

THE ROLES OF SCIENTIST, NARRATOR, MOTHER, PANDORA, NURSEMAID,  
THERAPIST, AND BAUCIS IN MARY ZIMMERMAN'S *METAMORPHOSES*: A  
PRODUCTION THESIS IN ACTING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by  
Anna Loft Richardson  
BFA, Longwood University, 2004  
May 2007

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my professors, John Dennis, Christine Menzies, and Nick Erickson for their devotion to their craft, and their constant support. I would also like to thank my classmates Kesha Bullard, Mark Jaynes, Reuben Mitchell, Derek Mudd, Ron Reeder, and Nikki Travis for their hard work, talent, and compassion for the past three years. Thank you to Steve Young for giving me the opportunity to work on this piece, and thank you to Christine Menzies for working with me on my biggest weaknesses, and pushing me to improve myself.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Pre-show Research.....	4
Character Analyses.....	12
Journal Entries.....	18
Performance Run.....	39
Post Show.....	41
Conclusion.....	42
Bibliography.....	43
Vita.....	44

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the evolution and development of the roles of Scientist, Narrator, Mother, Pandora, Nursemaid, Therapist, and Baucis in the Swine Palace show *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman. The rehearsal process is detailed here in journal format. Also included is pre-show research, character analyses, production run, and post show summary. This thesis will explore the creation of these characters, the obstacles during the process, and the experience of playing multiple roles.

## INTRODUCTION

Acting is at its root storytelling. Part of the magic inherent in theatre is the ability to craft an engaging story, and draw the audience in. Actors, by contemporary standards, involve themselves in the story by “becoming” the character. Many of our modern acting theories preach the importance of melding actor and character, thus bringing a two-dimensional creation to life by knowing it inside and out. *Metamorphoses*, by Mary Zimmerman, gleefully throws this current mode of thinking to the wind in favor of returning to the roots of acting—telling the story.

*Metamorphoses* is based upon Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses*, a piece of classic literature, and Mary Zimmerman’s play, as a result, utilizes certain conventions of traditional storytelling. First among them is the role of the narrator. This particular character does not often appear in modern American drama. Perhaps the most famous American narrator roles would be the Stage Manager from *Our Town*, or even Tom from *The Glass Menagerie*. For an audience that does not often attend the theatre-- such as the audiences that patronize Swine Palace—the narrator is a difficult persona to get past. Its straightforward ability to break down the fourth wall and speak directly to an audience member can be either thrilling or unnerving. More importantly, the narrator serves to remind the audience that what they are seeing is a story—not a reality, but a heightened, fantastical sense of life as we know it.

The second storytelling device reminiscent of traditional theatre is the use of multiple roles for each actor. It would be impossible to use a Method approach to this sort of acting when the actor must become a new character in five seconds. It is rewarding for the actor because it offers a test to the acting range. Creating eight

different characters with as much attention to detail as possible and making each one unique is certainly a challenging experience. It is an important acting lesson because, rather than being buried in a single role, one is obliged to create specific characters—a useful tool in general for the actor, but particularly in classical theatre.

What makes *Metamorphoses* such an amazing theatrical experience is its setting. Very rarely does one have the opportunity to see a play performed in a specific environment—in this case, water. Water was an important symbol in the play in that it can morph. The water has an affect on the actor that cannot be ignored. The effect of moving through water, the different shapes and dimensions that can be articulated in this environment help to define the performance, and what the character, and the actor is doing. How the water affected the actors is one of many aspects of preparing for this show that I will discuss here.

This production of *Metamorphoses* was a challenge for various reasons, some already listed above. It also brought attention to certain acting habits and weaknesses that I will discuss later in the paper. It required quite a bit of early research, particularly for the role of the Therapist. I also looked at the origins of the Greek and Roman myths the stories are based on, and descriptions from Ovid's own *The Metamorphoses*. Over the month-long rehearsal process, I kept a journal detailing my progress with the show—any frustrations I had with the roles, what I liked about what I was doing, what I did not, and so forth. By the time the performance run started, I had my characterizations in place, but continued to discover new things about the characters. I tried to journal this as best I could to continue developing the performance.

There were things I got right in my performance, things I was proud of, and things I did not get at all. This thesis helps to dissect the acting process, the building of a character—or characters, in this case—and offers insight into growing and developing acting skills. Ultimately, this thesis is about an actor's development through a specific performance.

The show ran at Swine Palace November 1-November 19. The cast included: Kesha Bullard, Rebecca Buller, Nick Erickson, Mark Jaynes, Reuben Mitchell, Derek Mudd, Shauna Rappold, Ron Reeder, and Nikki Travis. The production staff included: F. Nels Anderson(Set Designer), Jim Bussolati(Props Master), Eun-Jin Cho(Sound Designer), Louis Gagliano(Lighting Designer), Ellen Lennox(Assistant Costume Designer), Christine Menzies(Text/Dialects Director), James L. Murphy(Production Manager/Technical Director), Nick Erickson(Choreographer), Ginger Robertson(Costume Designer), Kristen Sosnowsky(Managing Director), Ellie Sturgill(Stage Manager), Michael S. Tick(Chair and Producing Artistic Director), and Steven Young(Director). All script notes and references are taken from Zimmerman, Mary; *Metamorphoses*; Northwestern University Press; Evanston, Illinois; 2002.

## PRE-SHOW RESEARCH

The first thing I did after being cast in *Metamorphoses* was copy down all of my lines; in this way, I would be able to have a different perspective on what I was saying, and be able to memorize faster. The first character whose lines I began analyzing were those of the Therapist. Much of her text is taken from Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. I also went through with a dictionary for any words that I was unsure of.

I did some image work with my narrator text for the Ceyx and Alcyone story. Image work is going over each word, and drawing whatever image comes to mind as it is said. For the scene in which Ceyx and Alcyone separate, a lot of the images I put down were of long blue lines, which represented the lovers being pulled farther and farther apart. This monologue also reminded me of Imogen's monologue in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, in which she says, "To look upon him, till the diminution/Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle/Nay, follow'd him, till he had melted from/The smallness of a gnat to air..." (Act I Scene3). I did image work with this as well, drawing Ceyx at the center point of a perspective picture; I also drew specific pictures of each movement away from Alcyone as described in the monologue.

I also did some research on the original Greek and Roman stories on which the play was based. Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* contained most of the stories that concerned me, so it was my primary source. Ironically enough, even though Hamilton refers to Ovid as "a compendium of mythology", she also accuses him of not being in touch with the stories he told, saying, "...in his hands the stories which were factual truth and solemn truth to the early Greek poets Hesiod and Pindar, and vehicles of deep religious truth to the Greek tragedians, become idle tales, sometimes witty and diverting,

often sentimental and distressingly rhetorical” (Hamilton, 15-16). The versions of the *Metamorphoses* myths she has compiled make for an interesting take on the stories, sometimes quite closely related to Zimmerman’s version.

