

Creating Net Loss: A One-Person Show

An Honors Thesis (THEA 434)

by

Maya Vagle

Thesis Advisor

Eva Patton

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 2022

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2022

Abstract

While the criticisms of capitalism have always been plentiful, being entrenched in a global pandemic for the past few years has further exposed how a capitalist economy can have detrimental effects on the well-being of its people. In the United States, the productivity- and success-driven culture often places excessive demands on its citizens, while simultaneously depriving them of life satisfaction, a livable income, and physical and mental wellness. My one-woman play titled *Net Loss* strives to analyze what it means to exist in a society not designed to prioritize its citizens' well-being (often referred to as "inner peace" or "inner flame" throughout this statement) over economic profit. In this process analysis statement, I explore how I arrived at this theme and devised *Net Loss*. I reflect on the performance, the piece's effect on the audience, and how I would like to evolve the piece going into the future.

Acknowledgments

I am endlessly grateful for the assistance and support I have received throughout this process. Thank you to Eva Patton for being a splendid mentor and advisor. Your guidance over this semester, and the past four years, has been incredible. Thank you to Veronica Santoyo for encouraging me to push myself and find joy in making this work. I would also like to extend my gratitude and love for the BFA Acting Option Class of 2022. You all grounded me, supported my work, and inspired me to continue when the process seemed too difficult. Thank you to my roommate Tara Williamson, who has taught me more than she knows. Finally, I want to thank my parents for instilling their love for knowledge in me and constantly supporting me—much love to all.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS ANALYSIS STATEMENT	1
SECTION 1: ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES & MEANING	3
Organizing Principle	3
Capitalism's Role in <i>Net Loss</i>	3
Why This Play Now?	7
SECTION 2: THE PROCESS	9
Exploration	9
The Evolution of the Story	12
Motivation	16
Collaboration	17
Finishing Touches	19
SECTION 3: THE PERFORMANCES	22
The Design	22
Performances	24
SECTION 4: REFLECTION	28
What Worked Well?	29
What Could I Improve?	29
Goals for the Future	30
CONCLUSION	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34
APPENDICES	36
Appendix A: The Final Script	36
Appendix B: The Poster	39

Introduction to the Process Analysis Statement

As the final part of the acting curriculum at Ball State, we are guided through the process of creating a One-Person Show. Alongside my class, I spent the spring semester creating an eight-minute piece of theatre. We worked under the guidance of Professor Eva Patton, who was my advisor on this project, and Professor Veronica Santoyo. This process brought extraordinary challenges, rewarding lessons, and joyful professional satisfaction in being able to assume the role of actor as well as director, writer, and designer.

Since March 2020, I have become increasingly aware of the inequities of a capitalist system. It punishes imperfections and does not exist to support the lower socio-economic strata. My journey with mental illness piqued my curiosity about capitalism's effects on the mental health and inner life of its citizens. Through self-reflection, I found that its unrealistic demands and harmful perspectives on value and worth decimated my passion, self-esteem, and happiness. I identified these components as my "internal flame."

Therefore, I created a play titled *Net Loss* to examine the effects of capitalism on the inner life of a character called Woman, played by me. In the piece, the Woman is terrorized by an unsuspecting villain: the dress she wears to work. To view the filmed version of the piece, please copy and paste the URL in the first footnote.¹ If there are any technical difficulties, do not hesitate to email me at maya.vagle@gmail.com.

My goal in this process analysis statement is to detail how the piece evolved from conception to performance. I begin by discussing the changes from my proposal and how this fed the guiding theme of the piece, called the organizing principle. Then I examine the potential

¹https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SEZpBH-_exc4SJ-k3SWPiisIDgN15RX2?usp=sharing

negative impacts of capitalism on someone's emotional life, and how that translated into this play. The second section includes a step-by-step description of the process of creating the play, beginning with brainstorming and explorative work, and ending with a finalized script. In the third section, I cover the details of technical rehearsals and the performances. In the final and fourth section, I reflect on the entire process, examine what worked well with the performance, and how I would like to expand on this piece in the future.

Section 1: Organizing Principles & Meaning

Organizing Principle

In my proposal, I set forth the following questions to guide my exploration: What choices do we make at the end of the world? What are we forced to do? What are we supposed to do? What are we obligated to do? What sacrifices are we willing to make?

After working in the beginning of the semester, I discovered that this “end of the world” I was exploring was not a hypothetical, but a definite sense I was feeling. I also discovered this feeling was rooted in my own existence in the capitalist, productivity-driven world we live in. Therefore, my central question morphed into a single statement, or organizing principle: How can I protect and nurture my internal flame amidst the absurdity of a deteriorating capitalist society? The aforementioned guiding questions led me to the idea that the choices we make in life seek to balance our true, internal selves with the often-conflicting exterior demands. The “internal flame” is my way of visualizing my internal life: my basic human needs, desires, emotions, and motivations. These are in complete opposition to the image of a society that appears to be collapsing around me. In relation to the real world, it operates as a metaphor. I proceeded to examine the ways in which capitalism affects my internal life or flame.

Capitalism’s Role in *Net Loss*

The purpose of this piece was not to criticize the economic functionality of capitalism. The purpose of this piece was to examine the emotional and psychological effects of capitalism. I will not profess to fully understand or seek to analyze the complexities of advanced or neoliberal capitalism. I will, however, examine how some of its features have the potential to negatively impact the people who live under it.

We see an immense amount of theatre dealing with the issues of various economic systems. Some deal with the intense fear of communism, the most famous example being *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. *The Guardian* recently published an article on a new play called *Corinna* by Chloë Moss about the horrendous conditions inside cargo ships and how they tie closely to the functionality of capitalism.² A third and notable example is the Korean television show *Squid Game* which explores capitalism's devastating effects on people.³ This show depicts the brutal desperation of the characters as they attempt to pay off their massive debts, and we, as spectators are witnesses to the disturbing ways that debt was accrued. The game the characters play, which more often than not, results in death is a sobering metaphor for the consequences of a capitalist society.

Central to capitalism is the intense desire for profit and competition which inevitably leads to the survival of the fittest.⁴ One must outperform the competition. There are real stakes as to whether or not one is successful in the market. Central to my piece is the idea that this competition and struggle prioritizes capital gain above human life and happiness.

A useful example of this is health care and its market. A 2020 dissertation on the United States healthcare system described its deficits in three simple words: “expensive, wasteful, and inaccessible.”⁵ For a long time, there was no accessible and adequate universal healthcare. The result was expensive deductibles and copays that prevented people from seeking lifesaving or

²Amelia Gentleman, “‘It’s My Idea of Hell!’: The Intense New Play Set Aboard a Cargo Ship,” *The Guardian*, April 28, 2022.

³Netflix.com, “Squid Game,” (2021).

