

TO BE PLAYED AT

MAXIMUM VOLUME

A supporting ~~paper~~ PLAY

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Art
University of Minnesota

By Bianca Janine Pettis

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Arts Degree in Art

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*“Although what you are about to experience is a work of fiction,
it should never the less be played at maximum volume.”*

BIANCA JANINE PETTIS. BORN 1973, DENVER, COLORADO.

MOTHER: SALLY
FATHER: HENRY

EARLY THEMES

PUNK ROCK
STEPHEN KING
SHOW TUNES
MAD MAGAZINE.

SAFETY GUARD
BULLIED BY THE
BIG KIDS.

SCHOOLS AS MANY AS I CAN
REMEMBER...

CHILDHOOD

DENVER
LOS ANGELES
HOUSTON
NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE

MEADOWS ELEMENTARY - HOUSTON
PAWTUCKETT ELEMENTARY - CHARLOTTE
NORTHWEST MIDDLE SCHOOL - CHARLOTTE
ALEXANDER GRAHAM JR. HIGH - CHARLOTTE
WEST CHARLOTTE HIGH SCHOOL - UNTIL 11TH GRADE

INFLUENCES

KIMMY WARTHOL
BASQUIAT (JEAN MICHEL) TROUPE,
BARRY MCGEE
MARGARET KILGALLEN
OSGEMEOS
CHRISTIAN MARCLY
OPRAH
BEYONCE

TOURED W/
THEATRE

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS!

STUDIED ACTING, DANCE, VOICE

THEATRE
GEEK!

ANTIOCH COLLEGE

1992-1996
YELLOW SPRINGS, OHIO

"BOOT CAMP FOR THE REVOLUTION"

CO-OPS / INTERNSHIPS

WORKED AT: LIVED IN:

VERY SPECIAL ARTS

NEW YORK CITY

ALICE B. THEATRE

SEATTLE, WA

YELLOW AIRPORT SITUETTE

SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA

CENTER FOR CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

DENVER CO LEAD DANCE WORKSHOPS FOR THE ELDERLY.

PLAYWRIGHTS CENTER

MINNEAPOLIS, MN
I WANTED TO BE A P.W.

MOVED TO MINNEAPOLIS IN 1996

AFTER GRADUATING

DJED DANCE MEETS ORGANIZED PARTIES

STARTED WRITING SOLO PERFORMANCES

GRADUATE SCHOOL AT UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

ADVENTURES

PROFESSIONAL ACTRESS FOR A BIT.

MET MY HUSBAND

STARTED A BAND IN 2002

BEATRIX JAR 2003

CIRCUIT BENDING
AUDIO PLAYGROUND
DJ-SAMPLES HAWAII

ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM

STARTED PAINTING

LARGE SCALE

TOURED THE COUNTRY
BUSH FELLOWSHIP 2010

SAN DIEGO

PAINTING

OIL PAINT
WATER BASED OIL PAINT
GOUACHE
ACRYLIC
WATERCOLORS

BRUSH
CANVAS

TURPENOIL
WATER
SOAP
COLOR THEORY

BLUE
RED
YELLOW
WHITE
BLACK.

BLACK OIL STICK
BLUE OIL STICK
RED OIL STICK

TEXTURE
LIGHT
GESTURE
EMOTION

PAINTER

THEATRE

BODY
VOICE
POSTURE
MOVEMENT
POSE
TRUTH
BREATH
SCRIPT
TEXT
LIGHTS
SET
MEMORIZE
VOICE OVER
EMOTION
IMPROMISE

ACTOR

LOUDER
SOFTER
FASTER
SLOWER
MY CHARACTER
BELIEVABLE
EMOTION
EMOTIONAL STATES
COMEDY
TRAGEDY
LINES
BLOCKING
MUSICAL RANGE.

MUSIC / SOUND

MIXING BOARD
SPEAKER
INSTRUMENT
DRUMS
KEYBOARD
DIGITAL M006
LYRICS
RHYTHM
GROOVE
MICROPHONE
TONE
PITCH
DB
MODULATION

CARDS
LOUDER
SOFTER
BEATS PER
MINUTE
ARPEGGIO
SOLO
ANALOG
DIGITAL
NOISE
SHOW
SHOUT
WHISPER

MUSICIAN

SOUND ARTIST

TO BE PLAYED AT MAXIMUM VOLUME

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OPENING THOUGHTS

*"I do not have a disciplinary line to follow. I was brought up between disciplines and I have never quite felt comfortable in the homes they provide." ⁱ Though Sarah Amed is clearly speaking of her own experiences in her book *Queer Phenomenology*, her words can be directly applied to my experiences and perspectives as an artist.*

I have always taken a hands-on, do it yourself approach to art making. For me this means instead of relying on others to provide me with creative services, I find satisfaction in learning new techniques. I believe each discipline speaks its own language and I enjoy the different expressive outputs the disciplines provide. I also love how disciplines speak to each other.

Though my thesis project is primarily a series of oil paintings, I called on the other disciplines (as roles) from my artistic repertoire to navigate the creative process of creating them.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE PAINTER, a painter

She is dressed in a black smock with a black skirt and white Birkenstocks. Her clothes are covered with colorful paint splatters, there is paint on her face and legs. She just wants to get to work.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT, MFA student in Art

She is dressed in a fashionable blue and red op art dress. She also wears white Birkenstocks with paint on them. Her afro is pulled back, she wears glasses. She's always running a bit late.

THE PLAYWRIGHT, writes plays and screenplays

She sits upstage center at a small desk. She wears a comfy dress. She sits in the same location for much of the play typing on her laptop, pacing and sipping coffee. She's always thinking.

THE ACTOR, performs the playwrights plays

She wears all black, full make-up - she is very intense full of energy, love and rage all at once. She wants to be seen.

THE MUSICIAN, plays music

She is dressed in a black t-shirt and black leather pants. She wears a large fluffy wig and sunglasses. She's pulled back, cool.

JACOB, married to THE MUSICIAN

is also in all black with leather pants and sunglasses. He's supportive and enthusiastic.