The most interesting change I noticed was the character of the Mother in the Erysichthon story. In the version Hamilton retells, which is taken from Ovid, she is not his mother, but his daughter. As a result, the power Poseidon gives her is not eternal youth, but the ability to transform and shapeshift. Hamilton writes, “...she prayed to Poseidon to save her from slavery and the god heard her prayer. He changed her into a fisherman....The supposed fisherman [said], ‘I swear by the God of the Sea that no man except myself has come to this shore, and no woman either.’ When the other, completely bewildered, had gone off in his boat, the girl returned to her own shape” (421-422). However, in this version the girl returns to her father and uses her new abilities to help Erysichthon by changing, “into a mare, now into a bird, and so on. Each time, she escaped from her owner and came back to her father” (422). It would seem that in this version of the story, there is some love that exists between father and child. Also interesting is that the fisherman’s line here is almost identical to the line she utters as a little girl—“Sir, I swear by the God of the Sea, no one except myself has been to this shore. I swear it!”

One of Greek mythology’s most complex characters is that of Pandora, created by the gods with a name meaning, “the gift of all” (88). Although Pandora does not get much stage time in this production of *Metamorphoses*, I still felt the need to do research on the character to find out how I wanted to present her. Hamilton, relating the Hesiod version of the myth, identifies the meaning of Pandora’s name as a reference to the gifts

given her by the gods, including her infamous box. Some stories say that Pandora's curiosity got the better of her, and caused her to open the box; other versions state that she was truly evil with a fair façade. There are also differing ideas as to the nature of the open box. Hamilton tells how Pandora was unable to shut the box before Hope escaped, and brought comfort to the world. Hesiod tells of how Hope was left in the box until Pandora came back to it, and gave a true gift by releasing it. There is also speculation that Pandora saved humanity by keeping Hope in the box, as it is the world's worst malady. Regardless, it is difficult to make character choices for such a brief amount of stage time.

In the "Orpheus and Eurydice" story, there is a scene where Orpheus travels to the Underworld and sees the denizens that inhabit it. In the script, it is mentioned that the women are portraying the Three Fates. The Three Fates, according to Greek mythology, controlled the Loom of Life. Klotho, the young girl, spins the thread and is represented by the spindle. Lakheis, the woman, measures the thread and is represented by the measuring staff and horoscope globe. Atropos, the old crone, cuts the thread and is represented by the cutting scissors. Some stories talk about the three sisters sharing one eye. This research gave me some movement ideas to do when blocking this scene.

The story of Midas involved me only on a peripheral level, but I looked up the Ovid story, as retold by Hamilton, to get a starting point for his character and how to view it. In this version, it is not his love for his daughter and the tragedy that befell her that causes him to renounce the gift, but an inability to eat; "...the food he lifted to his lips became a lump of metal. Dismayed and very hungry and thirsty, he was forced to

hurry off to the god and implore him to take his favor back” (412). It is a different take on Midas’s character that could be useful in viewing him in the show.

Similarly, the retelling of “Ceyx and Alcyone” as communicated by Hamilton also had the opportunity for image work, particularly in the description of the separation and the storm. Hamilton writes,

When Alcyone learned what he was planning she was overwhelmed with grief and terror. She told him with streaming tears and in a voice broken with sobs, that she knew as few others could the power of the winds upon the sea...That very night a fierce storm broke over the sea. The winds all met in a mad hurricane, and the waves rose up mountain-high. Rain fell in such sheets that the whole heaven seemed falling into the sea and the sea seemed leaping up into the sky (142-143).

I also did image work with this to help with my monologue about the storm.

In Hamilton’s retelling of “Baucis and Philemon”, she describes Baucis as “a kindly-faced old woman” with “a cheerful voice” (151). Hamilton’s Baucis states “We are poor folk...but poverty isn’t so bad when you’re willing to own up to it, and a contented spirit is a great help, too” (151). This version also specifically states that Baucis turns into a linden tree, whereas Philemon turns into an oak, and both grow from the same trunk. Not knowing what a linden tree was, I looked it up online. The linden tree is very tall, and I used pictures I found to come up with ideas to create the tree.

Although the Therapist never actually relates the story of Phaeton, she clearly is well aware of his history, and so I looked up the retelling by Hamilton, taken from Ovid. The section that stuck out to me the most was this: “No doubt Phaeton had often watched the Sun riding through the heavens and had told himself with a feeling, half awe, half excitement, ‘It is my father up there.’ And then he would wonder what it would be like to be in that chariot, guiding the steeds along that dizzy course, giving light to the

world...Instantly, he cried, 'I choose to take your place, Father. That is the only thing I want. Just for a day, a single day, let me have your car to drive'" (181). This stood out to me because it marvelously details the root of Phaeton's downfall—his desire to be like his unattainable father. Much of the Therapist's dialogue is spent going over the psychological relationships between father and son, but this sums up Phaeton's state of mind simply and beautifully.

I did a bit of fantasizing about the nature of the characters I was portraying—the Laundress I saw as rough and no-nonsense, with very little connection to monetary gain. She does not like Midas, and sees his tale as a cautionary one. It is only when she see the effect this story had on her companion that she softens, and tells the more hopeful tale of Ceyx and Alcyone. The Mother as transformed into a little girl did not require too much research; over the summer I had been in a play where I had to portray a little girl, and simply took my discoveries from that experience, and applied them to this little girl. Finally, the Nursemaid could have been a Greek inspiration for Juliet's Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and so I kept that in mind as a mental image from which to develop.

Overall, this is the basic overview of my research. Some of what I discovered in this early process was a big help to me once rehearsals started. Some changed dramatically, and some did not get used at all. This is simply the nature of a constantly shifting and developing viewpoint.

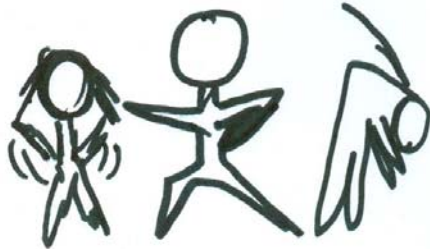
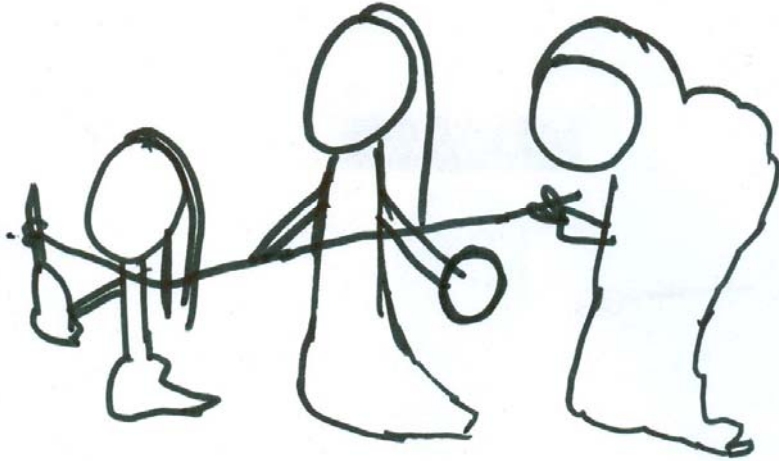
“She waved at him while the ribbon of black water widened between the ship and shore. She gazed at him until he was no longer distinguishable but still she could see the ship. And she narrowed her eyes to the horizon and watched it as it receded to a smaller and smaller object.”