⁴Heikki Patomäki, “Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crisis,” *Journal of Critical Realism* 16, no. 5 (June 1, 2017): 537–43.

⁵Samantha Sterba, “Neoliberal Capitalism and the Evolution of the U.S. Healthcare System,” (2020), Doctoral Dissertations, 2083.

preventive health care. Additionally, the more health issues one has, the more one must pay - not only to the medical facility but to the insurance companies.

Also central to this piece of theatre is capitalism's negative impact on mental health. A 2005 article examines this relationship. Author Dawn Martinez uses Michel Foucault's analysis to assert that the systems of power in place by way of advanced capitalism have increased the mental health crisis in recent years.⁶ One tenet of this theory is that those who treat mental health issues assume the problem is a pathological issue and the patient is at fault. An opposing theory suggests the systems in power (i.e. political, social, and economic systems like capitalism) either cause or exacerbate mental health issues.

A 2022 article by Anna Zeira examines how certain policies and systems of power that result from neoliberal capitalism negatively affect mental health and its treatment. Zeira claims that stagnant income, increased inequality, and emphasis on individualism in recent neoliberal policy lead to heightened distress.⁷ She also references a 2001 article that postulates that "income is often equated with a person's value and moral character" under capitalism.⁸ The negative emotions and mental anguish that can result from a person feeling their intrinsic worth is being decided based on the amount of their paycheck speaks to advanced capitalism's harmful effects on one's internal life. The capitalist environment does not create circumstances for many people to thrive and in some cases survive, as their physiological needs (i.e., shelter, water, food, etc.), security needs, and needs for love, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment cannot be met.⁹ There is a

⁶Dawn Belkin Martinez, "Mental Health Care after Capitalism," (2005).

⁷Anna Zeira, "Mental Health Challenges Related to Neoliberal Capitalism in the United States," *Community Mental Health Journal* 58, no. 2 (2021): 205–12.

⁸Joanna Moncrieff, "Neoliberalism and Biopsychiatry: A Marriage of Convenience," In *Liberatory Psychiatry: Philosophy, Politics and Mental Health*, edited by Carl I. Cohen and Sami Timimi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 235-56.

⁹Abraham Maslow, "A theory of human motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–396, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.

large amount of literature, scholarly and popular, that suggests that the relationship between the current economic system and its citizens is abounding with toxicity.

In the last few years, there have been many theories online about how capitalism practically affects the people living under it. Activist Maria Svart wrote in 2019 that capitalism is not failing, as some claim, but is thriving and that is the reason people are suffering.¹⁰ Author Matt Stoller wrote about capitalism's focus on profit leading to ineffective and unsafe products. He used Boeing's infamous 2019 plane crashes as an example.¹¹ He cited Boeings' executive team playing politics in order to rake in more money though it meant losing their skilled engineers and sacrificing safety. Economist writer Dennis J. Snower argues that the "materialistic social contract" existing in market economies fails its citizens repeatedly.¹² These are just three examples of countless articles highlighting how capitalism is not meeting the needs of the people who live under it.

In my one-person show, the character - "Woman" - is struggling beneath a capitalist system; she is suffering from mental and emotional distress because of the pressures such a system imposes. The Woman (a high-powered business woman) is attempting to put her own needs above the capitalist demands she faces every day. These capitalist demands are symbolized in the play by a single piece of clothing: the dress she wears for work. This dress transforms the *Woman* into her alter ego - the *Business Woman*. Every time she puts it on, the dress strips the Woman of her identity and safety, creating her in the image of the perfect capitalist worker bee.

¹⁰Maria Svart, "Capitalism Isn't 'Broken'. It's Working All Too Well - and We're the Worse for It | Maria Svart," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2019.

¹¹Matt Stoller, "Boeing's Travails Show What's Wrong with Modern Capitalism | Matt Stoller," *The Guardian*, September 11, 2019.

¹²Dennis Snower, "Toward Human-Centered Capitalism," *Brookings*, March 9, 2022.

The Business Woman delivers an aggressive and emotional tirade about the lack of adequate sales. She prioritizes productivity, in fact, it is her whole world.

In contrast, the Woman is sickened by the feeling of the dress on her body and how it turns her into someone she despises, so she desperately attempts to purge it from her being. She is terrified by the dress and the crushing weight of the capitalist world in which she lives. When in the “internal flame,” she attempts to protect herself from the destructive effects the capitalist society and her life as the Business Woman have on her.

In the end, her attempts to nurture her internal drive, increase her self-esteem, and become passionate about life once more all fail. The dress threatens her endlessly, and she is ultimately seduced by the power and influence she, as the Business Woman wields. Her desire to make the dress - the system - fit her wins her over. In the end, she is left standing, distressed, in the center of the stage, dress thrown over her head and body – and she is invisible. This system was not sustainable for her and ultimately destroys her spirit. This story is an allegory for the way capitalism and its inequities can leave a person destitute emotionally and physically.

Why This Play Now?

On the first day of my theatrical education, the faculty taught me to constantly analyze why we are doing certain plays now. While not every play needs to have explicit ties to the present day, there should be a reason why we are performing each play, at a precise moment in time.

I created this piece because the audience and I all exist in the confines of a capitalist society, and I wanted to tell a story about a person who feels trapped by the practices of this society. The character of the Woman is desperately trying to ascertain peace in the midst of a system she feels exploited and oppressed by. Because this is a struggle I have endured, this

character is partially autobiographical. It is my hope that anyone in my audience who has also struggled with feeling like they must choose between being “successful and productive” by our society’s standards vs. nurturing their “internal flame” regardless of financial success, will identify with this piece in a positive way. For audience members who do not identify with these struggles, my hope would be that they might be able to look more critically at this system and the inequities and suffering it can cause many people.

I wanted to accomplish three things with this piece: 1) For the audience to leave contemplating the detrimental effects of capitalism, 2) For the audience to experience a feeling of unease or discontent in regard to the faults of this system, 3) To make the audience laugh at the absurdity of a capitalist apparatus.

Section 2: The Process

Exploration

My process in creating this piece involved primarily two approaches. We, as a class, were given writing prompts from Professor Eva Patton and participated in exercises called Moment Work led by Professor Veronica Santoyo. It took a few weeks, but eventually, these two creative practices began to work in tandem. It was a joyful process of experimentation.

