Passerby, Be Modern!: A Case Study of Performance Art as a Social Critic

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“Passerby, be modern!”

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Senior Honors Thesis
Dr. John Houchin, advisor
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(Data CD of SPSS File)
Cover photos taken by Stephanie Bissonnette

The phrase “Passerby, be modern!” is taken from a marquis outside of the Chat Noir (Fields, 1993, pp.18)

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http://www.kamera.co.uk/reviews_extra/cabaret.php
ABSTRACT

Cabaret, a socially-amalgamated art form, has worn many hats over the course of its often outspoken history. Evidences of this fascinating and crucial European institution date back as far back as the thirteenth century and have since been used to categorize any number of venues showcasing acts of critical prowess and refined talent. By contemporary standards, the term ‘cabaret’ applies to “places of entertainment like night clubs that offer a wide variety of showmanship, food and drink, and often dancing both on stage and on the floor.”\(^1\) However, back at the turn of the twentieth century, when it finally materialized as a recognized form of artistic and social activity,\(^2\) cabaret carried a very strict and idealistic agenda. Whatever the precedents or forbearers of cabaret, the fact is that cabaret, as a distinct cultural phenomenon, had an articulate, recent, and undoubtedly relevant chronology – one that flourished for about half a century between the opening of the first and most famous cabaret in 1881 in Paris, and the political crises of Europe in the 1930s that curtailed the freedoms of thought, expression and experiment that characterizes cabaret in its most potent form.

In regards to such impertinent critiques of society – which the arts are hardly foreign – the significance of cabaret, as a catalytic point of artistic convergence as well as a port for mounting populist opinion, holds particular resonance not only in historical contexts, but in modern circumstance as well. Despite the innumerous adaptations, the regional and period variations cabaret has spawned over the years; besides the evolving (albeit vague) definitions of what cabaret was at any given time, cabaret, as an art form, naturally there is a great demand for music. In this context, cabaret has also become a descriptive term for a show designed to promote the talents of a single well-known performer, usually a singer. (O’Connor and Wachsmann, 2001)

\(^1\) first noted by La grande encyclopédie in 1889. (Ibid.)

\(^2\) first noted by La grande encyclopédie in 1889. (Ibid.)
retains many of the inherent intents and purposes that date back to its avant-garde birth. Arguably then, cabaret, a veritable social platform for criticism, holds palpable merit for contemporary artists and the societies they represent, considering cabaret has and perpetually will serve as a synthesizing mechanism to bridge not only the popular art mediums of the day, but the social classes as well.

Through research and example, I have isolated the characteristics and social forces behind cabaret that distinguish it from other performance genres in hopes to identify the current potential cabaret poses on an ever-evolving global culture.

**PREFACE**

The idea for this project came about haphazardly on a rather dismal day in February 2004, when a former professor and I happened to sit across the table from each other while we both took in a quick bite between classes. What emerged from that conversation became the running theme of my thesis: one that not only encompassed my academic concentrations in sociology, music, and German, but incorporated my strong interest and commitment to theater as well. Within a few weeks, I could voice specifically what I was going to research – a case study of cabaret-style performance art as a social critic. But not only research, I hoped to provide substantial insight into the contemporary applications of this, a proactive medium of societal reflection, through experiment and observation. I was to create and produce a contemporary, “workshop-style” cabaret show, assemble a creative team, a production crew, and a small group of performers, perform it and document the entire process.
By the end of the semester, I had finally mapped out my proposal and how I was going to achieve such an ambitious project; the only thing missing was an advisor. Besides probing the Sociology faculty, Music faculty, and German faculty, I also searched for an advisor in the Honors program. I did get a wide variety of answers, but they all revolved around the word “no.” Most felt that they were not qualified enough to advise me properly on such a specific, yet vastly interdisciplinary project. Luckily, due to my involvement in the Theater Department, I was able to bend the ear of Dr. John Houchin, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on German cabaret, and garner his support.