“The rest was one enormous green catastrophe.”



The Three Fates



Exploration of a Little Girl



## CHARACTER ANALYSES

### The Scientist

The Scientist is the first character physically seen by the audience. She provides the contemporary angle with which to view these ancient stories. She is a modern woman, and carries in her hands a jar of dirt and water, representing the mixing and separating of the elements. She also speaks mainly of scientific properties of creation, drawing a sharp contrast between herself and Zeus by stating “others maintain that we come from the natural order of things” (7), hinting that his existence is not natural, and therefore not concerned with the creation of the world. She is clearly bold to stand up to the king of the gods for the sake of her beliefs, or, at the very least, convinced that Zeus would not hurt her.

That said, the Scientist, in my portrayal, is awed by what she sees. Here she is, a contemporary woman, witnessing the beginning of the world. Whether or not she agrees with Zeus does not take away from the magic of this moment. Because it is easy to fall into the trap of making her unemotional and cold, I decided to emphasize her enthusiasm for the earth and curiosity about everything that lives upon it. Even though she does not stray from her corner of the stage, she is constantly looking around, following Zeus’ progress with her eyes. The line “each order of creature settling into itself” (6) is especially important to her because that is how she sees the world—everything in order, perhaps not by design, but ordered all the same.

## **The Narrator**

Also known as the Laundress, she is one of the few narrator characters who appears in more than one story. She is fairly level-headed in her assessment of monetary gain over all else—it does not last and there is so much more to do with your life. She snubs the ambitions of her fellow Laundress, but then decides to reveal greedy foolishness to her by telling a story. Once involved in Midas's story, the Narrator becomes almost a different person. No longer does she snub money; in fact, now she seems quite impressed by it. Midas is undoubtedly a likeable character, in spite of his faults and she warm to him. She even encourages him at one point, assuring him that he is one of the lucky ones who have "it".

However, she does not like the way he treats his daughter, flinching away when he yells at her. She merely watches, and does nothing to protest it. When Silenus enters the story, her behavior becomes louder and more extroverted. She sees the truth in his drunken ramblings, and allows her body to relax when he talks about "the blue sky above, and the pretty moon at night" (13). She goes along with everything, even Midas's poor choice in wishes. It is not until he turns his daughter to gold that her mood changes. It does come as a shock, even though she already knows this story.

Her take on Ceyx and Alcyone is a bit different. She has more respect for them, and a great deal of empathy for Alcyone. Alcyone's frustration with Ceyx is hers as well, as is her grief. It is interesting to note that she leaves after the shipwreck sequence that kills Ceyx. Is it too much for her? Why does she always let her stories end on a sad note?

## **The Mother**

Erychthon's mother is an interesting character because, in most versions of the story, she is his daughter. As his daughter, she helps her father even at his worst. Although the Mother is not so dutiful, I decided she should have a great deal of fondness for her son. This is why I chose to reach for his face when she first enters. Not only does it help the actor to grab her and drag her across the deck, but it also reflects the affection she feels for him. The physicality of the Mother as an old woman was very important. She is as hunched and small as humanly possible, and takes very tiny steps. She is arthritic, which would prevent her from being as active in cold water as she once was, which she misses terribly. The fact that she prays to Poseidon shows her to be one of his true followers at least at some point in her life. The fact that he so swiftly answers her prayer shows how important she once was to him.

The type of gift that Poseidon gives the Mother is a great blessing for someone who once loved to run on the beach. The transformation from old woman to young girl starts in the hands, then moves through her arms and legs. As the little girl, she is constantly reaching out and up, like a small child wanting a hug. Because the world is so big now, and her bones so young and healthy, she is going to be as active as possible. She never stops moving, and her body never really leaves the water until the very end when she exits with Poseidon.

## **Pandora**

For our purposes, Pandora is not as deep a character as she is in most stories. For her small snippet, there is simply no time. Because of the fact that she has been carefully crafted by the gods, she is almost reminiscent of a beauty pageant queen, which is why I made the choice to maintain a constant smile the whole time. We all know the story of Pandora and what exactly is in her box. It really is no secret to Pandora either. She proudly presents its terrible contents with all the artificiality of a pageant queen. She then bows to the world to acknowledge her achievement. This is a woman with no shame.

## **The Nursemaid**

The Nursemaid is the most complex character of all. She is wholly absorbed in the story of Myrrha, and its outcome affects her very deeply. Although it is stated that she is old, she is still young in spirit, and physically quite fit. Her age becomes apparent when she is getting into the pool. She is eager to engage in girl talk with Myrrha. She is clearly very close to her, both as a mother figure, and as a friend. She shows her age by being superstitious, with such lines as “Has someone bewitched you? Spells may be broken. Or have you crossed some god? Still, you may look to appease by sacrifices and prayers even the heaven’s anger” (56). She does not believe in vengeance, and is committed to the belief that forgiveness is always possible.

When she realizes that Myrrha is in love, there is a sense of relief; the girl has finally come of age. This is for the Nursemaid a joyous occasion until she finds out who it is that Myrrha loves so passionately. It is unnatural to love one’s own father, and the Nursemaid does not want to believe Myrrha capable of such a thing. But, when she

accepts this to be true, she agrees to follow through on her promise and help her. The Nursemaid will not break a promise, even if she finds it reprehensible.

In the end, she still holds out hope that Myrrha will mother Adonis, the great male beauty who will ultimately break Aphrodite's heart; the woman who once prayed for forgiveness now seeks vengeance. However, watching Myrrha melt away from existence drains her of all energy. She has become truly old, her back hunching away from the terrible sight.

### **The Therapist**

This role was undoubtedly the most difficult. The Therapist's dialogue is so dry I was at a loss on what to do with it for a long time. Finally, the idea of her attempting to save Phaeton, and, by extension, young men with strong father figures, was the best way to approach the role. The Therapist is incapable of expressing herself in direct terms. She uses psychological terminology to cover any sort of emotional response she might have to Phaeton's plight; it is the best way to keep things professional. It is not until the end, after Phaeton's fate has already been sealed, that she is able to address anyone directly. The Joseph Campbell quote is a means to open that door, but once it is open, she can at last say what she has been meaning to say all along.