Writing

The writing prompts were a big challenge for me. Every week, we were given a few words or a phrase intended to help us focus our writing. We were instructed to set a timer and write continuously for that period without stopping or lifting our writing utensils from the paper. (We were also encouraged to use pen and paper vs. typing on a computer since there is a significant amount of research that supports that writing freehand is better for creative writing than writing on a digital device.) We were also instructed to not censor ourselves, but to “go for the gut” in terms of subject matter that evoked a visceral response in us. For me, these exercises brought out a lot of intimidating and overwhelming emotions and even negativity. However, through the muck of my own raw emotions which spilled onto the paper, a realization emerged. I discovered my distaste and dissatisfaction with the world I am living in. One specific writing prompt was “Split in Two.” It was here where I found the most inspiration. I began to think about my own “split” in life: the desire for critical and financial success vs. the desire to just live and make art. I am consumed by the demands of a society focused on perfection and quantifiable outcomes, and this makes me feel like I can’t live authentically in this world. This feeling is tied to the focus on graduating, jobs, and finding material success in the world. My authentic desire

to create art and be happy is challenged by my perception of what success is (i.e., financial gain, fame, reputable work, etc.).

Moment Work

The second method used in creating my piece was Moment Work which is a methodology for crafting a story on stage first developed by The Tectonic Theatre Project. Tectonic Theatre Project members Lisa S. Brenner, Moisés Kaufman, and Barbara Pitts published an interview in the theatre journal *Theatre Topics* about the creation and utilization of moment work.¹³ Moment work is a process of creating theatre by crafting one moment at a time that utilizes an element of performance (lights, sound, costumes, text, movement, etc.) to tell the story. Each performer begins their moment by saying ‘I begin’ and ends it with ‘I end.’ Those two phrases provide the container for the moment to occur. All the moment requires is a beginning, middle, and end that translates into a story. This could be a few minutes or a few seconds. The moments create building blocks for a larger narrative.

I created a series of moments based on my organizing principle, “How can I protect and nurture my internal flame amidst the absurdity of a deteriorating capitalist society?” Professor Veronica Santoyo instructed us to pick a production element (lights, sound, text, movement, costumes, etc.) to base our first moment on. I chose costumes. I searched and searched for an article of clothing that sparked my curiosity. This was when I found the dress. It is a tan dress that is reminiscent of the 1980s power suit. It buttons like a trench coat and has shoulder pads that could kill. This dress alone brought out a specific character in me: a woman who is a high-level employee at [insert any Fortune 500 company you can imagine]. I next improvised a

¹³ Lisa S. Brenner, Moisés Kaufman, and Barbara Pitts, “Moment Work: An Interview with Tectonic Theater Project,” *Theatre Topics* 26, no. 2 (July 2016): 239–48.

monologue in which I scolded those employees beneath me about “low sales numbers this quarter.” The text eventually devolved until all I could say was “business.” Admittedly, I did not anticipate this simple exercise would be so successful. However, this woman’s staunch and ridiculous dedication to her business was hilarious to my class. I fell in love with this moment and this dress, and they would go on to feed my piece immensely. The following is the text that was initially improvised, and later set for the final script:

Ok. everyone. Quiet down. I want to get started on time today. Thank you, thank you. Thank you. (Deep inhale)

We got the numbers in. It doesn’t look good.

Our sales this quarter are down by 17%. That is the most they have been down in a single quarter in a DECADE. Our overall productivity is down by 33.78%. I am... disappointed.

Business. Business. Numbers up. Good. Numbers down. Bad. Capitalism. Late-STAGE Capitalism.

You are dismissed.

Subsequent moment work included using other theatre production elements to try and tell the story that was emerging within me. My second moment was to use light as the central element. I grabbed a dollar store disco ball and my phone flashlight. I was enraptured by an image of a large, dilapidated warehouse, and I envisioned someone sneaking into this space and talking to a higher power. This person asks the higher power if it is ok that they show them something they have been working on. With extreme reverence, they shine the light on the disco ball and watch the specks of light hit every inch of the warehouse wall. This exercise highlighted my desire to include an outside force, whether it be capitalism, an apocalyptic government, or a higher power, in my piece. Another moment exercise involved me dancing to a song as a form of release or catharsis. Another explored the image of a Catholic confessional and a woman trying to figure out how she had sinned and eventually concluding that her “sin” is her doubt - in a higher power, her purpose, and her inner life’s call. This exercise was invaluable as it illuminated

my own doubt about my purpose, career, and passion, as well as my feeling of confinement from the capitalist society in which I live.

The Evolution of the Story

Through the moment work, the structure of my piece started to become clear. I knew I wanted to include two moments from the moment work exercises, specifically: the Business Woman and the exploration with the disco ball/warehouse. Using my organizing principle, I identified the dichotomy between these moments I had created and worked to flesh out the relationship between these two opposing forces. The Business Woman came to represent how “the deteriorating capitalist society” negatively affects a person, and the woman in the warehouse came to be her alter ego - a woman who talked to a god and found joy in something as simple as twinkling lights. The second woman, for me, was representative of a person’s “internal flame and drive.” The relationship between these two became more and more about protecting one’s internal life from the grasps of an oppressive and deteriorating capitalist society.

In the first iteration of the script, there was a lot of text. We were challenged to deviate from text for awhile and explore all the possible ways we could tell our story through movement. Once I began exploring how to tell the story physically, I no longer felt the need for the higher power character. As I found myself experimenting with more active choices (incredibly essential for quality theatre), eventually, the moment with the lights was also, sadly forfeited. While that moment exercise had been very satisfying for me, I realized it did not ultimately serve the story in the clearest way. I learned the value of letting go of moments that you love in service of the narrative. I found that telling this story about protecting one’s internal life could be conveyed most effectively through three moments: 1) creating rituals to ground ourselves, 2) deep breathing and counting exercises, and 3) dancing for the sake of dancing. These three actions all

served to fortify the Woman's inner flame. They did not rely on text, so the action was much stronger than it had been initially. To propel the character of the Woman through each of these parts of the story, a symbol of the external, deteriorating capitalist society would have to be ever-present encroaching on the Woman's desire for peace and security. As mentioned before, the dress became that symbol. My initial image was that the dress would be floating onstage. Unfortunately, I did not have the resources to do this. Alternatively, I opted to have several classmates enter at various times throughout the piece and hold the dress out to me. Each time this happened, this symbol of oppression would interrupt the previously mentioned moments of peace and send my character reeling.

Once these moments were built, the next step in my process was to figure out an ending for the piece. I came back to one piece of feedback I had received early in the process - a classmate had brought up the idea of creating a cyclical structure, meaning repeating the beginning moment with the Business Woman to end the piece. This finalized the structure of the piece - The Business Woman would return with the dress on (though skewed – thrown over her head and body as described previously) to show how capitalism and the success it offers can seduce a person. Another piece of feedback I received informed how the return of the Business Woman took place. A peer suggested that the Woman's speech in the ending moments devolves into gibberish. This would represent how the capitalist society destroys the Woman's ability to function peacefully. At this point in the process, I created the following score:

1. Look at dress
2. Walk to dress
3. Look up center and nod
4. Pick up dress
5. Decide to put it on
6. Put on dress

7. Someone offstage claps
8. Repeat text from beginning
9. The text fails
10. Someone offstage claps
11. Take off dress
12. Moment of confusion
13. Put on dress backwards
14. Someone offstage claps
15. Flip → walk forward and speak text but it fails → repeat 3 times
16. Someone offstage claps
17. Try putting it on a different way. They all fail (continuous clapping offstage)
18. Throw overhead
19. Move in a circle while gesturing and speaking rapidly.