SETTING

ACT ONE takes place in a large space that contains each of the character's specific spaces. **THE PAINTER** is in her studio surrounded by her work, **THE GRADUATE STUDENT** is behind a podium, **THE PLAYWRIGHT** sits in front of her computer, **THE ACTOR** is on stage and **THE MUSICIAN** is with her music gear then moves into a performance/interview scenario with the **GRADUATE STUDENT**.

ACT TWO takes place in the **NASH ART GALLERY**. There are several large-scale oil paintings on display that the **PAINTER** has created.

EPILOUGE takes place in **THE PAINTER'S** studio.

ACT ONE / SCENE ONE

THE PAINTER

Lights fade up. THE PLAYWRIGHT sits alone onstage behind a desk. She is surrounded by her computer, a very large pile of papers both crumpled and collected. There are also books and sketchpads lying around. She pauses periodically to take a sip from a glass of coffee. There is also a coffee maker brewing fresh coffee - the smell echoes through the space.

THE PAINTER enters her studio, downstage from the PLAYWRIGHT. The studio is a mess. There are several colorful fabric birds with long floppy legs perched on an office desk, there is paint and paper on the floor. There are several colorful paintings in progress on the walls and scattered about the room. There is a table covered with painting supplies - containers of oil paint, brushes, paper towels, old canvas, etc. There is a stereo and a large blank canvas stapled to a wall.

THE PAINTER takes her place in the center of the studio and addresses the audience.

THE PAINTER

Your mother told you that the canvas is a space where you can be FREE. *She pauses for a moment. Turns to address THE PLAYWRIGHT.*

THE PAINTER

I usually play music when I paint.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Music? *(Thinks for a moment)* Great idea! That would really set the mood for this opening.

THE PAINTER walks over to her stereo and turns on some music. The Song "Premiere Gymnopedie"ⁱⁱ by Erik Satie softly. She returns center, begins again.

THE PAINTER

Your mother told you that the canvas is a space where you can be FREE. You find yourself delighted by her insight. Now here you are standing in front of your own canvas. A large canvas drop cloth that you have just stapled to the wall.

THE PAINTER picks up a brush and begins to add gesso to the canvas. She does this for several seconds in silence, then begins speaking again.

This is your canvas. The place where you can be FREE. But what is this version of freedom that she is speaking of? Then you wonder, what is your version of freedom? Is there truly freedom in the act of painting? Will you find freedom in blending cadmium red and lemon yellow? Is there freedom in allowing yourself to paint exactly what you want? Use as much canvas and paint as you want?

She paints again in silence for a moment.

Are you free because you sit here pondering the canvas and its existence? Is there freedom in tuning out the world to paint? Or are you just tuning into the world...when you paint?

THE PAINTER picks up her brush and continues to add gesso to the canvas.

THE PLAYWRIGHT continues typing. The sound of the keyboard is heard as the lights fade to black and the music fades to silence.

ACT ONE / SCENE TWO

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

A single light fades up above a single podium with a microphone attached. The words: "BIANCA JANINE PETTIS, TO BE PLAYED AT MAXIMUM VOLUME, MFA THESIS 2017" are crammed on the small space that is the face of the podium.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT enters. She is slightly disheveled. She carries a stack of papers and large art books. She places these objects on the podium, drops a few of the books, goes to pick them up then several sheets of paper fly from the podium. She goes to pick up the pages and pulls a cord causing the microphone to fly from the podium. She picks up the microphone, replaces it - replaces her books and takes a long deep breath. She takes a sip of water from a small glass on the ledge, she misses her mouth for a moment and the water falls onto her dress.

She sighs deeply and decides to continue.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Hello everyone, so nice to be here today. I hope you enjoyed my opening comedy routine! I am so excited to share some insights with you on my thesis project. Let's dive in, shall we?

(She clears her throat and begins to read enthusiastically. The stress dissipates.) On February 2, 2013, the Walker Art Center hosted an Opening-Day Talk: for the exhibition *Painting in the Present Tense*. During the talks, Jan Verwoert, German art critic and cultural theorist gave a moving presentation on the nature of painting and sound. In a recording of the talk published on YouTube, Verwoert, who also played a Roland TB-303 bass synthesizer during his talk...now, that's just cool.

(She continues)

Verwoert suggests a new perspective for the painter's relationship to the canvas. He says: "*Painting is the threshold between private and public and belongs to neither sphere exclusively.*"ⁱⁱⁱ I found this to be a fascinating statement in relation to my own thesis work. Specifically, because of the time I've spent being on stage. I started acting in a theatre troupe at the age of 14 and continued to find myself in front of audiences as a performer for much of my life. *(Becoming self-aware)* And here I am again, talking before you, an audience. Wow. That just occurred to me.

I enjoy painting because it gives me some distance from this relationship – the relationship with the audience. Painting provides a quiet introspection. The act of Painting transforms my

relationship with you, the audience. When you look at my work, you see the results of my private performances in the public space that is the gallery.

In my studio, I allow myself to be free from societal conditions that are eager to limit the possibility of my experiences. As Chila Burman suggests in her manifesto *"There Have Always Been Great Blackwoman Artists"* delivered before an audience at the Black Visual Arts forum at the ICA London in October 1996^{iv} *"Blackwomen artists are here, we exist and we exist positively despite the racial, sexual and class oppressions which we suffer."*^v In my studio I exist positively.

Back to Verwoert. He goes on to suggest: *"The canvas is the space of hosting. The canvas hosts the social that assembles in front of it."*^{vi} He continues, *"I would suggest that we think of the canvas not as this surface of depiction but as this strange social curtain, the veil the projection screen or the tablet on which you serve the community the food or the stage in which the community can assemble."*^{vii}

As an artist, all these worlds come together for me: Sound Art, Acting, Painting, Playwrighting and these disciplines all have their foundations on the stage. There is always some element of

performance and the stage is where the performance happens. And again, let's look at this dynamic. *(She gestures to herself and then to the audience.)* I stand before you here on a stage. You are sitting in the audience. But from my perspective you are the stage and I am the audience.

(She takes a meaningful glance at the audience and continues.)

Verwoert's suggestions are quite the opposite of Clemet Greenberg's 1961 *Modernist Painting* essay huh? I did take a bit of Art History in Graduate School, though I failed tremendously. Well, I made a B.