### **Baucis**

She has known Philemon virtually her whole life. They were born in a nearby house, played together as children and when they grew up, were married. They are truly soul mates. Even though they are poor, they do not think of themselves as such because they have everything they could possibly want. Baucis has a kind heart and a good sense of humor that keeps her strong in troubled times.

When the impoverished strangers arrive at her doorstep, Baucis is quick to welcome them but becomes so consumed in listening to them that she forgets to invite them inside. She loves to take care of people, and seems to enjoy looking after the needs of the strangers. She and Philemon have a rapport that seems unspoken. They discuss what wish they want, and very quickly come to a conclusion. These two people who have been together their whole lives are now content to spend eternity together, whispering the words, “Let me die the moment my love dies. Let me not outlive my own capacity to love. Let me die still loving, and so, never die” (83).

## JOURNAL ENTRIES

### October 2

This is the first official day of rehearsal, and the first opportunity for the whole cast to come together. What follows is the first read-through of the show. Our director, Steve Young, took this opportunity to share some research he had done about Ovid, and his own thoughts and vision of the play.

Ovid was banished from Rome for the last ten years of his life. As a result he never saw his wife and children again. It is therefore not surprising that his writings during that time period—including *The Metamorphoses*—deal with life, loss, death, and immortality. Steve believes that Mary Zimmerman took these themes, and, through her play, brought them into the universal theme that only love endures the ravages of time. Zimmerman set the play in water because it is an element that no one can live without; it makes up seventy percent of our bodies, and provides an environment for mobility and change.

Steve also mentioned that this play is about ideas and taboos that still disturb us. Particularly in the Myrrha scene, this play asks the actor to travel to extremes.

We also had the opportunity to find out about design concepts for set and costume. There would be pillar bases on each corner of the stage sturdy enough to sustain human weight, and the pool would be two feet deep. The costumes, taking a cue from Zimmerman's style, would be a combination of classical and contemporary. The design idea was that, since the Olympian gods were revered and idolized in ancient Greece and Rome, the contemporary counterpoint for that would be classic movie stars.

There is already a strong sense of connection to the work. I have a good idea where to go with the Mother and the Nursemaid. I can foresee, however, that the more narrative-based roles are going to be a problem for me. Steve gave us a note about the narrator roles: play it with an attitude of “I know something you don’t know”. The narrator is not just a talking head, but a character in the piece, who has an attitude toward the story, and how it turns out. As a result, the narrator is an active storyteller. The words have to impact emotions, not the other way around.

### **October 3**

We run the show in a rehearsal room at Hatcher Hall. My voice is going to need more work, especially for the narrator parts. I need to concentrate on the words resonating in my chest, and then bringing them forward in my mouth. This is a personal weakness of mine, as I tend to place words in the back of my mouth, rather than forward.

### **October 5**

In the morning, Reuben and I work the Poseidon lift. In this scene, I am transforming from an old woman into a young girl. My starting point for this character is that she is about eighty years old, and her body is very bent and hunched. By curling my body forward and making myself as small as possible, I can provide a good contrast to the portrayal of youth; it also gives me somewhere to go for the transformation.

We have some difficulty as to how Reuben will lift me off the boat. We attempt a lift where I lie down with my back against his, but it is decided that that looks too much like a lift used earlier in the play. Nick comes up with a lift where I sit on one of Reuben’s shoulders and he supports me on that one shoulder. In order to keep my balance, I have to press my feet against his chest. I personally like the look of this lift

because there is something childlike about it, but it is not safe for Reuben. For some reason, I am having a hard time getting enough leverage to push any weight into Reuben's chest so he can hold me up. The next lift Nick comes up with is a cross lift, where I become upright and stretch my arms out straight from the shoulder sockets. Then, Reuben grabs me underneath my arms, and lifts me straight up into the air. This time, I have to remember to push up so Reuben can lift me at all. This is a very difficult lift for both of us and I am not comfortable with it. It makes me feel heavy and awkward. It looks good, however. We switch Reuben's position so we are standing back to back when Reuben lifts me. This seems to make things a little easier for him.

That evening, we show Steve what we have worked so far. He thinks the lift is too Christ like, and wants something more childlike. Reuben and I, with Nick's help, work out a simple cradling lift where he lifts me in his arms like a small child. This is a better fit, and it helps my own transformation. I now have time to stretch out of the little ball I have made myself into, and begin to turn into a child. I start with one hand, which I have kept shriveled and arthritic, and held close to my chest, and reach it outwards, starting with the uncurling of the fingers, and letting everything else stretch out from there.

We are now also working on the set. There is no water and no lining, just a wooden pit. It is very interesting to rehearse the show like this because there is a lot of jumping in and out of the pit; I have very little sense of what we are going to be working with or how to play in that environment. I feel more sprightly on the set than I think I should and more like I am on a jungle gym.

## October 6

Steve has decided not to use the Fates in “Orpheus and Eurydice”. Instead, he wants wedding dancers who become hooded, lantern-bearing phantoms. We work out a four count step and twirl as the wedding dancers, then, as the phantoms, do four count gestures with the lanterns while moving into place. Although easy to rehearse, it is a little more difficult in practice because I am coming out of playing Pandora. However, it looks graceful, and so it is kept.

While running the Midas scene, I notice my Laundress does not seem to be playing off of Shauna’s Laundress very well. The gruff approach I have taken to the character does not seem to play well opposite my scene partner, nor is it helping the telling of Midas’s story. However, I am resistant to making it too chummy and upbeat, but the fact remains that I do not have much room to develop it.

We block the Myrrha scene today. It is interesting without the water because I am once again jumping in and out of a wooden pit. The Nursemaid is supposed to be a slightly older woman, so I do not really get a sense of her age making such huge movements. That said, I think Juliet’s Nurse was a good image to have. I feel as though I have a good handle on her rapport with Myrrha—kind, maternal, and a little dense. Steve gives me the additional instruction that the Nursemaid has a darker side; after all, she tricks a man into having sex with his daughter, and then watches the act. I do agree with this, but I also believe that the Nursemaid’s actions are born out of a love for Myrrha. She has raised Myrrha probably in place of her real mother. I want to start playing more with the idea that she still views Myrrha as a child in order to make the revelation that Myrrha wants to sleep with her father all the more horrific for her. The

Nursemaid's relationship with Cinyras is still a more tenuous thing and I still do not quite know where to go with that. I do know that she is disappointed and disgusted with him for agreeing to sleep with a girl young enough to be his daughter, disgusted enough that she cannot look at him for a moment. I think I will build the relationship from there.