The clapping referenced in this initial score began as a tool to guide the movement.

However, it morphed into a replacement for and restoration of the higher power character. The claps (or CLAPS as notated in the script) were two consecutive claps that represented the power of the capitalist society. The Woman claps to propel herself into the Business Woman and vice versa. However, a force outside of her also claps, influencing her choices. In the last part of the piece, the Woman decimates the dress. She looks at it and realizes how pathetic it looks. She discovers that she has the power now.

To utilize this newfound power, she saunters downstage to it. Once she arrives, she hears a pair of claps. She is so used to hearing the claps and transforming from Woman to Business Woman and back, but now she picks it up. She will not put it on yet; she touches it to prove she has the power to hold it and not let it get to her. However, she hears another pair of insistent claps. So she puts it on. Once on, the desire to be a part of the capitalist world and be an effervescent and powerful Business Woman pierces her. She cannot resist it, so she raises her hands above her head and claps in a trance. As she loses control and the power of the dress

deteriorates, people begin joining the clapping until it has become a cacophony of clapping and screaming.

The claps do not force her to do this; she chooses to put the dress back on. One should be aware that participating in a system with harmful effects is still a conscious choice. It is also nearly impossible to reject this system when it is as all-consuming as it is. That is the metaphor at the end of *Net Loss*: the Woman chooses to wear the dress with dreams that she will be able to control it and keep the high it gives her. As her text and movement devolve, it is evident that there is no escaping the disastrous consequences of wearing this dress - the dress will destroy her. While the clapping is coming from outside of her, an external force suffocating her, she is clapping alongside it. Eventually, this movement score evolved to the following list (Note that 'CLAP' indicates a pair of claps):

1. CLAP above head
2. Quick-shift to Woman
3. Text: *Settle down, I want to get started on time today. So I got the numbers in... I want to get started on time today. So I got the numbers in... I got the numbers in...*
4. Woman CLAPs
5. Quick-shift out of Woman (Sub-text → It's broken?!)
6. Put it on backward. That will fix it.
7. Woman double claps and CLAP at the same time
8. Quick-shift to Woman
9. Walk forward and stop as if hitting a wall 3 times w/ text: *I got the numbers in... it does not look good.*
10. CLAP → Quick-shift out
11. Try something new! (tie around Neck)
12. CLAP → Quick-shift in
13. Walk forward w/ clapping hand gesture: *Numbers in... not good... I want... I want... I want...*
14. CLAP → Quick-shift out
15. Something different! (Stuff in pants)
16. CLAP → Quick-shift in
17. Walk on 45 degrees while clapping: test deconstructs completely (CLAP CLAP CLAP)

18. CLAP → Quick-shift out
19. Throw dress over head: Clapping, turning in circles, walking forward
(CLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAP)
20. CLAP → Quick-shift in
CLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAP
CLAPCLAPCLAPCLAPCLAP
21. Woman suddenly stops.
22. Three Beats of Stillness and Silence.
23. Blackout.

Motivation

Creating a devised piece comes with a lot of tedious detail work. It was easy to get lost in the minutiae and lose sight of the piece. To set the piece in stone and feel confident moving into technical rehearsals, I had to establish a touchstone to ground myself as the Woman. The first thing any decent acting coach will teach their student is to establish a character's objective. An objective in a theatrical context is naming what one wants as their character more than anything else. This acting technique was the touchstone I needed.

An objective can be for an entire play (often called the superobjective). In *Romeo & Juliet*, Juliet wants to be with Romeo above all else. An objective can also be specific to a scene. In *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura wants to prove that she can make her own choices when her mother discovers she has dropped out of school. For most of *Net Loss*, the Woman's objective is clear. As the Business Woman, she wants to reprimand her company or instill the fear of god in them, so they perform better. The Woman wants to protect her internal flame from the confines of a deteriorating capitalist society (symbolized by the dress). These objectives were my two touchstones that grounded the first two-thirds of the piece. Delving into the meaning of the clapping gave me my objective for the final third: The Woman wants to control the dress and have it serve her will.

Collaboration

This project was unique because we were crafting our one-person shows within an ensemble. From the first day of the course, my peers and I gave invaluable feedback to each other, explored each other's ideas through movement exercises, and participated as supporting characters in each other's shows as needed. This collaboration taught us many lessons throughout the semester. For one, we learned how to give criticism effectively. Professor Veronica Santoyo offered us a series of questions to guide how we were to respond to our peers' work:

1. What did you see happen in this moment/scene?
 - Focus exclusively on what actually happened, giving factual information.
 - You are observing a sequence of events, separating them from what you may have felt or interpreted when you watched the scene develop.
2. How did you connect to this moment?
 - Discuss the feelings and meanings the scene evoked for you.
3. Was this moment narratively driven by the costume/light/sound element, or was this secondary to the story being told?

Feedback from the first question helped us to clarify the story we were telling.

Sometimes our work did not convey the story we were hoping to tell. For example, the moment with the warehouse and lights sparked various images/stories for my classmates that were not my intention. These reactions helped me determine that the heart of the moment was what I wanted, but that there were more effective ways to tell that part of the story. The second question offered a perspective on how the audience felt about what we were performing. When I performed the first draft of the end of the show, my peers expressed how that moment made them feel uneasy and engaged. Finally, the third question helped us understand if we were effectively using the theatrical elements to get our story across. This question pertained to the pedagogy of moment

work and allowed us to analyze how effectively we were using the tools we had. When I first introduced the dress, many people suggested I play with how I wear the dress. This feedback inspired the ending moment.

One of the discoveries I made that helped me was how much responding to my classmates' work informed my own. By examining the risks they took, I was emboldened to experiment with my own new methods. I also found that hearing feedback from a large group helped me hone in on what exactly was working and what was not. At one point in the process, one peer expressed how they wanted me to go all the way and demolish the dress, and the whole class vehemently agreed. On a different day, another peer was confused as to why the Woman did not want the dress if it gave her power and control. This piece of feedback helped to clarify for me that I needed to be more specific with the Woman's objective.