Greenberg states: *"Where the Old Masters created an illusion of space into which one could imagine oneself walking, the illusion created by a Modernist is one into which one can only look, can travel through only with the eye."*^{viii} Greenberg wanted a painting to be a painting, without giving the illusion of space. In comparison, we can consider Verwoert's more modern suggestion revolutionary. Where Greenberg suggests a flat surface – Verwoert suggests a stage. This left me wondering. Can a painter create an experience? Can a canvas be a space of hosting?

In considering Verwoert's perspective and my experiences in the disciplines of painting, music and theatre I am delighted to proclaim the theme of my MFA thesis show!

(A triumphant sound)

A ROCK CONCERT IN THE ART GALLERY! *(She holds for expected applause.)*

The idea seemed like a fantastic way to mount a large-scale event without the stress of the physical logistics.

In the Summer of my 1st year of graduate school, I took a position as Festival Coordinator for the Walker Art Center's *2015 Internet Cat Video Festival*. This involved creating an event for over 13,000 people at CHS Field in St. Paul, I was responsible for some elements of press, volunteers, vendors, artists, performers and along with learning about cat videos, I wrote copy about the festival for the Walker's website. Compared to the physical act of creating such a large event, creating a visual concert for the gallery will be easy and I trust my work will result in a similar visual celebration.

In planning my show, I am finding myself excited about the visceral elements of concerts from the perspective of audience and performer. I believe that there is a full ritual that plays out, depending on the size of the venue and popularity of the band.

(THE GRADUATE STUDENT pauses for a moment and steps away from the podium.)

Speaking from my own experiences as a member of the audience, there are moments of getting ready alone which involve a direct connection with self. *What will I wear? What will this event be like?* When I arrive at the venue, I connect with a larger community that shares my intention: *We are all here to see the band.*

Once the band begins, our attention is turned to the stage. *They are great!* I feel like there is an element of trust involved in this experience. As an audience member, I trust the band to create an enjoyable sonic experience for me. I give myself permission to let go, to be free – and move my body accordingly.

(She begins to sway, then pause and returns to the podium.)

My band, Beatrix*Jar, is an experimental electronic duo I formed with my husband Jacob in 2003. Each time we play a show, I feel a sort of heightened anticipation and anxiety in preparation for

the performance. Before I was a performer, I imagined all musicians were free spirited and easy going, but it turns out that musicians need to have a real attention to detail. Unless there is a road crew to help, the musician is responsible for making sure cords and instruments are packed and brought safely to the venue, where they are unpacked, and plugged in properly. There is a sound check for each instrument. *Is it loud enough, soft enough? How do the instruments sound together? What is the set list order? What about those drink tickets?*

Once the show starts, the dance between audience and performer unfolds. I've witnessed this as an audience member and musician. A reciprocal relationship is established – *action/reaction* – a transference of energy happens through soundwaves, gesture, lights. There is a rhythmic give and take. And sometimes it doesn't work. Sometimes there is no connection, the band begins and the audience retreats.

Performances are truly a shared temporary experience. Though sounds and visuals can be recorded, they can never be re-experienced live again.

(Her voice begins to echo.)

Again. Again. Again. Again...

(She pauses. The lights fade to black. The echo continues and fades out.)

ACT ONE / SCENE THREE

THE ACTOR AND THE PLAYWRIGHT

Lights fade up on the PLAYWRIGHT who is typing at her desk. The ACTOR bounces in triumphantly down center stage. She pauses for a moment then visits THE PLAYWRIGHT who hands her several sheets of paper. THE ACTOR glances at them briefly, walks down center stage pauses, then turns her back to the audience.

She takes a long deep breath, then another one, then one more. She turns around dramatically and speaks charismatically with a slight British Accent.

THE ACTOR

Actor training took place in a classroom. The. Acting. Studio.

(She pauses for effect.)

There were no desks. Only chairs. Usually not enough. It was okay though, you took a seat on the floor.

(She dramatically falls to the ground.)

You were a senior in high school. North Carolina School of the Arts High School. You were enrolled in Actor Conservatory Training. *See the walls, let the walls see you.* You lived in the High School Dorms with bathrooms down hallways. There were college students on the other side of campus. You had bunk beds. You couldn't have boys in your room without signing them in. Your curfew was 10pm.

(She pauses. Points at two audience members.)

You and You – do a scene.

(She jumps up from the floor and continues speaking.)

You rise from the floor and join your partner on stage. Your classmates watch. You lose track of yourself. You project/act/listen/respond. Your body is your instrument.

(She pauses, shifts her tone to more conversational.)

As a young thespian, I was often told *"your body is your instrument"*. This was a key phrase among theatre artists. Though it can conjure up images of Bobby McFerrin...

(She looks back at THE PLAYWRIGHT and shakes her head in shame.)

Bobby McFerrin? The real message behind the phrase is that the actor's body serves as their primary tool of expression. As a dancer uses their body to dance, an actor uses their body to act.

(She pauses. Turns her back to the audience to speak with the writer.)

THE ACTOR

I don't think... *(She walks back towards the writer who still typing. THE PLAYWRIGHT, noticing her, stops typing and listens intently while sipping coffee.)*

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Sorry about the Bobby McFerrin mention. But he does use his body to make sound.

THE ACTOR

It's not that. It's just...well, I don't think that my character would say this. I think this sounds more like The Graduate Student. I mean...I don't mind acting it – I just think...

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I understand. You feel like this is not something your character would say.

THE ACTOR

Yes.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I wrote it because I thought you might want to share your insights as an actor. This monologue was your opportunity to do that and you mentioned wanting more stage time.

THE ACTOR

Yes. I did. But what is my voice here? It sounds a lot like the Graduate Student? We need to be able to tell these voices apart.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Well, they are technically the same person.

THE ACTOR

I know, but I don't know what you want from this performance.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(Thinking for a moment.) How about playing the role of a former actor who is now a painter?

THE ACTOR

That's a good idea.

(She takes this in for a moment then walks down to center stage.)

Where was I? I believe that this "body as instrument" metaphor can be applied to different mediums. For example, viewing a painter's body as their instrument might lead us to look at how a painter uses vision, how their hands and feet play a role in the creation process and so on.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(She jumps up from her seat.)

I just had a brilliant idea! I think I should write myself into this work!