We are also blocking the Phaeton scene. This is definitely the most difficult scene in the play for me. As the Therapist, I have no interaction with the patient, Phaeton (played by Mark) at all. Part of my problem is that I have given little thought on how to approach the role. I feel like I am at a loss, sort of blocked into a corner. The dialogue is very dry, and I am not sure how to break out of "lecture mode". Indeed, Steve's vision is that I am in some sort of lecture hall, using Phaeton as an example and specimen. Given such pieces of text as "The conventional exordium of the initiate from latent to realized potential is inevitably accompanied by a radical realignment of his emotional relationship with the imago of parental authority" (65), it is easy to turn this scene into some sort of seminar, and little else. I do not know what else to do with it. Steve has blocked me so I am walking around the pool as if walking around a classroom. The blocking is very loose, and I need to figure out when it would be appropriate for me to move. I also need to figure out why exactly she is giving this lecture. How much is she invested in Phaeton's well-being? Is she more concerned about the bigger picture? Do young men without role models arouse any sort of feeling or sense of duty in her? I need to explore this further.

### **October 8**

Today we worked "Baucis and Philemon" for the first time. It will be fun working with Ron. He and I have a good rapport in real life, and that should play well onstage.

Although Baucis is very old, I am imagining her as being younger than the Mother, particularly in spirit. She is more active, and therefore should move around more easily. The transformation into the tree needs work. Right now, Ron and I are shaping our arms, and not too gracefully entwining ourselves around each other. We also keep moving longer than I would like.

We also worked Pandora a bit. She starts in the “god house”, the highest platform onstage. She opens her box in three different directions, causing horrible screams and demonic sounds to come out. Between the box openings, Atalanta runs down below, chasing the golden apples. It is not much, but I am eager to work with it and expand it some more and bring in a little more of the classic Pandora.

### **October 9**

We ran the show, or at least what we have so far. The Scientist is starting to give me trouble. The images she describes are not clear enough in my head, particularly “wax and wane”. I need to be clearer and more specific in this part. Christine took me aside to talk about the Scientist. She suggested I approach her rhetoric from the standpoint of ethics, rather than logic. After all, evolution is still considered a hot button topic. This is a bit of a battle between science and religion, particularly when the Scientist talks about the nothingness that existed before the Big Bang: “Before there was water and dry land, or even heaven and earth, nature was all the same: what we call ‘chaos’”(5). I need to do more image work with this. It will also make my words more clear because right now Steve is having a hard time understanding me. I need to speak with more volume and enunciate more—use more lips!

In terms of narration, I need to place more emphasis on the names, especially if it is a god's name. Explore everything that name encompasses. I do not feel as if I have a clear enough idea of what these words are, what sort of life they have in the play. This requires more exploration.

A good place to start would be where Christine kept correcting me: "wax and wane". There is not enough of a difference between the two words. These words are complete opposites. To wax is to grow bigger, to shine more, to be brighter; to wane is to recess, to draw away, make smaller. I need to keep thinking about it in those terms.

In the Midas scene, I am throwing away the term "net worth". Christine pointed out that it is important because it is a contemporary phrase in a classical setting. There is an interesting contrast between "net worth" and "gold", and I need to explore in order to find it.

## **October 12**

We worked the scenes we have so far today. I think I am making progress on the Scientist. There seems to be more of a distinction on "wax and wane", and other contrasting statements, such as "no way to walk on the one, or swim or sail on the other"(5). The Laundress is still too harsh. I am still not sure how to soften her in a suitable way and maintain an integrity to the character that I am creating.

I am having difficulty starting the Alcyone and Ceyx scene. Right now, I am starting the scene softly and romantically. We need to hit the ground running with this scene to bring us out of the melancholic ending of Midas's story. I need to be more aggressive about starting the scene, and on jumping the cues. There is a moment where I am supposed to cut Kesha off, and I need to jump on it. She is speaking quickly, so I

need to be in there as soon as possible to get my little line out. I need to think about my voice as being a long rope with the audience tied to one end, and I use my words to draw them into the story. This makes what I am saying feel more inclusive and important.

This scene also features a storm sequence. I need to be heard above the storm but I need to do so without hurting myself. In order to do this, I am thinking of my voice coming from my feet, and that I am reaching down, pulling it out, and letting the sound swell out of my mouth. Physically speaking, I need to be more engaged in the storm and its aftermath. To create a dreamlike environment, I need to take my time exiting.

In regards to Pandora, there is not enough time to show her giving way to her curiosity. Her name, however, means “gift”, so perhaps I should think back to the original myth—that Pandora opening the box is a gift of misery to the world, one that Pandora is happy to give. According to Hesiod, Zeus endowed Pandora with insatiable mischief so she would find delight in playing this trick upon the world.

We are still having problems with the tree in the Baucis and Philemon scene. I still need to talk to Ron because right now I just feel like we are a huge tangle, not a tree. Our tree needs to have structure and contrast. We need to see the entwining, but also the difference between the linden and the oak.

### **October 13**

Today we have water. I am not sure if there is anything more I need to say. This feels like a magical day. It is really wonderful to experience physically what this show is going to be like. I want to swim around in this forever; I do not care what the temperature is.

I think we spent half an hour just playing around in the pool. The greatest part of that was seeing everyone revert to a child once they adjusted to the water. I have always been a water baby, and feel very much at home in the water. I really feel like I understand what the play means about life coming out of water. When I am swimming, I feel reborn. It is like a surge of energy touching every cell in my body.

The pool is only two feet deep, so there is not much room for real swimming, but I discovered that one could move quickly through the water by walking one's hands along the floor of the pool. Having the water gave new inspiration to the Mother's transformation from old woman to little girl. Several years ago, I learned how to make synchronized swimmer's spray. Make the hand a flat blade, stick it straight in the water, and turn a complete circle as quickly as possible. Also, being in the water brought back childhood memories of going to the pool and what a treat that was for me. This sense memory inspired the Mother's reaction to receiving eternal youth. If she had been an active child who loved the water, she would yearn for it all her life. As she became old and crippled, she could no longer move through the water as she once did; the coldness would chill her bones, and her body is simply no longer strong enough. To regain that strength would be the greatest gift anyone could possibly give her; her joy has to be expressed through her whole body.

### **October 15**

Nick loaned me a copy of Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, and I took down some notes that I felt would be beneficial to me, and to any character development I need. There is a section called "The Creation", which, although relates more to the religious side than the scientific side of the argument, stuck out to me as being pertinent: "Before

the ocean was, or earth, or heaven, Nature was all alike, a shapelessness; Chaos, so called, all rude and lumpy matter...substance forever changing, forever at war”(Ovid, 3). This caught my attention because it is very similar to the chaos the Scientist describes. I particularly like the phrase “substance forever changing, forever at war” because I can relate it to the sand and water mixing and fighting with each other in the Scientist’s jar. It is a powerful image, and I like it; I think it gives me an added layer to play with in that moment.

