

Public Abstract

First Name:Cece

Middle Name:Marie

Last Name:McFarland

Adviser's First Name:M. Heather

Adviser's Last Name:Carver

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:FS 2013

Department:Theatre

Degree:PhD

Title:Becoming a Feminist Director in the Academy

In this dissertation, I investigate the creation of my performance of a feminist director. I examine how I became a feminist, what led me to directing, and what choices I made when I intentionally attempted to embody feminist theory in the rehearsal hall. More specifically, I examine how I worked to de-center the power of the director. The theme of silencing is prevalent in the literature about women in higher education, women in leadership, and women and communication. The theme of silencing was prevalent in my life, and I examine how I overcame that silence. I am left with the question: can there be a truly feminist directing experience in academia?

I use performative writing and Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN), developed by Robert Nash, as method and methodology to guide my research into and reflection upon the topics listed above. In addition to my own recollections of directing *Touch as a feminist*, I contextualize my experience within the broader scholarship of leadership, communication, directing, and feminism. SPN, combined with performative writing, allow me to tell my own unique story while still relating it to the scholars and practitioners upon whose shoulders I stand. Rather than simply telling my story, I examine the experience through a critical lens. SPN includes thick descriptions interwoven with theory. This is an autobiography as a performance of self on paper. SPN is not intended to create a 'how-to,' rather it encourages the writer to search ever deeper for underlying meanings and messages that may resonate with a reader.

I do hope that my dissertation inspires others to build theatre using the tools of feminism, because, as Audre Lorde said "[t]he master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Theatre practitioners often get caught up in the process of doing and creating. We don't have time for deep reflection about why we make particular choices. Then, if it didn't cause any problems the first time, we may automatically make the same choice again. In this way we perpetuate an automatic, rather than a reflexive, form of directing. We operate with what we know and have done in the past. Some of the rules and expectations associated with putting on a play are studied and taught while others are simply assumed. In this dissertation, I probe and reflect upon the choices I made in the rehearsal hall. I make those choices conscious and transparent so that others may draw from my experiences and add to their own directing toolkit.