THE ACTOR

I could play you...if you wanted me to.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I think I should play myself!

THE ACTOR

Good idea. I think your point of view is important too.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Yeah! Whereas actors use their bodies to interpret characters and emote them for audiences, Playwrights use their imaginations to create stage plays for actors to inhabit. At their root, Playwrights are simply story tellers – literary crafts-people composing plots, character, dialogue and spectacle. They place their characters in settings – assign meaning and vocal rhythms to their words. They find a way to hold the story in their mind and embody their characters mentally so that they are clearly expressed on the page for actors to interpret.

THE ACTOR

As an actor, I am called on to play roles writers have written. I feel like I never totally become the character I am playing, instead I embody the character by appropriating external characteristics like breath, voice, gesture and costume.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Playwrights never totally become the play they create. Though writing a play really occupies my mind and imagination. I feel like my vision of the play looks different from the reality of the play, once actors start to portray the roles I've created.

THE ACTOR

I would also argue that painters never really become the painting – they find ways to express external characteristics through color, rhythm and gesture and the paintings live on as recordings of gestures.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

The term "Play" feels like an important one for me in this equation. The playwright writes *plays*!

THE ACTOR

The actor *plays* a role.

(Pause)

That reminds me of a book called *Improvisation for the Theatre*. It was written in 1975 by improvisational theatre artist Viola Spolin. In the book, she curates a series of workshop exercises meant to assist theatre teachers and directors with training techniques for stage actors. The book promotes play and spontaneity in the theatre. She states: "*The first step towards*

playing is personal freedom. Before we can play (experience) we must be free to do so. It is necessary to become a part of the world around us and make it real by touching it, seeing it, feeling it, tasting it and smelling it – direct contact with the environment is what we seek.”^{ix}

My early theatre professor, Bob Moyer referenced Viola Spolin often in my actor training classes. He stated that his goal was to get us to a place in our performances where we were *not thinking, but being.*

Spolin suggests that *“spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom, when we are faced with reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly.”^x* I’ve always understood this to mean that personal freedom on the stage will bring about creative results. I’ve always taken this approach to anything I do creatively. That is, I allow myself some level of personal freedom to explore, play and experiment within different mediums. This leads me to creative insights. I simply play the discipline the way I play a role.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(To THE ACTOR)

That’s a great art school insight. Playing the discipline as a

role. I couldn't come up with that as a Playwright, I needed your actor insights! I am so happy you shared your perspective! Should we take a break and get some lunch?

THE ACTOR

Sure. I'm starving!

They walk off stage together. The pile of paper standing on the desk falls over. Lights fade to black.

ACT ONE / SCENE FOUR

THE MUSICIAN AND THE GRADUATE STUDENT

THE MUSICIAN stands center stage. Next to her is JACOB. In front of them is a table full of audio gear.

JACOB

(Speaking into the microphone)

We're so happy to be here. We are Beatrix*JAR

THE MUSICIAN

(She shouts out.) One. Two. One two three four!

(An electronic beat begins and JACOB bangs on his instruments.

THE MUSICIAN and JACOB take turns shouting in time with the music, not singing but speaking rhythmically.)

THE MUSICIAN

You start the process. Or Jacob does. You both listen to samples. Searching for that perfect drumbeat. Then you find a keyboard, a bass.

JACOB

Pitch it up or down. A guitar strum is chopped up and cut into smaller sections. This conversation goes on for hours.

JACOB AND THE MUSICIAN

(in unison)

For Hours! For Hours.

THE MUSICIAN

When you are done, you assign this collection of sounds a name.

JACOB

When you play a show - this collection of sounds becomes your "road map".

THE MUSICIAN

You improvise over the map by selecting samples from the CD-J
You add it rhythmically to the music. *(sings)* "This is James
Brown! James Brown! James Brown!" You like to find audio samples
on YouTube or on old tapes and reel to reels. You record them
and then edit your favorite moments to create new ones.

JACOB and THE MUSICIAN

You call it sound collage.

Like visual collage, but with sound.

You call it sound collage, like a visual collage with sound.

The song ends. THE GRADUATE STUDENT greets them both on stage.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

That was fantastic! Thank you, Beatrix*Jar, fantastic! Thank you, Jacob! Thank you, Bianca.

THE MUSICIAN and JACOB join THE GRADUATE STUDENT on a couch that sits down center of the podium. Once the two have taken a seat, they begin to have a conversation.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT *(To the audience.)*

To get more at the heart of my thesis project, we're talking with THE MUSICIAN, Bianca Pettis, from the duo Beatrix*JAR.

Welcome Bianca.

THE MUSICIAN

Thank you. Good to be here.

JACOB

We're happy to be here.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Sound artist, Circuit Bending Duo, Fuzzy Sound Collage. Machines of the past that create sounds of the future. Beatrix*Jar.

Here is a quote from a 2006 review of the Beatrix*Jar album, "I Love You Talk Bird"^{xi} by City Pages writer Lindsey Thomas. I think this quote points to some of the mythology you and Jacob were playing with at the time. *"A couple must know they've got something pretty special when they can agree that staying in for the night means less TV and more time spent sprawled out on the living room floor making beats and fiddling with circuitry. Beatrix (Bianca Janine Pettis) and JAR (Jacob Aaron Roske)—whose back story begins with the pair falling in love at a Canadian boarding school—make sound collages that have all the cozy familiarity of a romantic evening spent in the glow of a laptop."^{xii}*

THE MUSICIAN

That's a great quote! It really sums up our relationship huh Jacob?

JACOB

Totally! At the time, we were trying to create a mythology for the band like Bowie did with Ziggy Stardust or like Sun Ra.

THE MUSICIAN

But to set the record straight, we didn't meet at a Canadian Boarding School – we met in a video editing suite.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Why did you decide to name your thesis show: *"To Be Played at Maximum Volume?"*

THE MUSICIAN

You chose that title too!

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I know! I know. I should ask myself the question. Note to self, ask yourself the question.

THE MUSICIAN

The title was inspired by pop icon, David Bowie's 1972 Album: *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.^{xiii}

JAOCB

The album tells the story of space alien Ziggy Stardust descending onto the earth with a message from the stars. Ziggy Stardust is a character that David Bowie created.