As I began the first of three “phases” over the summer, researching the origins and historical contexts of cabaret, I found that almost every book, journal entry, or article written with any authority about cabaret all referenced one particular book by Lisa Appignanesi entitled The Cabaret. Unfortunately, this veritable bible on cabaret, published only 30 years ago, was nowhere to be found. Months would pass, long after I finished the bulk of my research, before I would learn that a new edition was being released that November. When I finally got a hold of a copy, I realized why it was so popularly referenced – as most everything I covered in the first phase of my thesis, was mentioned in this overly thorough book. To utilize this book a little more aptly in retrospect, I have taken Ms. Appignanesi’s example in broaching the subject of cabaret chronologically, concentrating on France and Germany.

It wasn’t until the near end of the fall semester that I set the second phase into action. After pillaging my day planner for the spring semester, I quickly realized my window of opportunity to stage an effective show with the best ensemble possible was limited to the extreme end of February. Skepticism, of the plausibility and subsequent
success of this experimental “workshop,” was a constant presence throughout the production. Luckily for me, I was also surrounded by a supportive and adaptive band of actors, musicians, managers, and friends that embraced the ideals of the project just as quickly as I explained them. Most, if not all, of the experiment’s success is due to these creative individuals.

Even in its proposed form, I knew phase III was going to be the most difficult to verbalize, for this project – however objective its intentions – is measuring, deducing, commenting on something utterly subjective that does not fall under normal conventions of assessment: man and society. With a proverbial grain of salt in hand, the means to which I leave this project will be as subjective as the very thing I seek to analyze. As Ms. Appignanesi says: “Since cabarets have, throughout history, often been impromptu and short-lived, to try and assess for durability is self-defeating.” As if the human element wasn’t discouraging enough.

From a sociological perspective, I hope the following example is encouraging to skeptics in the academic world, those who chalk up humanistic intrinsic value to “beyond comprehension.”

3 (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 239)
PHASE I

THE HISTORY AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CABARET

At first glance, one would think artistic and candidly political forums now known as cabarets developed out of a long, underground history of challenging political and social repression. But in reality, cabaret emerged only after a series of new laws preemptively extended freedoms of speech and press to the populace. France, then in its third republic, was the first country in Europe to establish universal manhood suffrage; subsequently, it’s capital became a bustling center for contemporary thought during a period which the French call the fin-de-siecle (turn-of-the-century). Nowhere in Paris was this zest for discourse promoted more than in the hilltop district of Montmartre. “After the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), Montmartre, originally known for its rural characteristics, rapidly became a home for artists and public entertainment.” While the rest of the French capital upheld an intellectually conservative façade, by 1880 the lively and progressive neighborhood of Montmartre “extended the parameters of propriety; there, rules were meant to be stretched and often broken.” The most influential contributors to Montmartre’s milieu of regrowth, of revitalization, were its bookshops, its budding cafes and soon after, its vanguard cabarets. Cabaret arose out of an embrace of the most modern and contemporary thoughts of the day, in the most modern and contemporary cities of the day, from the most modern and contemporary of people: Rudolphe Salis.

On November 18th, 1881, Rudolphe Salis opened a café in Montmartre similar in theme to the then popular Grande Pinte, a café catering to a large clientele of local artists.

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4 “This populism ... gave the common citizen the opportunity to debate about government, lifestyles, and personal beliefs.” (Fields, 1993, pp. 37)

5 (Ibid. pp 7, 37)
Salis soon took to calling his establishment a *cabaret*, for his intentions merited the distinction; inspired, in part, by the tremendous increase in both artistic and social sentiment literally flooding the boulevards of Paris, he sought to harbor this emerging creative pulse that had overflowed, homeless, into the bustling streets. One group in particular that garnered Salis’ attention was *Le Hydropaths*. The “Wet Apostles” was a loose association of artists – writers, musicians, actors, poets – that regularly assembled at cafés like the Grande Pinte to share their work. Though they had a reputation with the other patrons of the café, most of the floating group’s early recognition came from a journal they periodically published called *L’Hydropathe*. It was Salis’ suggestion – to make his cabaret the permanent residence for the Hydropaths, as it was the perfect setting for their artistic and populist exploits – that brought immediate distinction to what otherwise looked like any other café of the day.

