you get the wonderful feeling of a job well done. Then, lying broken on the floor, I thank them profusely for coming to see my show, and call for Sophie to lower the lights once more so I can lay there unobserved. And that was my piece.

My work went through many permutations. Initially I was going to do a naked monologue. I didn't know what I wanted to say but I knew it had to be vulnerable and about my

life. Then I wanted to do a dance, in which I, naked, slowly tangled myself in ropes on the stage while sighing and then untangled and retangled myself. I consider myself a bad dancer, and simply analyzing that in me was enough to make me feel excited about dancing on stage, exposing myself in more ways than one. Next I wanted to do characters, a pseudo comedy act in which I would say i'm about to do an impression (the one I had written down was JFK right before he was shot) and then I would just talk about my life and my mom and the audience would be confused at whether I was doing an impression or not. Then I wanted to be bratty queen Elizabeth, who opened fan mail and spoke to the audience like a celebrity doing their 15 minute segment. I planned to do my makeup and say a few sexual things and had a whole script written for that one, but ultimately I scrapped that too.

What I can see through all the permutations of my sproj is that I wanted to be vulnerable. I wanted to invite the audience to laugh at me, naked, or in the case of my final, stripping in my dress while making jokes. I wanted them to laugh because I like to laugh, and I wanted to be naked because I needed to take it seriously. What I mean by this is that I laughed on stage, had a great time with the comedy along with the audience, and that was beautiful and meaningful enough for me. And what I mean by wanting to be naked because I needed to take it seriously, is that it's scary to be naked, it's scary to be the object of laughter. It's scary to say, I made this dance, and when they move like that it's deep because it elludes to sex! I feel so gaslit by theater, that for me I couldn't deal with the misdirection. I'm so disillusioned with the mystification of theater, and that's why I love that whenever the audience thinks that something should be read into, like my dress, I flip the script by jokingly reading into it for them. And the best part? Is that it's still about the dress! Why is it less serious now that we're smiling? Why, when I address the obvious in a comedic fashion, does the subject suddenly become benign and not deep? For many people, it kind of does, that's why they can laugh even though it's about a politically hot subject like gender. I bring their guard down by showing them that my guard is down, that I can make jokes about it. Some people take offense because they think that

to me it's a joke, but they couldn't be more wrong. My guard is down, yes, i'm having fun and making jokes, yes, but i'm clearly dead serious. I am in character, and I do not laugh along with them. People are laughing not because of the funny joke I told but because of the sheer absurdity in their eyes of what they're watching. To me, my piece takes all of that in, all of those ways in which the audience is already denying my existence, by denying my piece's ability to be serious and my ability to have my piece mean something to me, and not backing down. Yeah I made a joke, now tell me what made you laugh? For a lot of audience members, I don't think they think about the ways in which theater is rigid, the ways in which I change the vibe just with my demeanor, and the way that that then changes their behavior drastically. But it's a big element to my piece, and I love how I combined raw, vulnerable, expressive, academia, with a heady subversion that questions the audience and their stance while still entertaining them.

It's important that some people didn't laugh, that some people thought it was an affront to theater. My total and utter vulnerability, my refusal to address the gender bending in an academic way, me poking fun at theater in a queer way, it really made some people mad.

Are those people bad people? No. Did they misinterpret my piece? No. In fact, they are the reason why my piece means so much to me. I'm queer, but people don't perceive me as queer and that's been an issue in my life. I'm going to be queer whether or not you respect it. So does my piece need to have the queerness as the focal point, to avoid haters seeing it and thinking I'm gay for clout? YES! For some people it does! But I think that's silly, and it makes me feel boxed in, and it is my sproj after all. For others who think I just didn't put any effort in, well, they are wrong, but again, it is arguably more vulnerable for me to go up there and make jokes for my final than for me to be serious. To make a lighthearted comedy out of my 20 minutes in Luma, while others are making pieces in which audience laughter would be the greatest insult, may feel like a threat to them. I don't mean it to be, I'm just trying to do what I love. But if no one hated me, was I really being vulnerable? If I explained my queerness, and made sure everyone knew all of my political values and stances and that they're the right ones before I allowed

myself to put the things that I wanted in my sproj, then is that even vulnerability? Or am i just explaining the groundwork for why the audience should like me and take me seriously?

I wanted my piece to be funny, lighthearted, deep as Tartarus, while not forcing any messages down anyone's throats. I was aiming for subversion. I'm subverting the ways in which I feel gender is talked about, I'm subverting my cringe into my power, I'm subverting the prestigious Luma theater presentation into a lighthearted, non serious, dead serious, entertainment session in which the "meaning" which everyone looks for in art, is questioned and the way it's demanded from works critiqued. What I mean is, me stating my piece is not about gender doesn't mean a lot of people won't think it is. Does that mean it wasn't? No it certainly was, but what's deeper than that to me is that I refused to go into it. If you want to make my piece about gender, fine, and if I inspire some young queers, more power to me, but that's not my primary intention and that's clear. And specifically about queerness, I find that so powerful. I didn't defend myself, or tell the audience my pronouns, the only thing I said about it was, you all think this is about gender, but really it's about the way I like to be fucked. That's the opposite of a defense, that's inviting critique in droves. But I didn't care. I'm queer, and im a jokester. I can be moved by comedy, in fact I enjoy it! If I were to make a peice that was more traditional, I would be sacrificing that part of myself. I would be giving in to the fear of misinterpretation, and ultimately, people did end up jumping to all sorts of conclusions about my piece, and it really hurt my feelings at times, but I'm glad that I did what I did. Once I analyzed that I feel scared to talk about my queerness without calling dramatic weight to it, and that calling dramatic weight to it would feel like an affront to myself and the ways in which I feel moved by things, I knew I had to address it head on. People who think I didn't take it seriously are revealing the ways in which we are terrified to joke and enjoy serious things, especially in academia.