On the other hand, the multiple, often contrasting opinions expressed during feedback sessions taught me not to take every piece of criticism. While many compelling ideas were introduced, it would have been inefficient, and perhaps even ineffective, to incorporate all of them into the piece. For example, one student brought the idea of bringing the hangers (holding the dress) back into the piece at the end. I spent some time playing with how I could do this. I thought of hanging them on strings and having them come floating onstage. Another idea was that I should battle the hangers as well as the dress. However, it became clear that in the eight minutes, there was no reason - in terms of advancing the story - for them to return. It also became clear that my peers had conflicting ideas regarding the tone of my piece. This became clear during an exercise called "machines" that we did in class one day. We were instructed to have four people create a machine using their bodies and voices inspired by our organizing principle. Each actor would improvise a single gesture and accompanying noise that functioned

together to create a machine. When my actors did so, I was startled by how little it had to do with how I viewed my piece in my head. I struggled to give them direction because they didn't seem to be on the same page with what I was envisioning. I resolved in the moment to let my momentary disappointment go, and to attempt to see what I could learn from them. I ended up drawing inspiration from their physicality. While I initially opposed their interpretation, I learned from this exercise to stay open and accept that alternative ideas can also sometimes inspire.

Finally, as we collaborated as an ensemble, common patterns and themes began to emerge in our individual stories. Self-identity became the focus of many of the pieces. Some people examined specific parts of their identity, like their gender, race, or neurodivergence. Others dived into their psyches. Witnessing everyone's journey and their bravery about their stories inspired me to be brave as well. I deeply appreciated my fellow actors' work, and my piece would not have been the same without their astute and indispensable input.

Finishing Touches

Names

I am notorious for giving abstract names to my characters instead of familiar names like Sam, Julie, or Dave. I find that familiar names limit them in my mind to the confines of realism. When a character has a name like Q or Person A, I feel free to explore how they move, speak, and exist in more abstract and creative ways. I arrived at the character name "Woman" because her womanhood was so central to her being. While gender was not my focus going into the project, conversations with Eva Patton alongside my physical explorations in class revealed that gender was an important factor for this character. While the image of a dress is not inherently tied to womanhood, I knew there would likely be a strong association for most audience

members. Establishing the dress as the “villain” of the piece, and having the Woman be continuously restrained by this dress allowed me to symbolically connect capitalism and toxic femininity. Furthermore, the Business Woman clearly has succumbed to societal pressure to display stereotypically feminine characteristics: she speaks in a high register; she smiles - even if forced - constantly; she wears high heels and an attractive dress even though they restrain her; and most importantly, she sacrifices her agency, and ultimately, her well-being.

Title

I arrived at my title late in the game, primarily by chance. As I sat down to brainstorm, the two titles I was contemplating were "Evil Dress" and "Ties Bind." “Evil Dress” was on the nose in terms of letting the audience know what to expect, but it implied comedy and didn’t fit the tone of the piece as much as I would like. It focused on the dress-as-villain but had little to do with capitalism and its effect on the Woman's internal life. It also gave too much away upfront before the significant shift when the Woman desperately peels the dress off her body. “Ties Bind” - a reference to the phrase "the ties that bind” - felt more in line with the tone of the piece since binding and tying conjure up being trapped and held hostage. It also gave a nod to the toxic and restrictive relationship between the Woman and the dress. However, this title had everything to do with the emotional life of the piece and little to do with the actual content. I wanted a title that balanced and encompassed both.

My solution was to research business glossaries online in hopes of finding inspiration from legal and economic vocabularies. That was when I found the term "Net Loss." According to Investopedia, Net Loss "is when total expenses... exceed the income or revenue produced for a

given period of time."¹⁴ This phrase rang true for my story and the character of the Woman. She is expending her internal life and flame at the hands of the capitalist society, and that expenditure is exceeding any income, revenue, or benefits she gets in return, the result being a net loss. I knew I had my title. With a title and a finalized script, I was ready and excited to move into technical rehearsals (see Appendix A for final script).

¹⁴Will Kenton, "Net Loss Definition," Investopedia, March 27, 2022.

Section 3: The Performances

The Design

One major privilege of this project was being able to not only function as an actor, but as a creator, director, designer, and producer. We were limited to ten light and sound cues in total for each of our shows. We also only had twenty minutes to tech our show with the design and tech crew. (Technical rehearsal or “tech” is when you set and test the lights and sound and any other production elements for the show.) The average technical rehearsal at Ball State takes place over ten hours in one day. Tech for a ninety-minute show would normally require about twenty hours over two days and evenings. That does not include the preparation the design and creative team have to put in outside of the time with the performers. Even though our shows were only eight minutes long, twenty minutes was a monumental challenge!

Lighting

I wanted the lighting in my piece to illustrate the two different worlds the Woman exists in. I decided on only two main looks. The first was a bright fluorescent light over the entire stage - similar to what might be in an office setting. It was meant to be cold and unfeeling for the audience. In contrast, the light of the internal flame sections was textured and had a very warm amber tone. These two cues not only establish the moods of the two different worlds the Woman lives in but also convey how she feels about them. They also show the audience the vast difference between these two worlds.

Sound

All of my sound design was done in the space as opposed to having pre-recorded sound cues. The most important sound element was the CLAPs done by fellow actor Alan Belmont. In performance, Alan sat on the side of the stage and double clapped at various times in my piece. Most of the clapping was scripted from the moments described in the previous section, however, some CLAPs were improvised as Alan and I developed a routine of feeding off of each other in performance. How we responded to each other changed every time we ran the show. A second aspect I played with was using the entire ensemble in the clapping. At one point the Woman ties the dress around her neck. I instructed three of my peers to begin clapping once that occurred. As the Woman's text devolves near the end of the piece, she stuffs the dress into her pants and the rest of the ensemble would then join the cacophony of clapping. This created an effective build to the final moment which was complete chaos. For me, these choices in regard to sound design helped represent the deteriorating nature of a capitalist society and the Woman's psyche in response to it.

Costume

My entire piece was created around the concept of the dress, so for me, my costume was far more than just the clothing my character wears; it was central to the story. The dress has incredible power over the Woman. It terrifies, oppresses, and seduces her. Its power is so strong, that she has to peel it off as though it were burning her skin. She is so determined to protect her inner flame that she accepts the pain and fear of touching the dress to get rid of it. Driven to desperation, she beats the dress, ignoring how it hurts her. I struggled with what to wear underneath the dress. Ultimately, I realized that wearing simple leggings and a t-shirt was ideal for the Woman as it signals that she is able to dress comfortably and be "in her own skin" when

she is not confined by the dress. The leggings and t-shirt were all black representing a simplicity and the Woman in her natural state - existing peacefully, without oppression.

Performances

A few elements ended up heavily impacting how the piece turned out in performances. For one, we were performing all sixteen shows as one night of theatre. Crafting my individual piece fed one cohesive show and influenced how I organized my props, warmed up my body and my voice, and prepared myself for my piece. The pieces ranged from a heartfelt superhero story to a poetic piece condemning the stereotyping of Black female students in the United States Public School System. And then, of course, mine - a criticism of capitalism through a darkly comedic lens. To reflect the varied nature of all the pieces, we aptly named the performance as a whole: *Disorganized Principles*. As previously discussed, Organizing Principles were the guiding light for each of our pieces. Trying to find common ground for a title was nearly impossible, so taking something that led the development of our pieces and flipping it on its head was the perfect way to capture how all of our pieces fit together. Once we had our title, our classmate Lizzie Nguyen designed our graphic of the show for advertising and social media. The design featured outlines of each actor's face (see Appendix B for this graphic).