Troop in hand, Salis named his cabaret *Le Chat Noir*, or the Black Cat. “Historians believe that Salis chose the name because of its sexual connotations and artistic symbolism, which enabled him quickly and clearly to communicate his cabaret’s social, political, and entertainment intentions.”

Followed soon after by a piano license and a bar, Salis’ haven began to attract more than the artists of the neighborhood.

“*During these early years, the Chat Noir’s audiences were entertained with solo or group performances of political and social satire. Sometimes, extravagant fantasies were given, dealing with religion, the government, or the upper classes. The young literary exponents were especially good at this. All of these presentations featured a sense of humor, biting and sarcastic, but not malicious. The atmosphere was light, seemingly unstructured and improvisational. Audiences expected to be insulted by Salis and the other performers as they poked fun at the values of all the classes of society. The environment was such that people could laugh at themselves and others, with no one being offended.*”

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6 (Ibid. pp. 11)
7 (Ibid. pp. 14)
Indeed, the cabaret emerged when it did because of the undeniable appropriateness of the role it came to fulfill. “Through camaraderie, the stimulation of new and audacious ideas, and the lively mixture of all professions and classes of people, artists found a sympathetic ambiance for their creative impulses.” These creative impulses, the guiding guise of social equality, the art and acts that would henceforth be definitively ‘cabaret-esque,’ took on a mutually compromising paradigm. The artists felt a penetrating need to come together to fill a void not only in their own creative lives but in the pulse and collective opinion of society as well. Their efforts “mocked and derided the values and cultural monuments of a society they condemned as hopelessly bourgeois and philistine. … At its origins, the cabaret had, therefore, a certain elitist character; it existed only or primarily for artists and their closest friends. It was also intended as something essentially private.”

The art, for which cabaret became best known, however, was anything but elitist. It drew heavily upon popular sources and aimed, above all, “at ending the hegemony of art that was either elitist by virtue of patronage or audience, or bourgeois by virtue of its standards and conventions.” In short, cabaret produced an amalgamated art form from the refuse of the social extremes; as easily accessible and entertaining to the factory worker as it was to the duke or dignitary. By belittling the ‘high’ art of the time, while at the same time cleaning up or revitalizing the seedy ‘low’ art of the time, cabaret

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8 (Henning, 1993, pp. 6)  
9 (Segal, 1987, pp. xiv-xv)  
10 (Ibid. pp. xvii)
personified a hybrid of class as well as a hybrid of art. Musically, cabaret (at least initially) was a genre without distinction; it was both satirical and sentimental at the same time. The melodies and rhythms composers drew from for inspiration ran the gamut from folksong to opera standard. “The cabaret’s nose-thumbing at contemporary art and society gave prominence to forms of Kleinkunst such as the chanson (the popular French song that was generally sentimental, romantic, or patriotic), the marionette and shadow show, and the short parody play, which came to enjoy virtually universal cultivation wherever cabaret existed.” The use of ‘small art forms,’ as underrepresented by the elite, gave cabaret an enormous playing field for artistic development: “It was by means of the cultivation of genres long regarded as minor or marginal that the artists who created the great European cabaret culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought not only to break with tradition and convention, but to defy them.”

It is important to reiterate that this appealing venue, this successful performance art form, was not originally intended for mass public patronage. After all, it arose as but a regular, reliable venue for artists who assembled away from the public eye, away from the critics – to share their artistic experiments in the company of similar opinion and attitude. “The public was not actively sought. The small premises of the early cabarets,

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11 “The art both cultivated and reproduced by the cabaret is what the Germans call, in a single word, Kleinkunst. The phenomenon referred to is best understood as an ‘art of small forms,’ that is, an art consisting of genres traditionally regarded as minor, or marginal, in terms of so-called high culture.” (Segel, 1987, pp. xvi)

12 “The shadow theater was another Chat Noir innovation, a pre-cinema production that was the first to combine visual images, words, and music.” (Fields, 1993, pp. 38)

13 (Segal, 1987, pp. xviii)

14 “By turning to folk and popular culture for inspiration, by merging ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, by narrowing – or eliminating – the distance between spectator and performer, they signaled their disdain for the art of a society that had become increasingly less relevant to them.” (Ibid. pp. xvii)