In the Myrrha story, the Nursemaid is described as having “gray hair” and “skinny breasts and arms”. What is a little more useful to me is how, when the Nursemaid holds Myrrha, she remembers her when she was a child. This is a concept I have been toying with myself, so it is somewhat satisfying to see Ovid made note of it, too. This is further inspiration to imagine Myrrha as a child.

For Baucis and Philemon, it is stated that Baucis married Philemon when they were very young, that they grew up together, and have known each other virtually all their lives. For some reason, the description of Baucis’s “trembling hands” when the gods reveal themselves stuck out to me when I was reading this story, and I decided to try to incorporate that somehow into the scene. A new piece of information I discovered is that the goose Philemon wants Baucis to sacrifice to the gods was not a mere goose, but served as a watchdog of sorts. This heightens the stakes when Philemon asks Baucis to kill the goose. I am not sure what to do with it, though, since I am not sure there is enough time to pause.

Another detail I discovered was that before Baucis and Philemon become trees, their house becomes Zeus’s temple, and they are the guardians. I decided then that the

walk to the tree pillar needed to be more regal and dignified; we had seen this funny little couple bow and scrape, and we should see the opposite, which would be them standing upright and unafraid.

In terms of running the show, the narration for the Ceyx and Alcyone scene is getting to be on one note. I have a tendency to drag off the ends of my sentences. As a result, there is no build on what I am saying, and the audience loses the meaning of what I am saying. I need to be more specific at the ends of my sentences.

In the Myrrha scene, I need to react more to the sight of the noose. My little girl is trying to kill herself. I need to act as quickly as I possibly can. Freak out, let it go, do whatever I need to do to get to her and stop her from doing this thing.

We are finally making some headway on the Baucis and Philemon scene. Steve told us to think of a vaudevillian couple, so I am letting Gracie Allen and Audra Lindley from Three's Company be my inspiration for Baucis. Audra Lindley, I think, will help especially because her blowsy persona on the show. Ron and I also have an idea for the tree worked out. We will each lunge forward so we can entwine at the ankles, with ballet arms entwining upwards. It looks a lot more graceful, and more like a tree. Ron and I also decided to end the transformation on Zeus's line "They were turning into trees" (82).

The Therapist, on the other hand, is a dead end. I do not know how to relate these lines to Phaeton, or why anyone would care. The final monologue is a quote from Joseph Campbell, and I need to look it up. There is too much I do not understand about this particular scene. I still feel boxed in without a personality of my own. This scene is a death trap; I hate it.

## October 17

Narrating the Midas and Alcyone scenes is still too cold to me, especially Alcyone. I do not feel as if I have a strong enough emotional connection to the story. I need to explore the depth of Alcyone's loss more. What would it be like to know the love of your life is going off to certain doom and not be able to stop him? What is it to strain your eyes to the horizon until the last wisp of him is gone from your sight? The hope she clings to must be enormous because her despair is such a huge weight. I may not be playing Alcyone, but I need to be able to communicate her grief and pain.

I have come with an idea for Pandora. Steve wants this interlude to be a light little vignette, so I was inspired a bit by a Monty Python sketch. In this sketch, a man in a three-piece suit is performing in a music hall. He very solemnly shows an index finger to the audience, places it up his own nose, removes it, and bows. There is something of a showman in Pandora. There is a sense of giving the world misery without being ashamed of this stigma wrought upon womankind. Since it was intended for these miseries to be unleashed on the world anyway, perhaps Pandora should simply accept this solemnly, and move on. When we run the vignette, I open the box to each side of the audience, and when I am finished, I take a bow. Steve gets the joke, so I am going to keep the bit.

We now have stairs on the deck connecting it to the platform. They are directly where we move as Eurydice's wedding attendants. It is a little harder to twirl up the stairs, and the choreography has to be modified so we can make that move.

The most pressing matter right now is, as always, the Therapist. I do not know how to make her an interesting character. Christine took me aside today to work on her a little more. She gave me the interesting idea that the Therapist is more in love with her

own diatribe than with actually doing her job, and could therefore afford to be more dramatic in her delivery. “Think Anne Rice,” she said. I have highlighted all the key words I need to hit, and punch them up a little more. Christine suggested that I think of myself as being in competition with Mark. At the very least, it would give me a new sense of energy in the scene. This was extremely helpful, and I am very much in Christine’s debt because I did not know where to go at all. This is a good starting point because now she actually has an opinion on what she is saying, if not necessarily about Phaeton. This relationship still needs to be explored.

### **October 18**

I am beginning to develop the bad habit of pounding my words. This means that I put the same amount of stress on *every! word! I! say!* I am not quite sure where I picked up this habit, but it is a sign that I am not exploring enough with my text. I am pretty frustrated with myself for getting to the point where I am not being clear in my speech. The Scientist and the Narrator still need more work. I have a better idea where to go for the Narrator simply because she is more invested in the story. I have decided to take a different route with her simply because I want her to play off Shauna more in the Midas scene. Shauna glows when she is onstage and, after much resistance, I want the Laundress to be able to smile along with her. During the exploration of this, I also opened myself more to Derek’s performance as Midas. The way he holds his daughter after accidentally turning her to gold is heartbreaking. Allowing myself to be affected by it made for a smoother transition into the Alcyone story. It also changed the last exchange between the laundresses. Up until now, I had been reading the line “Alright then, here’s another [story]” as a way to get back at Shauna for not liking the previous

story. Now, I am saying it to keep her from leaving. I want to tell more stories, and think she will prefer a more romantic one with a more uplifting ending.

I am pushing on my throat during the Alcyone scene, particularly during the storm sequence. I need more vocal power to sustain myself during that scene; right now, my voice is ending at my chest when it should be moving through my whole body. Also, I need to work out the beats for the following monologue: “One day, Alcyone had heard that Ceyx had ordered his ship to be made ready for a sea voyage, to visit a far-off oracle” (20). Right now, Steve cannot understand it, and it is all running together without any key words.

The Therapist continues to be a problem. Although I feel like I am finding more of a rhythm for her speech, I am now too busy preaching to the audience. I am not listening to Mark; regardless of what she thinks of him, the Therapist has to listen to Phaeton because it is her job. Some changes have been made to blocking. Instead of pacing around the edge of the stage, I am now seated on a pillar the whole time until my final monologue. This makes transitions a lot easier, and I do not feel quite so awkward, either. However, the biggest problem I can see overcoming with this new blocking is bringing the whole audience into me when I am only facing a small portion of it.

On the other hand, we have all been added to the song. I am excited about that because I like to sing. I also like the gentle rhythm of the whole cast cleaning up the deck.