THE MUSICIAN

The album includes Bowie's famous 1969 hit "*Moonage Daydream*" in which he cries out:

JACOB AND THE MUSICIAN

(Singing Together)

*"Ziggy played guitar, jamming good with Weird and Gilly
And the spiders from Mars. He played it left hand
But made it too far
Became the special man, then we were Ziggy's band!"^{xiv}*

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I figured out why I chose the title.

THE MUSICIAN

Why?

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

The 1998 Todd Haynes film, "*Velvet Goldmine*".

THE MUSICIAN

Oh, that was a good movie!

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

In the very first moments of the film, the audience is told: *"Although this is a work of fiction, it should never the less be played at maximum volume."*^{xv} The film, which is a love story to 1960's British Glam rock, tells the story of fictional rock icon Brian Slade, a character based on the life David Bowie and his character Ziggy Stardust. The film also includes characters based on the singer Iggy Pop and Lou Reed from the Velvet Underground. Central to the digenesis of the film is the perspective of a fan that came of age during the glam rock era. The film creates fictional glam rock mythology from the perspective of the band and its loyal fans. I chose the title because it's a suggestion – it says, turn this up.

THE MUSICIAN

It makes me think, oh this is going to get loud and we are going to have an experience here.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

And what exactly is Maximum Volume?

JACOB

David Bowie passed January 10, 2016. His passing reminded me that

I've always admired his ability to reinvent himself while so many others choose the normal path.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

He was an actor, when he was young just like you. He played Andy Warhol in the 2003 film *Basquiat*, directed by painter Julian Schnabel. *Basquiat* was a film that portrayed the artistic rise and subsequent death of artist Jean Michel Basquiat, who made a significant impact on the 1980's New York Art Scene and has a great deal of influence over my personal visual style.

THE MUSICIAN

For me the two quotes serve as a nod to the mythology of the rise and the fall of the rock star and inspiration in the creation of my own rock icon. As a black woman, the mythology of the rock star is not one that typically belongs to me. Throughout history, this has been a white male archetype starting with Elvis, then the Beatles and on and on through history. While there have been plenty of black female musicians with a rock and roll sensibilities like Tina Turner, who is referred to as the "*Queen of Rock and Roll*"^{xvi} and played the *Gypsy Acid Queen* in the Who's *Tommy*, and Grace Jones who was around New York during the Warhol years, there are very few black women that take the lead of a band backed by heavy drums and shredding guitars. When we think of a black woman musician we

do not think of the Velvet Underground, Ziggy Stardust or Led Zeppelin – we think of artists that carry a level of pop glamour and sexuality like Beyoncé and Whitney Houston. Or we think of backup singers.

(She pauses.)

So, maybe the show is a Black Woman exploration of the lineage of artists like Led Zeppelin, the Who and David Bowie.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Tell me about Jacob.

THE MUSICIAN

Well I became the Beatrix to Jacob's JAR. He was a solo musician before he met me. He worked as a sound technician at the Kitty Cat Klub in Minneapolis. A friend introduced us. Jacob gave me a cd with his music on it and I loved his sounds. One of his instruments is the AM Radio with Flash Cameras! I felt so inspired by his sounds, I made a video for one of the songs. We started collaborating after that. We discovered ourselves to have a boundless creativity together. We did video projects, we made music – we created fabric sculpture. For a long time, I

would film his performances and work his merch table – where we sold handmade t-shirts that we made together that read JAR.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

When did you join the band?

THE MUSICIAN

It was after months of watching Jacob play that I decided to join the band.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

What is the Fuzzy Sound Collage?

JACOB

Fuzzy Sound Collage is the name we gave the experimental electronic music we played together. We quit our day jobs, started touring and found some success playing music venues around the country. At some point, with the impetus to set ourselves apart as a band, we started offering hands-on circuit bending workshops paired with our live performances.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

(To the audience.)

For those of you who don't know, Circuit bending is the modification of battery powered electronic devices like children's toys and keyboards. Through the process of circuit bending, an artist can take an already existing instrument – like a keyboard – and modify it to suit their sonic needs.

Circuit Bending founder, Reed Ghazala describes some of the sound modifications possible in the world of Circuit Bending. *“Instead of a train, we hear an abstract musical passage appear and fade away; the train horn now becomes an impossible animal cry from a bent barnyard toy. The background and wind and rain are new washes of mildly stuttering syncopated static and so on down the line.”* ^{xvii} Ghazala's description embodies the sheer randomness and indeterminacy that circuit bending sounds provide.

THE MUSICIAN

After a curator took us out to lunch and validated our parking at a museum called Zeum in San Francisco, we decided to quit playing clubs and start playing art museums.

JACOB

When we were featured at museums, it was usually as programming in conjunction with an art exhibition.

THE MUSICIAN

During our museum phase, we were featured with the 2009 Tara Donovan exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego. We were also Artists in Residence for the Teen Program at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston during a 2013 solo exhibition by the artist Barry McGee. We also played a DJ set at the opening party for *My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love* the 2007 Kara Walker show at the Walker Art Center. I've seen works by Clive Gray, Swoon, Os Gemeos, Andy Warhol...I could go on and on...

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Do you think seeing this work inspired you to have a career as a visual artist?

THE MUSICIAN

I see how these experiences motivated me to pursue a career as a visual artist and inspired the possibility of creating large scale visual work. As people often say, there is nothing quite like seeing and feeling the presence of art up close and in person. I was in awe when I saw some of the art. I thought, I want to do that!

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

You decided to paint bands and crowds.

THE MUSICIAN

Yes. For now. I adore the world of sound and art, audiences, energy, exchange.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Do you want to play us another song?

JACOB AND THE MUSICIAN

Sure!

THE MUSICIAN

Would you like to join us?

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Sure!

JACOB joins THE MUSICIAN onstage at the music gear. They start to play music together.

The lights fade down on them.

ACT ONE / SCENE FIVE

THE PAINTER

Lights fade up on THE PAINTER, who has made a considerable amount of progress on the original painting. She notices the lights fading up on her and sighs annoyed because her concentration has just been interrupted.

THE PLAYWRIGHT is also onstage in her usual spot. She types.