The crafting of my piece was slow and painstaking and I tried to be only concerned with how it felt to me. Not because I don't care, but because I believe in theater and I believe in myself, and even if I didn't put out the piece that would get me the well liked, easy A - like

imagine if I did the exact same things but just talked about queerness with no jokes - I had faith that by making theater that feels good to myself, it would be the right decision. My GPA is higher than it's ever been, but I've always really struggled in school and with grades. If I fail and don't graduate this semester, or if my board hates my sproj, am I no longer a theater maker? Was my theater bad? I ask these questions rhetorically, as no one can tell someone definitively whether or not art is "good" or "bad". But it can certainly feel that way with school and the grading system. That notion that no one can definitely judge art, except of course in school, is what inspired the ending of my piece. Me, on my knees, begging Bard like they're my sexual dom to give me my degree. While no one can judge art, a college program certainly does! When have I done enough? When have I earned my degree? The very real prospect of failure, of wasting the tuition and time spent on college, is crazy. I'm not saying abolish failure, but I do enjoy thinking about that tacit sub-dom relationship students have with their school. It's weird to me! And here I am participating because I do want that degree! After coming to that conclusion, it brings me so much joy to beg explicitly rather than to tacitly beg by doing more traditional theater.

I love theater, but I often hate doing it. How does that contradiction exist in me? Well, because of the theater I've had to do. Art in school is almost an oxymoron. There are techniques to be learned and histories to be studied, but teaching art? Like there is a proper way to express the infinite number of potential things one can express through art?

I took lessons at the Lee Strasberg School For Method Acting, and 80% of their curriculum is them explaining why the Strasberg method is so much better than Stella Adler or other competitors. I hated it there. In many of my early scripts I dealt with the concept of tuition and money and how if I fail it's wasted and how weird that all is. My mom loved my sproj, but if I don't get this degree all of that is secondary to the fact that money was wasted. I understand why that is, but in the utopia that I dream of in my art, my mom sees my sproj and her loving it is me graduating. Sure, I can make great art, but without the approval of Bard, I am nothing. I don't feel that way, but that is how the system is set up. We don't realize the ways in which that

pigeonholes us. The ways in which it encourages us to make art that doesn't raise any eyebrows. Combine that with a hyperfocus on sex which is then only addressed in this coded way, and it leaves me feeling like I want to scream. Sex is universally involved in art, but my critics would say that I'm being weird and went for laughs instead of trying. I thought it through, it's about sex. Art is becoming more and more similar in my opinion, and I think that that is why. We need institutional approval. We forget that institutional approval is not art, that is not sacrosanct, I will be alive I hope in two years and degree or not I will be the same. My struggle to graduate, something which has been a struggle my whole life, certainly went into that piece.

In the words of my brother "Call me an artist, it's all I have left." I feel shunned by my peers, hated even at times. I feel as though the upper echelon of theater students do not consider me their peer. To be honest, I feel as though I could be in the upper echelon right there with them. I feel as though I could have made a piece that they would have loved and it would've offended no one, but that's just not me. Like I said, I'm a troublemaker, and performance means so very much to me. That's why I had to be honest with what I wanted to do, even though it probably won't make my plight to graduate any easier. I am already deeply involved in theater which I do solely for others, and for my sproj I wanted to change that. My earliest genesis of my piece was "I don't know, but I'm going to make sure it feels right". I'm so sick and tired with theater that I don't think I can do what I love professionally. I certainly would not get very far applying my attitude towards my sproj into my professional life. But I am grateful that I got the opportunity to do this, and it gave me a feeling of catharsis that I haven't felt from acting since high school. Maybe I am wrong, as school and essays and grading give me the impression that being wrong is a very real possibility, but for me, that feeling of catharsis makes the art. The reason why it's art to me is because of my catharsis, the reason why my piece was subversive and so controversial is because regular theater wouldn't have given me that, not because subversion is intrinsically artistic. This piece was all about me, I set out to make sure it felt good to me, and you can interpret all sorts of things and messages from it, but for me, the

catharsis, or that trueness to me, was what made it art. Art is deeply personal, and I was scared and nervous until I finished. While we were still rehearsing, when I would hear critics of my piece it would make me sad and I would try and change my piece to not offend anyone. But once I finished my last performance and heard critique, I had no apologies or embarrassment over my work, for me it had validated itself with how deeply personal it was. Maybe the audience could see that or maybe they couldn't, but for me I completed what I set out to do. I tell the story of my career, my birthmark and my dislike for addressing it, and my rocky relationship to theater because I feel that when looking at my Sproj, it is truly the culmination of all of that. To me, it makes perfect sense, as this was the first show I have ever put on by myself, the first show I have ever been allowed to direct. I am scared that I won't get a chance like this again, because it can feel like I'm one of the few who loves theater like this. How did I address that fear? By making sure that this piece is all about me, the antithesis of what I have to do for my acting job. It's a successful piece for me because I refused to give concessions to my fear. This was my first chance, maybe my only chance to put on my own show. If nothing else, I proved to myself that I can break out of what I consider to be a constrictive mold. Putting that piece on makes me feel as though all of my critiques about theater and uncomfortability, are valid. To me, I did the terrifying thing and didn't apologize, didn't stay quiet, but called bullshit where I saw bullshit. I am not saying that classical theater, or anything at all, is bullshit. But I can tell you, that I am glad that I stood up for myself and for what I think is good, honest, powerful theater, even though I was and am scared that I would have gotten a much better grade if I had simply done a scene from a Broadway play.