### **October 19**

The Scientist is getting lost in the wonder of her own words. This scene needs to move. I could think of a ball that is being thrown from one person to another. I only

want to keep the ball long enough to speak and then send it along. Also, I should not be afraid to mock Zeus. The Scientist does not believe in him, whether she has just seen him create the earth or not.

The Midas scene is getting better. It is also a lot more fun to play. Bouncing off of Shauna and Derek's energy makes the whole thing move a lot faster. Also, the fact that I have affected a lighter tone helps to keep the scene light and frothy until the unthinkable happens. I like this because it gives me somewhere to go emotionally; even though the Narrator knows exactly what is coming, she allows herself to get so swept up in the moment that it still surprises her.

The storm sequence is still a problem. I have a tendency to jut my head forward when I am speaking and trying to force words out into the room. All this does is close my throat and limit my power. I need to remember to keep my neck pulled back, and in alignment with the rest of my body. The separation sequence is a lot better, except now I am getting too maudlin too early. I need to remember that Ceyx has not died yet; while he is alive, there is hope for Alcyone.

I feel as if I am beginning to lose something on the Nursemaid. It is all coming too easily, in my opinion. My energy in the scene seems to be low, possibly because I am exhaling as I speak, which spends energy. I feel as if the performances of the other actors in the scene are on a higher level than mine; I have plateaued with my image of the Nursemaid, and need to work it in a new direction.

I am beyond frustrated with the Therapist at this point. I have been doing the dramatic Anne Rice take, and have lost all perspective on key words; I am pounding every single word I speak with equal intensity and weight. I hate when I do that because

I know better, and I hate having Steve pick up on it. He goes on to tell me how likeable I am onstage when I let myself be. I do not know why I did not think of that before—think about making the Therapist likeable. I need to listen more to what Mark is giving me, and let the words flow out of that, rather than piling on thunderous words. As the Therapist, I feel like I have a hammer, and am just hitting the deck with it repeatedly instead of acting.

### **October 20**

The Narrator is going a lot better. I particularly like my transition from the Midas story to the Alcyone story now. The separation and storm sequences are also progressing well. There is a nice build and shape to it, and I can keep going with it. However, I need to explore the word “weeping” more; I feel as if I am throwing it away, rather than endowing it with something more. I also want to work on the line “The rest was one enormous green catastrophe” (23). I like this line because it makes me think of an army of seaweed attacking Ceyx and his men.

The Nursemaid is starting to gain some strength again. The moment where she first begins to realize what Myrrha wants from her is making more sense to me. Incest is such a level of taboo that she cannot even comprehend it, and she has to physically move away from her. She knows that Myrrha means what she wants, but denies because she is still her innocent little girl. When Myrrha confesses the truth, my instinct is not to want to touch her; she is no longer my child, but some creature that has taken her place. The acceptance is shown by slowly embracing her as the Nursemaid did once long ago. She is trying to rationalize what she must do. It is like bandaging a scraped knee. Minimizing the extent of the act is what gives the Nursemaid the ability to convince

Cinyras to take Myrrha into his bed. It is not until they are united that the Nursemaid is forced to face what she is doing and how she is assisting a sin—and even then, she still loves Myrrha more than anything.

The Therapist is finally beginning to take shape. Christine mentioned that it might be helpful to be concerned for Phaeton and his plight rather than being indifferent to him. This is not what Steve originally wanted but he agrees to this suggestion. It is a godsend. Now that I can take on a mindset that I can relate to and seems human to me, I can do more with the role, and the way she relates to Phaeton. There is a certain amount of pride that bubbles up when Phaeton talks about meeting Apollo for the first time. I cannot quite describe it or why it happens, but it needs to be explored further. In the meantime, I need to keep developing in the direction of a Therapist who truly cares about her patient.

Baucis and Philemon are coming along well. One change that has been made is that we now exit after transforming into the tree.

### **October 24**

I am starting to do a lot of mugging in my interplay with Shauna as the Narrator in the Midas scene. I was afraid this would happen; I need to tone it down a bit. I am starting to jut my head forward again during the longer monologues. I need to relax and trust the fact that I have the power of breath to get through it without physical crutches. I am also pushing vocally in the storm. It is making me appear weak onstage, and is bringing my energy down.

The Nursemaid needs to glide more in the water. My legs splash a great deal while guiding Myrrha, and that part needs to be as quiet as humanly possible.

The Therapist has got to drive it more. Right now, Mark and Ron are going on ahead with what they need to do, and I am still lagging behind. There is too much gesturing at Mark, and I am resorting to this because I do not know how to properly communicate my intentions with words. I need to single out the individuals in the audience close to me, and speak directly to them; I know this will help me make more of a personal connection with what I am saying, and what I am relating to the audience.

The blocking for the Baucis-Philemon tree has to be changed. There is not enough room for us to straddle that pillar. Steve puts me on top of the pillar while Ron puts one foot up next to me, and I place a foot on his upraised knee. I entwine my right arm with his left, while my left arm reaches upwards. This is easier to do.

### **October 25**

I am pushing too much on the throat during the storm sequence. I need to be careful, or I am going to hurt myself. Steve tells me to cup my hand to my mouth when I am speaking at the height of the storm. I have been resistant to that impulse, but it looks like it is my only option. It should be fine since I am in the middle of a storm. Once I get to the line “The men have lost belief in their captain...” (24), I can drop my hands.

Today was probably the best I have ever done the Nursemaid. The intensity of my focus on Myrrha is exactly where it needs to be. I need to keep working in this direction. I like raising the stakes on my relationship with Myrrha; she is more than a daughter figure to me, she is my whole world. This thought allows for an emotional release when I finally embrace her. It also helps my physicality at the end as I watch her melt away into the water. Stuck by the platform, I arch my back so I can keep my eyes on her until she is gone—not unlike Alcyone.

The Therapist is getting better. I like going faster; it feels a lot more comfortable. It also provides more opportunity to play off of Mark whenever I can. Also, the last monologue has become very important to me. In it the Therapist states one of the main reasons to do this play—so we remember our history and where we came from because it is intrinsically a part of us. The first line of the monologue, which states “It has been said that the myth is a public dream, dreams are private myths” is a quote from Joseph Campbell. The rest of it sums up what Mary Zimmerman was perhaps trying to say with this play: “Unfortunately, we give our mythic side scant attention these days. As a result, a great deal escapes us and we no longer understand our own actions. So it remains important and salutary to speak not only of the rational and easily understood, but also of more enigmatic things: the irrational and the ambiguous. To speak both privately and publicly” (68). This is true both in real life and as an actor. I need to be more open to my mythic side. Saying this monologue made me think of how important it is for us not to repress ourselves. I changed the tone by smiling on the word “salutary” because I want the audience to be welcomed into this rationale.