THE PAINTER tries to paint as she addresses the audience.

THE PAINTER

In many ways, my mother is the originator of my painting journey. Ever since I can remember the walls of her home are always celebrating her latest creation. *(She pauses, looks back at THE PLAYWRIGHT)* Listen, I think this is a good idea, but I can't paint and talk at the same time.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(Stops typing. Takes a sip of coffee.)

I see. I hear you say that you can't talk and paint.

THE PAINTER

At the same time. Right.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

At the same time. Right. *(Thinking)* Well...I thought it would be nice for you to give some of your background here, talk about seeing your mother's work and what that meant to you.

THE PAINTER

That makes sense. I get it. I just feel a little uncomfortable painting and talking. What if we bring The Actress in? Could she read in the background while I paint?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Good idea! Or, what if we have The Actress paint while you read? Brilliant!

THE PAINTER

Really? But what about my work? She can't paint.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Look, we're trying to give her more stage time. She could act like she is painting for this scene and we could hear your authentic voice on seeing your mother's work. Just go with me.

It will be very powerful. I promise.

THE ACTOR appears and stands in front of the canvas near THE PAINTER. She is dressed identical to THE PAINTER and she poses to imitate the painter. THE PAINTER shakes her head, hesitates then hands over her paint brush. THE ACTRESS begins gesturing as if she is painting. The PLAYWRIGHT hands THE PAINTER a stack of papers. THE PLAYWRIGHT begins typing again. THE PAINTER reads.

THE PAINTER

Growing up with my mother in our little two-bedroom Charlotte apartment on the tree lined corner of Laurel and Dotger there was always a work of art perched on her easel for completion. She brought to life oil paintings of oranges, water lilies, cowboys riding horses in the nighttime desert, canyons and mountains with bright reds and yellows blended together to portray a southwest that resembled David Hockney's *Grand Canyon painting*.

The ACTOR continues to gesture, doing an almost comedic interpretive dance of THE PAINTERS reading.

I was never invited to paint in the same way she did with tubes of oil paint and the smell of turpentine echoing through the

apartment. She always said it was an expensive hobby and encouraged me to find my own thing. Which, in hindsight turned out to be a lot of things.

I started painting my second semester of graduate school. Each day walking to my studio, I saw classrooms of students working intensely on painting projects, but it never occurred to me to sign up for a class until I saw the painter Jack Whitten speak at the Walker during an education event.

Whitten, an African American abstract painter, was in town for his exhibition *"Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting"*. The show shared over 50 years of Whitten's explorations as a painter creating his own visual language of abstraction. *Whitten says: "I insist on having fun with my paintings. Once the individual proclaims themselves to be the artist, they can be anything they want to be."*^{xviii}

The day after Whitten's talk, I signed up for an Advanced Painting class with Clarence Morgan. The first few days of class, I worked quickly. Yet, I also felt as though painting was the worst thing that I could do. That I might get into trouble for doing it. I thought for sure this thing – called painting – belonged to my mother and I had no right to participate.

That feeling faded away and soon the curiosity emerged. I grew more comfortable just experimenting without worrying about being good or bad. I started with acrylic paint and let myself experience the materials – first making small strokes, then large fast ones. Then I started to experiment with different brushes, how hard or soft I had to press. I experimented with different mediums to compliment the paint. I played different music in my studio and let the sounds direct my work. Then I started to paint the characters that inhabited my notebooks.

These characters, the characters that inhabit my notebooks, are long lanky men and women with large eyes usually drawn with a black pen. According to my mother, I started drawing them when I was six years old. I have no personal memory of their inception but I they've always been there. I remember drawing them on letters I sent to college friends. I remember inserting them in notes during classes and using them to write out challenging episodes. I continue to draw them to this day.

THE PAINTER hands her script to THE ACTRESS and takes the brush back. She starts to paint. She paints a giant character on the canvas to demonstrate her monologue. She continues filling it in with color.

THE ACTRESS

When I went to the Art Supply with my mother for painting supplies, she would let me purchase a black sketch pad and black fountain pen. These notebooks became my companions. In them I wrote secret journal entries, stories, lists and cultivated a cartoon practice. My sketchbook and pen paired with *Mad Magazine* served as my personal laboratory; I would spend hours tracing and redrawing the long lanky, big-eyed figures drawn by, Mad Cartoonist, Don Martin and the simple, expressive black line of cartoonist Sergio Aragones. The history of their influence can be seen in my character drawings to this day.

When I would sit down to draw, my mother would joke that I was *wasting paper*. It occurs to me as I write this that she never used sketchbooks. Instead she filled the pages of already published books with her own drawings and poetry. She created figurative sketches in the margins and wrote notes over already existing text.

THE ACTRESS takes a bow. THE PAINTER sighs interrupted again!

THE PLAYWRIGHT

That was great! How did it feel to you both?

THE ACTRESS

How was I? I really tried to embody your words.

THE PAINTER

It was fine! Good! Great!

THE ACTRESS

Painting seems cool.

THE PAINTER

It is. There's not as much pressure as there is in acting. I don't have to perform other people's words. I get to explore color and shape and lead my own explorations. It's quite amazing.

THE ACTRESS

Hm.

THE PAINTER

Okay, I need to get back to work.

THE MUSICIAN and THE GRADUATE STUDENT enter.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

How is it going?

THE PAINTER

I need to get to work everyone, I don't have time for this.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

(To THE MUSICIAN and THE GRADUATE STUDENT) I am so happy you both came. You have impeccable timing! I have another idea. I was hoping we could get The Musician in to talk about how sound affects the painting.

THE PAINTER

I was hoping to...

THE MUSICIAN

That's a great idea. When you paint do you think about how sound affects your work? I would like to add something like that.

THE ACTRESS

And I could play The Musician!

THE PAINTER

This is frustrating! I need to keep painting. You are putting a lot of pressure on me!

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I may be able to draw some parallels between sound and painting. We could talk about your brush strokes. Isn't there an artist that paints with sound?

THE ACTRESS

Kandinsky.

THE PAINTER

How did you know that?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Exactly! *(starts to type.)*

THE PAINTER

(Starting to shout.) Hello! Hello! Listen you are all putting a lot of pressure on me to finish this project as a series of paintings. Musician you are not writing songs, actor you have no role to play. It's just me here! Me and the canvas.