15 “It was reasoned [in Berlin] that art need not be measured in terms of its length or grandiosity. A short poem or song... should be treated with the same respect as a great drama or symphony;... programs composed of Kleinkunst would be more entertaining, and just as elevating,... since the potential for variety was greater and the artistic level of the material equally high.” (Houchin, 1977, pp. 1)
usually capable of holding no more than a hundred people, if that, guaranteed that even when members of the public were admitted, both as a concession to insatiable curiosity and, in some instances, for purely commercial reasons, their numbers would be small.” 16

The primary function of the early cabaretists was to escape the eye of the conventional critic of the day and, through artistic means, become renegade critics themselves. Although originally agreed upon that this cabaret would never be subjected to the population at large, “Salis knew a money-making opportunity when he saw it and admitted the general public. The programs took on a new dimension: The singers now had the very objects of their ridicule sitting in front of them.” 17

Apart from a large, sheet metal cut-out of a black cat sitting on a crescent moon (designed by one of the regular patrons, Adolphe Willette); little literal distinction could be seen on the exterior of the Chat Noir. But it was clear to any patron, upon taking his seat inside, that the spirit of the Chat Noir was jovial and infectious. “Cabaret provided [both] an atmosphere in which innovation could flourish and the opportunity for it to do so; it is not surprising that avant-garde experimentation often dominated the performances. Much that went on was improvised.” 18 Though some would argue that impromptu or (what would evolve to be) modern-day sketch comedy had no place in original cabaret venues, elements of parody and satire ran rampant – “forged into effective weapons in the cabaret offensive against pretentiousness in high culture, smugness in society, and conservatism in politics.” 19 The performers of the Chat Noir, in

16 (Segel, 1987, pp. xv)
17 (Houchin, 1977, pp. 11)
18 (O’Connor and Wachsmann, 2001) “Much of the success of cabaret theater was attributed to the spontenity and improv characteristics of the artists and acts performed. Indeed, there are more examples of failure than success in cabaret history in regards to mechanically replicating such spontenity on a nightly, routine basis.”
19 (Segel, 1987, pp. xviii)
shaping the very dogma of this emerging art form, read poetry, sang political song, “even devised melodies to existing poetry – like Baudelaire’s verses – to entertain the audiences. Audiences were invited to participate in singing the popular songs.” No topic was off limits or too taboo for discussion; this added edge only heighten the attraction of cabaret. The Chat Noir was highly successful in promoting a populist view of art, literature, and music through this new-hybrid of artistic outlets – that subsequently led to its great popularity across the social spectrum. “The Chat Noir was the venue where words, pictures, music, and performance were brought together to teach, entertain, and make fun of the conventions of the day.” This aspect of cabaret made an art form that was contemporary, topical, and continually up-to-date; a giant reflective pool, from which all the city’s social classes could drink from in good spirit and rousing sentiment.

Social class, as inferred thus far, played an integral role in the development of cabaret – and its incorporation into the mantra of cabaret can be traced back to its birth borough of Montmartre. Besides the abundant density of writers and artists, this section of Paris boasted a vibrant working class, feverishly rebuilding their local economy after the war with Prussia. It came to be said that Montmartre, as a populace blender where all social classes were mixing, offered a voice for the common citizen. “Not only were the various social classes able to mingle freely with one another, the performers were able to parody other lifestyles with humor and satire, demonstrating that they understood and were in touch with life’s realities. Knowing that, they were able to turn these realities

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20 Charles Pierre Baudelaire’s (1821-67) only famous work, “Les Fleurs du Mal”
21 (Fields, 1993, pp.15) See Bette Midler’s parody of a washed-up lounge singer “Delores Delago” for a more recent comparison.
22 (Ibid. pp. 7)
into absurdities; audiences could laugh at themselves and others without prejudice.’”

Cabaret became a vehicle for ‘heightened reality,’ a very practical and communally therapeutic mechanism. Furthermore, pretentiousness was eradicated; every patron paid the same admission price and sat in a similar seat, which made for a ‘classless’ audience. That is why cabaret, in its inception, became so popular.