Prior to performances, we had extensive sessions in which we brainstormed the order of the show, restaged moments that were problematic, blocked (set the movement pattern for) transitions between the pieces and coordinated technical elements. Fellow actor Carmia Lowe and I drafted options for the order. It was an extraordinary challenge as we had sixteen wildly diverse pieces of theatre that had to fit together to create a chronology of sorts. The order of the shows would no doubt influence their meaning and impact on the audience. One decision we had

to make was whether to organize the flow of the whole show by grouping pieces that were similar in theme or tone together or spread them throughout the evening. Going back and forth in terms of ideas and themes, would diversify the evening and balance out the more serious pieces with the lighter, comedic ones. Professors Santoyo and Patton used the orders we came up with as a jumping off place and proposed an order that took the second route.

Once the order was set, we wanted to make the show as cohesive as possible, and this necessitated creating intentional transitions. We spent three rehearsals crafting exactly how we would move from one piece to the next - who would move which set pieces on and off stage, etc. For example, actor Alan Belmont and I assisted our classmate Graeme Mahon with his piece by coming onstage with an eight-foot long stick that had a pill bottle hanging from it. We held the stick over Graeme's head so that the pill bottle dangled in front of him. We stood centerstage with our backs to the audience. As Graeme struggled to cut the twine holding the pill bottle with a pair of scissors, a voice recording discussing the nature of Christian Science and medication played in the background. Alan and I stood completely still during this abstract and intense emotional moment. We put in significant time choreographing this part of the piece to help reflect that intensity: Alan and I met upstage center and picked up the stick simultaneously. We had to remain in tune with each other as we walked downstage, turned, and settled into stillness in sync with each other. While every piece required something different, we worked tirelessly for intentional, clean, and specific transitions that helped to tell each person's story.

Net Loss landed as the second to last piece in the overall performance. It came right after a piece that examined how trauma affects someone throughout their life. This particular piece utilized beautiful poetry, contemporary music with hymnal elements, and violent movement to tell the story. It was a heavy piece that left me feeling overwhelmed by joy, grief, and pity. The

transition into *Net Loss* consisted of several classmates clearing the stage while I grabbed my dress and heels and walked upstage to my initial position. I intentionally kept my movement pedestrian during the transition. I wanted my physicality and energy to contrast with the crisp stiffness of the Business Woman. While backstage before entering, I would do a brief stretch to release the emotion and tension from the previous piece. Once I positioned myself onstage with my back to the audience, I would stretch my jaw to ensure it was relaxed. I also used that moment to ground myself. I had choreographed in advance, exactly how I placed my shoes on the ground and draped the dress over my right arm. This routine grounded and prepared me to do my piece.

I have struggled to stay grounded and focused while performing in the past. When emotions run high, it is tough to stay in the moment. The pandemic only intensified this for me, and made this struggle the worst it has ever been. In addition, the circumstances surrounding this performance were very intense: *Disorganized Principles* would be my final time acting on a Ball State stage; I was preparing to graduate; and it was the last time I would be able to collaborate with this group of people with whom I had spent four years studying and training. While these imminent changes and losses broke my heart, I was able to overcome them. Something about performing a piece I had created myself helped ground me. I felt myself able to focus in a new way and much more than in the past because it was my own story. Additionally, I used breathing techniques with a two-fold objective - to relax myself, and to protect my “inner life in the piece.” The biggest challenge was how physically demanding those eight minutes of performing were, as I ran around the stage continually, singing in full voice, and exerting intense physical energy throughout.

After *Net Loss*, the final piece of the evening was a piece about the struggle of isolation during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. Inspired by *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* on Broadway, it had dazzling lights in darkness as the stunning central image. The protagonist would desperately search but repeatedly lose the lights he was searching for. The last moment was a beautifully crafted moment of hope in which a singular light turned on and the protagonist - lit only by this one source - looked up and smiled. To end my piece in an uncomfortable place, followed by this message of hope was such a pleasure. Each time we ran the show, I knew I could get through my piece no matter the circumstances because there would be that beautiful light in the dark to look forward to.

The entire performance was about 2 hours and 40 minutes long, including a 12-minute intermission. All the actors sat on the sides of the stage the entire time watching our peers perform and aiding in the transitions throughout. We had two performances, the first at 7:30 pm on Saturday, April 23rd, and the second at 2:30 pm on Sunday, April 24th. After months of hard work and preparation, the performances were a great relief because I could finally simply be the performer - the writing, self-directing, designing and producing was all behind me. I also loved being able to act as an audience member for my classmates' work. Both roles were familiar to me from so many years of being involved in theatre, and I was filled with gratitude for the work I was able to accomplish.

Section 4: Reflection

I am pleased with how this project transpired. In my initial proposal, I established a few themes and ideas I wanted to explore based on questions about the choices we make in life, and what we are forced or obligated to do in the society in which we live. My intent was to blend my own story with that of a character, to include the audience in some way as part of the piece, and to blur the lines between comedy and drama.

I accomplished these goals in *Net Loss*. I successfully transformed my thoughts and feelings about capitalism into a theatrical piece that had a multi-faceted main character. In regard to the audience, when I was playing the Business Woman, I spoke directly to them, as though they were employees of my company. I also included my peers seated on the sides of the stage; they functioned as both audience members and participants in the show. Engaging with both audience and peers functioned very well theatrically and added an unusual dynamic to the show that surpassed my original intention. Finally, I succeeded in creating a piece that can't be categorized as just one genre - comedy or drama. *Net Loss* could be categorized as a serio-comedy or a dark comedy because of the satirical treatment of a serious subject matter. The pendulum swung in both directions during performance based on the audience's reactions - at times there was spontaneous laughter, and at other times, you could hear a pin drop.

This entire experience provided me with some challenging lessons in regard to creating one's own solo work, and it also helped me immensely in developing my artistic aesthetic. It also made me realize there are many possibilities and avenues for pursuing future work on this piece.

What Worked Well?

There were three elements that worked exceptionally well in the development of my piece. First, the piece's structure - which was cyclical - was effective because of its simplicity and clarity. This choice gave me a solid foundation from which to work and provided a container of sorts that I could explore within. Second, utilizing a comic lens was very successful, and allowed the audience to contemplate the serious themes in a less threatening way because they laughed throughout. Audience members I spoke with after the performances expressed - regardless of their belief systems - that they enjoyed a piece that poked fun at capitalism. One audience member described the comic elements of the piece as a successful tool for “masking” the thoughtful questions posed. They commented that as an audience member, they didn’t even realize they were being challenged until the piece ended which was very effective for them.