*They all leave in shock. The Painter is left alone. She sighs
deeply and begins to work.*

ACT TWO / SCENE ONE

FINALE THE ART WORK

SETTING: THE NASH GALLERY

The PAINTER, THE PLAYWRIGHT, THE MUSICIAN AND THE ACTOR all stand in the Nash Art Gallery together. There are five chairs set up. They are surrounded by THE PAINTERS colorful large scale oil paintings. There is a feeling of excitement and anticipation.

THE GRADUATE student enters the scene, late as usual. She is carrying a book bag full of papers and a box of donuts.

GRADUATE STUDENT

Sorry I am late. I brought donuts!

THE PAINTER

Can we get started? I want to get back to my studio.

GRADUATE STUDENT

Sure. Have a donut. Sorry I am late.

(She puts her bag down in a chair and opens her donut box to get a donut. A stack of papers fall from her bag. She holds a chocolate donut and retrieves the papers managing to get chocolate all over them. She hands them out to each person while licking her fingers.)

After receiving the paper, the group gathers in front of two large paintings at the entrance of the exhibition.)

THE PLAYWRIGHT

The Graduate Student just handed out my script. I hope you like it.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I added a few art history things and did the bibliography.

THE ACTRESS

It looks good.

THE PAINTER

Should we get started? I have a lot of work to do.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

THE PAINTER

(in unison)

The first three paintings in my thesis...

(They laugh.)

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

You can go ahead.

THE PAINTER

The first three paintings deal with the concept of waiting in line and the temporary community that gets established.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

This first work is called: *"General Admission: We waited in line for over an hour."*

THE PLAYWRIGHT

That's my title!

THE PAINTER

This is the first work. It depicts two rows of heads adding up to 25 all gathered in line on a 4x15 foot canvas. The heads are each assigned their own backgrounds. This is a nod to some early

Warhol screen-printing multiples like Andy Warhol's 1963 silkscreen "*Ethel Scull 36 Times*".

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

In Warhol's work, Ethel Scull's image from a photo booth is reprinted with several different colorful backgrounds 36 times on the canvas. I created a similar effect, but tried to create different characters with their own backgrounds or energetic conditions.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

For me the work is about a sort of temporary community that is established in the act of simply waiting in line together. I also think the painting suggests that there is more to the story. That everyone has some experience that is being played out in line. That we may assume we know of other's experiences but really, we have no way of knowing.

(They stand before the work and consider it a bit more.)

THE MUSICIAN

Waiting in line at night clubs there is a similar vibe. I waited in line at the Limelight in New York and watched certain VIP's bypass the line to gain entrance while the rest of us were made

to wait. Later inside the club, I stood in line to gain entrance to another smaller room. The woman standing at the door waved me through like I was a VIP.

THE ACTOR

This reminds me of the audition scenarios I've experienced. Depending on the audition, there could be a handful of actors or hundreds. The actors audition, some are asked to leave. The casting agent narrows the pool down to just a few – and then only a very small percentage end up playing the roles.

That also reminds me, when Jacob and I lived in Los Angeles I secured tickets for us to attend the 2012 MTV Movie Awards. I thought just going to the event made me a VIP, but when I arrived at the venue I encountered thousands of other people that had the same idea.

THE PAINTER

Should we move on?

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Sure. This work is called "**VIP/Will Call Line**", which depicts about seven decorated heads with a black background.

THE PAINTER

The canvas is 4x15 feet. The decorated heads offer a bit of Op Art experimentation by layering multiple colors. I am really attracted to how Op Art creates a visual sensation for the viewer. The painting sort of unfolded before me as I created it. I did another work I called, "*Portrait of the Gear*", which is on display at the Rochester Art Center in conjunction with a show called "*Warhol Goes Pop*". The show presents over 20 screen-prints that Warhol created late in his career. I spent some time studying them and took note of the different registration lines he used in his work. Instead of a typical black line Warhol sometimes chose white, pink or green outlines. For this painting, I chose to play with the registration line by alternating between white and black. I also worked at creating a busy background full of colorful weavings, but decided that this made the painting too busy – so I covered up my work with a thin layer of black paint.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

This speaks work speaks of who gets access, who gets to bypass the larger line and move through with ease. It reminds me of the different class lines at the where people with first class seats can board the plane before people with regular seats. There is a

crowd hierarchy that gets played out and this painting is a representation of that for me.

THE ACTOR

What about this one? I really find it interesting. It's called *"It was so crowded, we couldn't move"* is a screen-printed work which stands 8 x 10 Feet.

THE MUSICIAN

This work is a collaboration Jacob. His screen printed work is really sonic.

THE PAINTER

The work is composed of over 50 screen printed images of hand drawn crowds I printed with Jacob. The crowds existed as a few single prints that were repeated to make even larger crowds. Some of the crowds are layered, some single, some printed on wood, some painted with gouache – many printed on different types of paper to speak of their condition.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I can tell this piece is inspired by the works of Barry McGee and Margaret Kilgallen. McGee and Kilgallen used alternative sources to create collages. McGee sometimes printed on bottles

while Margaret used simple line paintings of woman (mostly from the folk music scene) and text to inhabit pieces of wood collaged together to make larger images.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

This work makes me think of larger communities we are connected too and the relationship to waiting with those groups of people.

THE MUSICIAN

It reminds me of the stadiums crowds that gather to see big named music acts like Bon Jovi, Madonna and Beyonce.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Let's go around the corner. *(They all walk around the corner).*

This work is called: *"They were putting on glitter makeup in the bathroom."*

THE PAINTER

This is a 45 x 45" canvas mixed media work composed of acrylic paint, screen-print, glitter, oil and oil stick. Just beneath it a screen-printed bench where glitter seems to have gathered.

Another Warhol inspired print. I used glitter to pay a homage to diamond dust.

THE MUSICIAN

This piece feels like a homage to the glitter makeup referenced in the glam rock scene. It reminds of me how a band can inspire its fans to dress and express themselves in similar ways.

THE ACTOR

Oh, what about this one?

