

BRAND JOURNAL

"DOORS"
a musical revue

A Retrospective Record of my Production

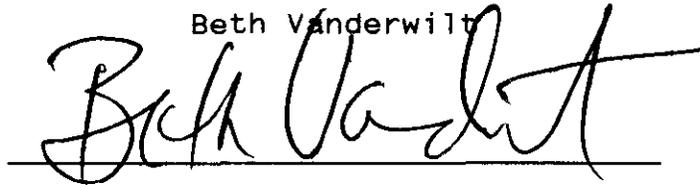
A Creative Project for HONRS 499

by

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Thesis Advisor

Beth Vanderwilt

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Beth Vanderwilt", written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and stylized.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

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May 1992

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Where to begin. Putting down on paper everything that I went through while producing my Honors Thesis Project, "DOORS" a musical revue, would be a next to impossible task. Therefore, I shall attempt to sum up in this short paper, kind of a journal written after the thought, what it was like to have an idea, a "vision" if you will, and see it worked over and over and finally produced on stage, receiving a very warm reception I might add.

It all began way back in my Freshman year here at Ball State when I first learned of the Thesis requirement. I knew that the Honors College was pretty flexible in their determination of what was a suitable project and what was not. I decided then and there that I felt the most practical application of my individual skills would come in the form of producing a musical production of some sort. From this tiny seed grew the production that has occupied most of my waking hours for the last two months of this semester.

During the Spring semester of 1991, I decided that I would set a tentative date of production for my thesis. Since I would be graduating the following May, I figured that I would shoot for the end of the Fall semester, 1991, leaving room in the next semester if something was to delay the production. I immediately began moving through the appropriate channels within the department to secure departmental backing and a choice performance space. I knew that I did not want my show, as I was now referring to it, to be in the small, experimental space known as "The Cave" theatre, where student directed workshop productions were normally produced. The main reason for this was the room's unfavorable conditons for

staging a musical performance and the limited seating arrangement therein. I decided that the flexible and intimate space found in the Edward S. Strother Theatre would be ideal for the type of production I was envisioning. Getting use of the space was a whole other process. I first had to check the 1991-1992 schedule to find out what would be going on at the end of the semester and what show, if any, would be rehearsing in the theatre that I so desperately wanted to work in. It turned out that the time I wanted coincided with the first week of rehearsals for the annual student directed show. Luckily, the student director was a friend of mine and I was able to convince him to move his rehearsals to another space. I then approached the Chairman of the department and presented my proposal, confident that I would have no problem getting it passed by the Honors College since it would be something new and original. The next step was to write a formal letter to the Play Selection Committee and ask permission to use the theatre and explain the arrangements I had made and what kind of show I was planning. I did this on April 25th, 1991, and on June 27th, I finally received an official letter from the Chairman giving me use of Strother Theatre on Sunday, December 8th, 1991 and subjecting my project to the existing restrictions for workshop productions - in other words, no budget, and use of the space as it was being set for the next show being mounted in the theatre.

Well, this was fine with me. I now had to begin the task of actually putting together a musical revue. Of course, I hadn't the first clue where to begin, but I figured I'd better start looking for music to use. Being very familiar with the genre and having a

lot of personal favorites, I chose to go ahead and assemble a list of music that I may want to use in my show and go from there. By the end of the summer, I had a tentative song list (which was very definitely subject to modification). My next step was to obtain the actual music that I did not already have or was not available to me through the library. This involved a trip to Chicago and Carl Fischer, Inc. -- an excellent music store that can get just about any published music. They also ship anywhere in the U.S..

I was not able to get all the music on my list, but I was already prepared to make a few changes. I was also in the process of searching for a common theme under which I could classify the songs I had picked, because by this time, I knew I did not want a stereotypical revue where you just hear song after song after song. I wanted to put together something that would have a message and that would touch people. I eventually settled on human relationships as my theme (a rather broad one, at that) and once again revised my song list.

My next step was to assemble a cast for my production. I had a general idea of what and who I wanted, but I was not too clear on how to go about assembling the "perfect" cast. I eventually sat down and went through my song list and decided who would be good for what song and once again revised the list to suit some of my choices. I then wrote up a formal invitation to ask those I had in mind to join me in this endeavor. To my great relief, they all accepted. So, now I had eleven talented and willing people to deal with. Needless to say, I was very excited!