The third element is the personal or autobiographical nature of the piece. The subject matter is based on a relatively philosophical idea, and I use an abstract lens to examine and delve into this story. But this abstraction is juxtaposed with the immensely personal. I feel very proud that I could create something that feels so true to who I am. And in turn, this experience has shed light on who I am as a person and an artist. Because of this process, I feel prepared to continue devising theatre and art in new and exciting ways.

What Could I Improve?

I believe there is much room for growth and expansion in this piece. For me, the gravity of the struggle The Woman is experiencing was not as realized as it could be. I would like to continue working to develop the piece so that the comedy and seriousness would be entirely balanced. In my experience, when comedy and drama are perfectly balanced, the seriousness of a

situation is even more heartfelt by the audience. One example that comes to mind of a work that strikes this balance superbly is the television show *Fleabag*. It expertly creates heart wrenching, dark moments followed by laugh-out-loud comic ones. I would like to extend the piece and explore accomplishing that equilibrium.

After watching the video of my performance, I realized the “wall” (what we call the “fourth wall” in theatre) between me and the audience was nonexistent. I was “breaking the fourth wall” because I was talking to the audience. So, in an odd way, the performance felt, unlike a play. As opposed to the audience feeling like a part of the world, I felt the Woman becoming a part of theirs. This could be remedied by expanding the world of the play. I feel like I can be more specific in creating the world of the play - how I interact with the audience, and how I use the space. As the actor in the piece, I would like to slow down the pace of the piece. The time limit on this project - eight minutes - prevented that, but this resulted in the middle of the piece feeling rushed to me. Additionally, I would want to continue exploring the actions in which the Woman attempts to protect her inner flame. While deep breathing and counting worked to a degree, I think it would be helpful to play with other ideas as well. Finally, I would like to make the Woman and Business Woman more distinct. I discovered this after watching the video of my piece. There were differences between them, but I believe they could be drawn even more specifically through my physicality, voice, costume choices, and more extreme shifts in lighting.

Goals for the Future

I do not intend on retiring this piece. The theme is something that interests me greatly, and I have laid the foundation for a fictional world I've grown to genuinely love. The first element I would focus on would be to expand this world. In one respect, I am speaking

technically. I want to be able to stretch the possibilities of the lights, costumes, and props. This would mean using a different performance space. A very popular trend is site-specific theatre - people perform in living rooms, restaurants, found spaces, etc. I could experiment with this style by performing the piece in an office space. I would be so curious to know what would happen if I were to perform the piece in a conference room.

In another respect, I mean expansion in terms of the world - or worlds - in which the play takes place. As it exists now, the audience experienced two small glimpses into each world - the Business Woman and her corporate domain, and the Woman being sustained and nurtured by her inner flame/life. Both worlds could grow. For the corporate world, I would possibly cast an ensemble which could allow the audience to experience more viscerally, the Business Woman's environment and interpersonal pressures to conform. If the physical world of the play were further developed (with more extensive set pieces, etc.), there would be opportunities for the world around her to literally fall apart before the audience's eyes at the same moment in the play that her speech is deteriorating. My ideas for the internal flame sections would also be to include other actors/characters to represent her interior life and the different aspects of her personality. The world of the internal flame could also expand through more technologically advanced uses of the playing space. I'm envisioning the possibility of the stage shrinking and expanding to illuminate the internal life of the character in this world.

The second element I would like to explore further is the power of the dress. As I covered in my section on the process, my initial image of the dress intruding into the internal flame sections was that it would float into the space on its own. This was not possible with our current resources for this production, but in a professional theatre with more resources, it would be very manageable for the dress to float in from the rafters or with a fly system. This adjustment alone

would give the dress more power by making it appear somewhat of a supernatural entity. The dress could also become more active - as though it were itself, truly a character. In this rendition of the piece, it was a static object. With more technical capabilities, the dress could physically fight back and engage with the Woman.

The third element I would like to experiment with is the length and form of the piece. Audience members, my instructors, and my peers agree that the piece lends itself to further development as either a full-length play (approximately 90 minutes) or a one-act play (45-60 minutes). More time would allow the expansion of the piece as described above. While a longer version would necessitate a different structure than the one, I currently have, it would also offer the opportunity for the end to become more powerful. With more time to build up the world and the arc of the story, wrecking it at the last moment would be monumental.

The fourth and final element I would investigate further is the theme of gender and sexuality. I would like to do more research on how capitalism can lead to the oppression and exploitation of women in the workplace. This idea exists in the piece as of now, but I would like it to be a much more dominant element of the story.

Conclusion

This project, *Net Loss*, was an excellent conclusion to my educational experience at Ball State. I experimented with new methods of creating work - like moment work and scriptwriting, collaborated with my peers, and devised an independent show from the ground up. Above all, I connected with *my* internal flame and created a piece of theatre close to my heart. *Net Loss* tells the story of how capitalism and its ideas of aggressive productivity, and low human worth and value can destroy a person's internal passions. The piece demonstrates the seductive nature of capitalism and how it can control the people living under it. The Woman is torn between the high life that capitalism makes possible (in terms of material gain and status), and the peace and passion of her inner life or authentic calling.

As previously mentioned, as an artist, I identify with this struggle and it is my hope that if someone seeing this piece is also struggling, they will feel welcome to examine their place in this system. Protecting one's internal flame (which could be many different things to different people - a true vocation, a love, a passion, a delight, or a hope), is an individual journey. Every person should be encouraged to take steps to prioritize what will give them joy in life and thus bolster their physical and mental health. While it is impossible to reject the economic system altogether, it is possible to take steps to nurture one's inner life and authentic calling. Creating *Net Loss* was a way of nurturing and protecting my internal flame while deeply examining my own role in supporting this system.

Bibliography

ABBA, "Dancing Queen." Recorded August 4, 1975. Track 1 on *Arrival*. Polar, Epic, & Atlantic, 1976.

Belkin Martinez, Dawn. "Mental Health Care after Capitalism." (2005).

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.532.4287&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Brenner, Lisa S., Moisés Kaufman, and Barbara Pitts. "Moment Work: An Interview with Tectonic Theater Project." *Theatre Topics* 26, no. 2 (July 2016): 239–48.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2016.0036>.

Dexys Midnight Runners, "Come On Eileen." Recorded 1981. Track 10 on *Too-Rye-Ay*, Mercury, 1982.

Gentleman, Amelia. "'It's My Idea of Hell!': The Intense New Play Set Aboard a Cargo Ship." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, April 28, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/apr/28/chloe-moss-corinna-women-cargo-ship>.