As word spread of this artistic outlet, Rudolphe Salis and company spawned new ways to draw and assimilate the general public into their “irreverent world of fantasy, irony and improvisation.” Indeed, besides holding the title of owner, manager, promoted and publicist, Salis was greeter, producer, a very participatory master of ceremonies, poet and orator. He was the biggest attraction of the venue. “[His] voice reverberated across the room as he greeted Chat Noir customers. Welcomed by these salutations, visitors entered the cabaret, ready and eager to embrace [first and foremost] an impresario of a kind found nowhere else in Paris. When he performed, he showed respect to nothing and no one.” Many scholars attribute much of the Chat Noir’s success and appeal to Salis himself, as he was also an astute businessman. Besides engineering innovative public relation tactics, like stationing people near the entrance of the establishment to draw a crowd, Salis was very careful to “maintain a good working

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23 (Fields, 1993, pp. 37)
24 (Houchin, 1977, pp. 2)
25 “Guarding the entrance was a greeter, dressed in a uniform of the old monarchy, holding a halberd. He would tap his halberd loudly on the floor and announce visitors, if he knew their names. Sometimes, he would make up names for entering guests, much to the amusement of the patrons.” (Fields, pp. 12, 19)
26 “The role of the conférencier was a complex and manifold one. Now only was he, or sometimes she, like a master of ceremonies, to introduce the acts and set the tone for performances which, in themselves, might be extremely modest; but he also had to be able to draw the audience into the spectacle and provide a quick repartee to any challenge it might make. Besides this, the best conférenciers had to be well versed in literature, master of improvisation, and have antennae for the next day’s news.” (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 195)
27 “That the Chat Noir continued its creative output for fifteen years was due, in part, to Salis’ leadership.” (Houchin, 1977, pp. 17)
relationship with his colleagues and the local government bureaucracy, who admired his operation skill.”

Salis was not the only ingénue of the group; regulars of the Chat Noir were highly talented creators and performers. “They represented some of the best in art, literature, and music of their era. For many of the participants, this was a training ground for future success and recognition, a meeting of popular culture and artistic activities”

They also represented the voice of Montmartre; as they themselves were local residents, and portrayed them realistically. In their art, writing, and performance they conveyed feelings and emotions to which all audiences could find familiar. Topics of war, poverty, and social injustice frequented the stage – remnants of the decade-previous war. Despite the local flavor, the art produced within the Chat Noir’s walls was nothing short of extraordinary. The artists of the cabaret commanded a strong sense of integrity and pride in their work. “There always was an aspiration towards high standards as understood by the artists who supported the cabaret idea.”

There was also the element of laughter. The cabaret relied on the intimacy of the locale, the economy of a small, often ad hoc, musical ensemble, and the directness and warmth of contact between floor and platform. Artists read their own poetry and composers performed their own music; at least, that was the idea.”

That is the most important element of original cabaret.

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28 (Fields, 1993, pp. 12, 15)
29 (Ibid. pp. 20, 37)
30 “In the climate of the growing sense of fragmentation and imminent collapse, artists and intellectuals became increasingly bolder in their questioning – and ultimate rejection – of authority, increasingly more willing to challenge conventions and traditions. It was this ever widening contempt for authority, in whatever form, that gave rise to the avant-garde.” (Segel, 1987, pp. xvi)
31 (O’Connor and Wachsmann, 2001)
32 “Thus the Chat Noir became a catalyst of the cultural mainstream, a symbol of the period, and an influential force in turn-of-the-century French Art.” (Fields, 1993, pp. 11)
"As European culture entered a period of transition toward the end of the nineteenth century, as if in anticipation of the coming of the avant-garde, the cabaret emerged as a focal point of experimentation and innovation. By serving as a gathering place for restless, disaffected, and defiant artists and their fellow-travelers, the cabaret rapidly developed into a kind of sanctuary within whose privacy and safety barbs could be hurled with impunity at the enemies of authority and philistinism just outside the gates, and forms of art cultivated which by their very nature flouted the accepted and approved. . . . A sense of imminent sweeping change, of tumultuous upheaval, also gave rise to a sense of impermanence. The result was not only the cultivation of laconicism, but of ephemerally as well, all epitomized in the art of cabaret and in the cabaret itself as an art form."  