### **October 26**

I need to think more about my physical reaction to the storm. Right now, I am just ducking out of the way to get away from the fight scene, and getting up again when it is time to speak. I may be the Narrator, but she is stuck out in this storm, too. The minute I hear thunder crash, I am going to hunker down on the deck, and use it to pull myself up the ramp so it looks like I am struggling to get up there. Then, I can rise up on the final lightening crash to speak again.

Also of note: “enormous green catastrophe” has been cut.

## October 31

Today we ran with lights, sound, special effects, and costumes. I was absolutely exhausted by the end of the show. My vocal energy needs to be up more at the beginning of the play. I must remember that I am helping set a tone for the whole evening. I also need to let the sound effect of the earth rumbling to calm down before I continue speaking.

I need more vocal energy during the storm sequence. I need to keep cupping my hands to my mouth. However, I think I am discovering useful things by my new reaction to the storm. It is going to be easier to portray urgency, which will also heighten vocal energy.

I have not spoken about the Mother in a long time. Today would be a good day for that because I have started doing something a little different. Usually when my transformation is complete, Reuben and I run around in the pool and splash each other. This time, I dove into the water and swam around. Reuben mirrored me. I think I like this change because it shows how important the water is to her. I should probably write down the whole transformation sequence as it is now. Reuben picks me up, and I stretch and uncurl, also removing my kerchief as I stretch. By the time he lowers me into the water, I am standing upright; young, but not yet a child. Then, he baptizes me, and spins me out of my old woman dress, where I have on a child's dress underneath. I spin out reaching for sky. I look at my new body, and, overjoyed, execute a synchronized swimmer's spray and dive into the water.

A new obstacle is getting out of the old woman dress. Because of the sleeves, the spin has to stop so I can extract my arm before continuing. Also, today the exit was a

little too fast. The ramps are getting kind of slick. I slid down the ramp a bit, hit the puddle at the bottom, and fell on my hip. I have a nice big bruise there now, but if I take smaller steps running out, I should be all right.

## PERFORMANCE RUN

We had our first audience November 1. Despite some immature reactions to nudity, it was a good house. The play officially opened November 3, and ran until November 19. Overall, it was incredibly well received. I also made some discoveries over the course of the show.

As with the Therapist, it was easier to handle the Scientist dialogue when I directed bits of it at specific people instead of the general mass of humanity. The Alcyone scene became more effective as the show progressed. I learned more about the grief that Ceyx's death leaves in its wake, and tried to communicate that to the audience. Another scene that developed more as the show went on was the transformation scene. It began to feel as if the Mother was turning into a little mermaid. She did not even walk anymore. Instead, she swam to the Buyer to speak with him. This made more sense to me, especially after considering other versions of this story. Poseidon has granted her a certain power; it seems natural that she should become more like the sea that is the source of his power.

The moment of acceptance in the Nursemaid scene started to get milked a bit, probably to the detriment of the scene. I spent too long looking for emotion when I should have just plunged ahead with the scene.

Of course, the biggest wrestling match with any of the roles was with the Therapist. The only time I truly felt comfortable onstage in that scene was during the last monologue. I added something prior to the monologue that made the shift make more sense to me. When Phaeton suddenly got up to leave, I rose as if to stop him. That then propelled me center stage to deliver the final monologue, which initially was going to be

more psychobabble. Instead, she stops herself, shuts her notebook, and speaks from her heart. The rest of the scene still felt very small and closed-in from my perspective. I tried to fill that space by reacting more to what Mark was doing, but I do not know if it read. Overall, I was still at a bit of a loss in that scene.

Baucis and Philemon got more comical and hammy as the play progressed. Ron started spinning around like a gerbil in a wheel, so I mirrored him while still playing up the trembling hands. The moment when the house turns into a temple played more honestly for the most part. There was a certain place in the ceiling where my eye always went first when the transformation started, and from there, could watch everything else change.

Pandora also became more dynamic, which is why I included her in the thesis. Building on the bow at the end of the vignette, I took a new approach to her character during the run of the show. I began to see her as a pageant queen with a huge smile; very gracious and polite to her audience. The bow, which started as more of a military bow, became more feminine and reminiscent of a diva.

Our audiences were extremely responsive. Among my personal favorites were the two high school matinee performances. The kids completely understood the nature of the play, and the story we were telling. They were with us the whole time.

## POST SHOW

Looking back at my performance in *Metamorphoses* is bittersweet for me. On one hand, it was an amazing show that I loved to perform. On the other hand, there was a sense that I did not completely own my performance. I do not feel I took enough initiative early in the rehearsal process as I should have. Looking back, I am alarmed at how few journal entries discuss the Scientist or the Mother. It seems that once I had figured them out, I just let them sit, and did not develop them any further.

I never really got the Therapist at all. I do believe that I did as much as I could at that time with the role. The problem was that Christine and I came to the realization on where to take the character at such a late date, there was very little time to play and experiment. I would love to change almost everything I did with that role, though I am still not quite sure how. The one thing I would leave intact is the final monologue.

There are parts of my performance of which I am proud. I like the way the Nursemaid developed and I like the way life was discovered for the Narrator in both the Midas and Alcyone scenes. The Nursemaid was not as consistent as she could have been, but overall, she was a strong character with a distinct point of view.

Probably my biggest regret from this show was how I used my voice. Especially as the Therapist, I was overcompensating for a lack of honesty with overworking the jaw and shouting. Despite all this, I do look back on *Metamorphoses* as a positive learning experience, and a way to continue growing as an actor.

## CONCLUSION

Working on *Metamorphoses* could be frustrating. I am not entirely pleased with my final performance, or the results of my research. However, it provided me with the chance to play multiple roles, to take on different characters, and breathe life into them. I now have a better understanding on how to approach a role, and the level of detail and exploration that needs to go into it in order to make it believable. This was a lesson to continue seeking out questions in my performances, and in the characters I play. The performance never stops developing and growing. There is no point where one says, “All right, that’s it, I’m done. I have found everything I need to find.” There is always something more to find.

*Metamorphoses* was an amazing experience because it provided me with such important actor lessons. These were things that, intellectually speaking, I already knew. However, practice—or a lack of practice—is a better teaching tool. I know there are things about my performance I would now do differently. I think that is a good mode of thought for an actor to have. Our skill and our ideas are constantly changing, constantly in motion. Nothing is ever stagnant because I am, as an actor, constantly transforming.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hamilton, Edith. Mythology. Little, Brown and Company, New York, 1969.

Ovid. The Metamorphoses. Translated by Rolfe Humphries. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1955.

## VITA

Anna Richardson has performed at Louisiana State University, Longwood University, Swine Palace Productions, and Tecumseh the Outdoor Drama. She achieved her Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre with a concentration in performance from Longwood University in 2004. She is now enrolled at Louisiana State University where she will receive her Master of Fine Arts in May 2007.