In order to put together a rehearsal schedule, I had each cast

member turn in to me a copy of their schedule and I worked from there. Every minute of my out-of-class time was then devoted to meeting and rehearsing with the cast, usually on an individual basis, since there were so many extraneous conflicts. This led to one of the first lessons I learned while doing this project : be prepared to be flexible but at the same time strict about your rehearsal times. There were a few wasted rehearsals due to poor planning on the part of both parties. However, I knew I was working with a very talented group and I was hoping that when the pressure was on, they would pull through.

So, the month of November was devoted to learning the music and developing the songs so that they would work into the theme. Meanwhile, I received the last piece of music I had ordered from Carl Fischer and was very happy because now I had an opening number and this number eventually became the unifying force behind the theme and I soon adopted it's title as the working title for my show; it was "Doors" from Maltby and Shire's Closer Than Ever. With the help of my advisors, I decided to have a set that consisted of three free-standing door frames through which the cast would pass. These doors were to symbolically represent the doors that we, as humans, pass through in our lives; opening new doorways to unknown territories or closing doors to those parts of life that are the past. I also wanted to get across the sense of forward motion so evident in our lives as students -- that the future is ours and our time is coming. Thus, the closing number was "Our Time" from Stephen Sondheim's Merrily We Roll Along.

As the production date neared and this project was beginning

to rule all facets of my life, I began more and more to understand how a director feels when a show is nearing completion. We were ready to stop pounding out the songs on the piano and move on to blocking and the acting aspect of the piece. Our first all-cast rehearsal was held on the weekend before Thanksgiving. I tried to be as prepared as possible for this all day rehearsal, but I really did not know which direction to take and my lack of experience in directing really showed. This is the part of the process that, if I could go back, I would totally do over again and attempt to do a better job! We did hash out a tentative order of songs and get the opening and closing numbers staged (which was one of the main objectives of the rehearsals), we also began work on the individual scenes that were being written by the cast. I had arranged the songs in such a way so that they fell into little scenes, and even though they came from totally different shows, I saw that they fit together and could be effectively done in this manner. So, the cast members were instructed to come up with small scenes to go with their songs. This idea ended up being one that really paid off in some instances and was trashed in others. All in all I think it worked well and I liked the personal feel it gave to the songs and to the entire show.

It was the Monday before Thanksgiving when I was faced with my toughest challenge. One of my cast members informed me that she had decided to drop out of "DOORS"!! Panic time! After a few tense phone conversations and a sleepless night, I simply accepted the fact that there was nothing that I could do or say that would change her mind. So, I spent the break rearranging the show and

once again revising the song list. Eventually everything worked out for the better because the second act was tighter and I inserted a more upbeat number into the second act which helped give the show more dynamic levels.

Upon returning from Thanksgiving, we all knew it was time to put our noses to the grindstone. This was the week that the show was to come together into its final form. I held rehearsals every night (making many concessions and adjustments for cast members with conflicts) and got the show blocked by Tuesday night. We had only three run-throughs, one on the day of the show. Since the show had kind of been thrown together in the last couple of days, I was feeling a little nervous come Sunday afternoon. The run-through had gone relatively well that morning, but there were still some shaky moments.

I was given a lot of technical support and had no problem working out the lighting cues as I had a very reliable stage manager. We were even able to work out some lovely moments with the lights -- something I hadn't anticipated but was glad to have. I was also very fortunate to have recruited a reliable accompanist earlier in the year, so that was a huge load off my mind.

At last the night arrived. Sunday, December 8th, 1991. I was so nervous that I had to take an antacid and a hot shower before going to dinner with my parents (where I had fish, something I knew wouldn't sit too heavily in my stomach). I arrived at the theatre and had a final warm-up and meeting with the cast before sending them off to give their all. As I got ready to give my introductory speech, I felt a wave of emotion come over me that I knew I had to

stifle but that I knew would surface later in the show. Well, the show was much better than I ever could have dreamed and the audience seemed to agree as they rose to their feet for a standing ovation. During the final number, the emotion that I had repressed throughout the evening surfaced and I almost lost it. However, getting the words of the song out became paramount in my mind and as I sang, I knew that I had accomplished something and had touched people and had found in myself the courage to pursue my dream.