(Points to the next painting)

A moment to reflect on love in "From the Bottom of my Heart"

THE PAINTER

This is one of the first large scale paintings I created in my second year of the graduate program. I remember as I was creating it the characters poured from me with an indescribable urgency. This was during a period where I questioned whether I should be painting. I see this work as my first hieroglyphic because it feels very raw to me – the lines feel very quick and the colors aren't filled in completely.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

For me this work represents love through the anxiety. I created this painting during a tumultuous political time in Minneapolis and a personally difficult time.

THE ACTOR

For the me the work is a message of love that I needed when I arrived in my studio. It's kind of a giant Hallmark card.

THE MUSICIAN

Now, I really love the title of this one. "Opener: Your friend's band". Did you do that? (*Speaking to THE PLAYWRIGHT*)

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Yeah, I was thinking of seeing you and Jacob play.

THE PAINTER

This is a large 6x9 Foot Canvas depicting a three-piece band...

THE MUSICIAN

...with drums, guitar and vocals written in white text above their heads.

THE PAINTER

This painting continues an Op Art exploration by creating a multi-line background and decorating the faces of the band members and writing above them in white oil stick. The painting was not planned, rather it evolved over time eventually becoming an experiment to see what it would be like to paint three giant

heads. The women in the painting didn't really decide to become a band until after they were all unified on the canvas.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

What about this one? *"Second Act: DJ Polly Breeze"*.

THE PAINTER

The painting is 9 x 6 feet and depicts Laptop DJ Polly Breeze...

THE MUSICIAN

DJ Polly Breeze! Cool. She's making music on her computer!

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Is that what I look like?

THE PAINTER

The painting depicts a lone woman with headphones looking at her laptop. Behind her a crowd gathers excited to hear her music. There is some Op Art involved with this image too and a homage to Hilma Auf Klint.

THE GRADUTE STUDENT

For me this painting is about an artist connecting with a laptop, connecting with the world. I feel like it's a bit of a

nod to the technology that musicians use these days to create music and the ease with which we can access it.

THE MUSICIAN

For me the painting also speaks to the power of music – how it can connect us and transform us. How it makes people move and respond.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

There is also some thought there about the ability of humans to work through different mediums to express themselves.

THE GRADUATE

"The Headliner: The Grizzly Fantastics"

THE PAINTER

I made this painting to be just that – the headliner!

THE MUSICIAN

Inspired by the 1960's versions of rock bands, I chose to depict my version of a female group like Led Zeppelin or the Who.

THE PAINTER

For the me the painting is the pinnacle of my work for the show. It's the one that I gave the most thought and attention too. It's the entry into this world that does not totally include me through a visual form.

THE MUSICIAN

The painting also represents a dream I have: I want to play stadium rock concerts.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

But what I find the most satisfying is that it allows me to play a stadium concert without all the physical logistics of creating that reality. It's a reality that does exist, it just happens to be alive in an oil painting. The mythology lives on in the recorded gesture of the paint.

THE MUSICIAN

Finally, "*Terrible Marigold*", is a nod to my own band, Beatrix*Jar. It depicts two giant "*Speak and Spells*", staples of our musical expression as circuit benders.

THE PAINTER

This was one of the first large works I created. I feel like it's a portrait of the Speaks and a portrait of Jacob and I.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

What about the video that is set up at the start of the show?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

That was an afterthought. I created it after the show opened. I thought it would drive the point home about the rock show.

THE PAINTER

I took a picture of the progress I made on "Headliner: The Grizzly Fantastics" each time I worked on it. I put that footage together and made a video.

THE MUSICIAN

I helped with audio. I wanted to create the real feeling of a stadium show with the audience and live music.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I also wrote the text. I've seen a lot of concerts, musicians say stuff like "We Love you!" And the Minneapolis song, those were my lyrics.

THE MUSICIAN

(Singing)

"Gonna take a bus, to Minneapolis!"

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

I think the piece works because it sets us up to see the band. I saw the video, then I turned the corner and there they were!

THE PAINTER

Well there you have it. Are we done? I'd like to get back to work.

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Sure. But wait, what about the questions I asked at the start of this work. Did the canvas become a place of hosting?

THE PLAYWRIGHT

I think it did.

THE MUSICIAN

Painter, you've been working so hard, we never see you!

THE ACTRESS

Yeah. We never do plays anymore!

THE PAINTER

I know. I still love you guys, I am just exploring new mediums.

THE GRADUATE

Are we done here? Hey guys...

(Lights fade as they walk off stage together.)

EPILOUGE

THE PAINTER

THE PAINTER is back in her studio. She sits alone in front of her canvas, it is blank. She begins applying a layer of gesso again. She pauses and addresses the audience.

THE PAINTER

This is your canvas.

You purchased it that afternoon at the Home Depot.

Aisle 13, in the painting section

EVERBILT: Heavy Duty Canvas Drop Cloth

For painting and cleaning.

THE ACTRESS enters, THE PAINTER hands her a brush. She speaks

THE ACTRESS

You decide that you like painting on the drop cloth because it is inexpensive. And allows you to work on a large scale. Plus, they come in five sizes.

While the ACTRESS is speaking, The MUSCIAN enters, THE PAINTER hands her a brush. THE MUSICIAN dips the brush in gesso and paints a layer on the canvas and sings:

THE MUSICIAN

(sings)

4' x15', 6' x 9', 4' x 4', 5' x 5' and 12'x 9'

That makes it easy you think.

THE PLAYWRIGHT stops typing and walks to the PAINTER, who hands her a brush. THE PLAYWRIGHT dips the brush in gesso and begins to paint.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

You use your brush to coat the raw, bumpy canvas with a layer of white gesso. This is important. This is when you think about the potential of the canvas. You set the stage and begin the process.

THE PAINTER

You consider what the canvas has the potential to become. How the brush strokes and colors will come together on the journey. What it will be when you are done.

(THE GRADUATE STUDENT enters and observes everyone working together.)

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

You smile, because you realize you've found freedom in painting.

They all pause and speak in unison.

THE PAINTER

THE PLAYWRIGHT

THE ACTRESS

THE MUSICIAN

THE GRADUATE STUDENT

Your mother was right. It was here all along.

They all pick up their brushes and start to gesso the canvas together. Lights fade to black as they laugh and work together.

END

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