Kenton, Will. "Net Loss Definition." Investopedia. Investopedia, March 27, 2022.

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/netloss.asp#:~:text=A%20net%20loss%20is%20when,tax%20income%20or%20net%20income>.

Maslow, Abraham. "A theory of human motivation." *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–396.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.

Moncrieff, Joanna. "Neoliberalism and Biopsychiatry: A Marriage of Convenience." In *Liberatory Psychiatry: Philosophy, Politics and Mental Health*, edited by Carl I. Cohen and Sami Timimi, 235-56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511543678.013.

Netflix.com. "Squid Game." (2021). <https://www.netflix.com/sg/title/8104034>

Patomäki, Heikki. "Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crisis." *Journal of Critical Realism* 16, no. 5 (June 1, 2017): 537–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2017.1332807>.

Snowder, Dennis. "Toward Human-Centered Capitalism." *Brookings*. Brookings, March 9, 2022.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/toward-human-centered-capitalism/>.

Sterba, Samantha. "Neoliberal Capitalism and the Evolution of the U.S. Healthcare System." (2020).

Doctoral Dissertations. 2083. <https://doi.org/10.7275/nhs9-kd81>

https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/2083.

Stoller, Matt. "Boeing's Travails Show What's Wrong with Modern Capitalism | Matt Stoller." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, September 11, 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/11/boeing-capitalism-deregulation>.

Svart, Maria. "Capitalism Isn't 'Broken'. It's Working All Too Well - and We're the Worse for It | Maria Svart." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, June 12, 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/12/capitalism-isnt-broken-its-working-all-too-well-and-were-the-worse-for-it>.

Zeira, Anna. "Mental Health Challenges Related to Neoliberal Capitalism in the United States."

Community Mental Health Journal 58, no. 2 (2021): 205–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-021-00840-7>.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Final Script

Net Loss
By Maya Vagle

Note: a 'CLAP' in blue signifies a double clap done offstage

A Woman stands up center, black stilettos placed on one side of her, a dress in her other arm.
She puts on the dress.
She picks up the heels and sets them down in front of her. She slips them on.
She raises her hands above her head and double CLAPs.
Sharp, clean turn to the audience.
She smiles and walks downstage slowly
She addresses the audience.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Ok. everyone. Quiet down. I want to get started on time today. Thank you, thank you. Thank you.
Deep inhale
We got the numbers in. It doesn't look good.
Our sales this quarter are down by 17%. That is the most they have been down in a single quarter in a
DECADE. Our overall productivity is down by 33.78%. I am... disappointed. Business. Business.
Numbers up. Good. Numbers down. Bad. Capitalism. Late-STAGE Capitalism.
You are dismissed.

She turns to upstage and walks up center.
She stops. She CLAPs
She turns around breathing rapidly.
She fumbles and takes off the dress like it's burning her skin.
She kicks off the heels.
She throws the dress off left.

She scrapes the feeling off of her body.
A moment of joy. → She dances a brief celebratory jig.
She thinks she hears a distant clap? She checks around her for the dress or clap.
She runs to the center. Quick.
She puts her hands on her heart. A deep breath.

CLAP.

The Dress appears Down Left on a hanger

WOMAN

Are you fucking serious?

She grabs the dress and throws it off right.
She walks back to upstage center and stands still. She takes deep breaths.

CLAP

The dress appears again, this time Down Right.
She grabs it and throws it out of the room. You hear CLAP CLAP CLAP outside of the room.

WOMAN

*Can I get a chair, please?
I need a song recommendation.*

She sings to distract herself. As she sings, the dress appears.

Come on Eileen, oh I swear what he means	You are the dancing queen	← Options if no one suggests a song.
	Young and sweet	
At this moment, you mean everything	Only seventeen	
You in that dress, my thoughts I confess	Dancing queen	
Verge on dirty, ah come on Eileen ¹⁵	Feel the beat from the tambourine, oh yeah	
	You can dance	
	You can jive	
	Having the time of your life	
	Ooh, see that girl	
	Watch that scene	
	Digging the dancing queen ¹⁶	

The dress is back up left.
She sees the dress.
She beats the shit out of the dress while singing.
She throws the dress on the ground downstage center and retreats upstage.
She stops upstage center. She sees the dress. And walks downstage back to it.

CLAP.

She inhales.
Picks up the dress.

¹⁵ Dexys Midnight Runners, "Come On Eileen," 1981, track 10 on *Too-Rye-Ay*, Mercury, 1982.

¹⁶ ABBA, "Dancing Queen," August 4, 1975, track 1 on *Arrival*, Polar, Epic, & Atlantic, 1976.

Appendix B: The Poster



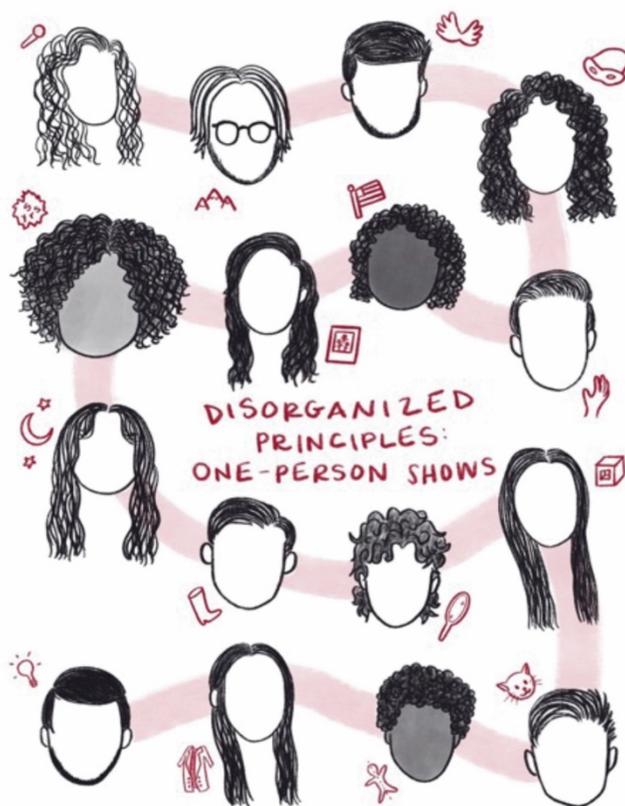
**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

College of Fine Arts
Department of Theatre and Dance

BFA Acting Option Class of 2022

presents

DISORGANIZED PRINCIPLES: ONE-PERSON SHOWS



Saturday April 23 at 7:30 PM & Sunday April 24 at 2:30 PM
Ball Gym, Korsgaard Dance Studio, Rm 213
Admission is free.

Please be advised that this performance contains strong language, mature themes, flashing lights, high-pitched noises, mentions of sexual assault, mentions of ableism, simulated gun violence, and full nudity.