

In order to reach the point where the faculty in the WMU Theatre Department will entrust a student with directing a full length production (known in the department as a Footlight 2), the student must take the Directing I class, be accepted in to the Directing II class the following semester, and then be apply and be accepted to direct a Footlight 1 (a one-act, 45 minute length production). As I progressed on this directing track, it became clear that I was a skilled young director, with clear creative vision and the analytical skills necessary to produce detailed, quality work; however, over the course of the two classes and during my Footlight 1 production, I relied mostly on my instinctual understanding of theatre and my artistic vision to stage shows. Taking on a Footlight 2, and having Joan Herrington as my mentor and chair of my thesis, I was able to begin to dedicate myself to the deeper work required to be a professional director. I chose Jose Rivera's *Cloud Tectonics* as the show I would direct not only because of a deep love for the script, but also because Rivera's writing is complex and layered in such a way that I knew it was going to be a challenge, but also felt like something I could reasonably accomplish and grow with as an artist over the course of the semester.

Working with this script during the pre-rehearsal research process, it became clear to me just how much I relied on instinctual knowledge and basic, surface level research to accomplish this kind of work. Relying on those skills alone not only wouldn't do the script justice, but wouldn't hold up to my mentor's standards, and so I was pushed to dig deeper and do more work, employing skills from my Development of Theatre course earlier this year, and then pushing them further. This became a lesson not only in dedication, but in self teaching and motivation; I discovered how to continue to encourage myself to look farther and keep asking questions, how to be unsatisfied with surface level work, as well as how to employ all the skills I currently have and the lessons I've learned and take them a step further on my own. This was by no means an easy process, and a lot of these realizations didn't really set in until late in the rehearsal process. As rehearsals progressed, and as I continued to work harder to analyze and understand every detail of this play, I began to see the benefits of this work manifest in my directing. Scenes became clearer, character motivations made sense, and the general shape of the show began to sharpen. In a lot of ways, the rehearsal process and the book work fed into each other, with answers to questions that came up during book work appearing in the rehearsal room and vice versa. I was rather disappointed when the rehearsal process came to an end because by the time the show opened I felt like I had just begun to settle into the groove of asking the right questions and doing the work to fully uncover the machinations of the script and how to translate them into the staging. It was also at this

point when I began to realize just how much more global, interdisciplinary knowledge is really required to be a successful director.

Directing this show, which is full of Biblical references, Puerto Rican history and mythologies, Christian church history, as well as global history, the scope of my research had to be broad in order to understand the script at even a basic level. As is typical with research in my experience, the more I read up on information directly related to the script, the more doors opened to other avenues of research and information. As the process went along, I found myself researching material not even remotely related to the play, from the biographies famous performance artists, to the way different cultures approach death and funerals, to the writing of E.M. Forester. In trying to approach my thesis work as a professional, it became clear that at the age of 22 and with an undergraduate education that is heavily focused in one area, I am not nearly knowledgeable of the world enough to be making the in depth, deeply relatable, well rounded art that is my professional goal. As Joan frequently reminded me, Tony Kushner doesn't even believe people my age should be making art because we simply don't know enough to be making it well, and I'm beginning to find that true. Some of that comes simply from being young and not having lived much life yet, but working on *Cloud Tectonics* ignited a passionate curiosity about everything in me, and renewed my dedication to learn as much as I can about as much as I can. Moving forward as theatre artist and a citizen of the world, and as a result of the work I did on this thesis, I have dedicated myself to continuously broadening and deepening my global knowledge so that I can achieve my goals and make relevant, complex art that best serves the people who experience it in every way possible.

This commitment to lifelong, in depth learning, and the dedication to doing as much work as possible are the biggest take aways from my experience directing *Cloud Tectonics* for my honors thesis. The process prepared me in terms of the paperwork and professional process that is expected in my industry, which was the original goal of my thesis, but mostly this process opened the door to me for more work, to a better understanding of myself, my professional goals, how to achieve them, and most importantly, how to be a dedicated global citizen. While I turned in a directorial book and completed a fully staged production as my thesis, the real end product isn't the show or the work, but the fire it ignited in me to learn more and work harder moving into the world after graduation.