I have found this project of be one of unending trials, unexpected joys, and unforgettable experiences. I feel that both I and my cast benefited greatly from working on it. I would encourage anyone, whether they be honors students, theatre majors, or just dreamers like the rest of us, to never let their dreams fade and if they think they have even the slightest chance of realizing their dream, go for it! I shall end this remembrance with a message to us all. It is the final lyric of the closing number. It reads:

It's our time, breathe it in.
Worlds to change and worlds to win.
Our turn coming through,
Me and You, pal, me and you.
It's our heads on the block,
Give us room and start the clock.
Our dreams coming true,
Me and You , pal, me and you.

BRENT E. MARTY

in cooperation with

The Department of Theatre and Dance Performance

presents



"DOORS"
a musical revue

Sunday December 8th

8:00 pm

Strother Theatre

Ball State University

You are cordially invited to attend my senior honors thesis project entitled "DOORS" - a musical revue. This evening promises to be an entertaining and touching look at relationships and how we as people deal with other people in our lives. Please join us .



DOORS

a musical revue

"DOORS"

a musical revue

Arranged, Produced, and Directed by
Brent E. Marty

CAST

Heather Baker
Amy Bowman
Ken Dingleline
Melissa Jones
Alicia King
Lisa Lintner

Brent E. Marty
Paula Merrill
Paul Nicely
Debbie Thomas
Beth Vanderwilt

STAFF

Accompanist.....David Wilson
Assistant to the Accompanist.....Iiva Smith
Assistant to the Director/Stage Manager.....Jim Melin
Assistant Stage Manager.....Audrey Snyder
Lighting Design.....Todd Green
House Manager.....Patrick Kelsey

Very Special Thanks To: Don LaCasse and the Department, Mike Lamirand, Dean Arno Wittig and the Honors College, Kip Shawger, Drew Ostick, Todd Green, Shawn Stoner, my wonderful advisors Beth, Phil, and Lynnette, my faithful and talented accompanist David, my best friend Jim, Ken and his computer, my extremely talented and tolerant cast, and my very supportive family -- Without the time, effort, love, and support from those mentioned here, this project would not be the wonderful experience it has become for me...THANK YOU!!!

This production is dedicated to all of us...May we have the wisdom to see that this is our time and the courage to face any door that we may encounter along the way.

Musical Numbers

ACT I

- "Doors".....by Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire
-- Cast
- "Two People in Love".....by Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire
-- Heather and Brent
- "You're Nothing Without Me".....by Cy Coleman and David Zippel
-- Brent and Paul
- "Pretty Lady".....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Ken, Paul, and Brent
- "What You Don't Know About Women"....by Cy Coleman and David Zippel
-- Heather and Amy
- "Being Alive".....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Ken
- "Your Fault".....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Brent, Ken, Paula, Ali, and Heather
- "Easy To Be Hard"....by Galt MacDermot, James Rado, and Gerome Ragni
-- Debbie
- "Mean To Me".....by Fred E. Ahlert and Roy Turk
-- Debbie
- "Can't Help Lovin' That Man"
.....by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern
-- Amy
- "The Night It Had to End".....by Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann
-- Heather
- "Romantic Notions".....by Barry Harman and Keith Herrmann
-- Brent, Melissa, Ken, and Heather

15 MINUTE INTERMISSION

ACT II

- "You're Gonna Love Tomorrow/Love Will See Us Through"
.....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Brent, Amy, Paul, and Heather
- "Life Story".....by Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire
-- Beth
- "What Kind of Fool Am I?".....by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley
-- Brent
- "I Don't Know How to Love Him"....by Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice
-- Lisa
- "It's De-Lovley".....by Cole Porter
-- Brent and Lisa
- "Good Thing Going".....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Brent
- "Come Back With the Same Look in Your Eyes"
.....by Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Don Black
-- Ali
- "Leavin's Not the Only Way To Go".....by Roger Miller
-- Brent, Heather, and Ken
- "Our Time".....by Stephen Sondheim
-- Cast