The success and regional popularity of the Chat Noir sparked an artistic revolution in the metropolises of the continent; and beyond. “Wherever it went, it brought with itself that contagious air of freedom and a daring disrespect for established structures whether political, artistic or institutional. For those artists, writers, thinkers, keen to thrust their own countries into this age of bristling freedoms and radical artistic experiment, the atmosphere of Paris was one which needed to be captured, taken home, and let loose.” In Barcelona, young Catalans, most notably Picasso, were intoxicated by the artistic vibrancy that emulated from Paris.

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33 “Adding to this sense of transience and expendability was their almost universal disavowal of commitment in art. To the cabaretists of the turn-of-the-century, art could best free itself from the tyranny of commitment by vigorously asserting its rights to purposelessness, its freedom not to have meaning in any conventionally representational sense, its legitimacy as play. In its rejection of authority, its defiance of convention and tradition, its pursuit of the small and the fleeting, its eschewal of commitment, its spirit of play, the cabaret of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was thus far more than a marginal diversion of the time. It could be viewed as the very symbol of those forces of change in sense and sensibility out of which the new art of the twentieth century was born.” (Segel, 1987, pp. xvi, xxiii)

34 “The adjective ‘Chatnoiresque’ was coined to describe situations and events that blended irreverent fantasy and humor.” (Ibid, pp. 20)

35 (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 29, 31)

36 “The Chat Noir was imitated by hundreds of other enterprises of a similar kind, catering for variations on the same theme: they toured the provinces and went beyond the borders of France, especially to French-speaking regions, including north Africa, but also visited other countries, and the German cabaret movement probably owed its birth to such visits.” (O’Connor and Wachsmann, 2001)

37 “Like the rest of the group, part of Picasso’s modernism lay in his willingness to turn his hand to ‘poor’ and popular artistic forms, to allow the street with its crude colors, omnipresent signage and print, its speed, its raw energy (indeed vulgarity) to invade his ‘art.’ In February, 1900, the nineteen-year-old Pablo Picasso exhibited his work – including charcoal drawings of various Quatre Gats regulars.” (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 33-34)
As cabaret spread, “forms initially given their greatest impetus by the Parisian experience, such as the chanson – which was not everywhere assimulable with the same ease – were modified by local traditions and augmented by forms more characteristic of the indigenous culture. No two were alike either in focus or formal preferences.”\(^{38}\) In Munich, Germany’s artistic center at the turn of the century, the paring of Kleinkunst with the already crafted experience of carnival produced one of the most fertile cabarets in the early 1900s. In New York in 1909, vaudeville influenced what would become known as American dinner-cabaret when the owner of a famous restaurant asked two performers to sing during dinner.\(^{39}\) In Berlin, between the World Wars, like elsewhere in the world, cabaret found much fuel in the decadence of the era: its consumerism and its dynamism under the Weimar Republic, its absurdity and its ostentatious atmosphere under the growing fascist regime. In fact, the latter is the variant of cabaret that contemporary society holds as the cabaret archetype. For this reason, a more thorough summary of Berlin cabarets of the early 20\(^{th}\) century deserves attention.

Noted for some of the most aggressive political satire ever produced, Berlin cabarets are of particular interest in the evolution and application of the cabaret art form; as the German Empire was, at that time, caught in the midst of a severe cultural crisis brought about by both the industrial revolution and the authoritarian regime in power.\(^{40}\)

“One reason why the new ventures took hold in Berlin was the city’s long tradition of

\(^{38}\) (Segel, 1987, pp. xviii)

\(^{39}\) (NY Times 2004) This however is just an Americanized “café-concert,” or rather, a primitive musical revue staged in restaurants that Parisians had been patronizing since the 1860’s.

\(^{40}\) “By the turn of the century many observers of German culture concluded that a new performing art was needed. It should appeal to the modern audience’s predilection for the fragmented form of vaudeville, and it should occupy a middle ground between mindlessness of popular variety shows and the incomprehensible esoterism of the avant-garde. The solution to this equation was cabaret.” (Jelavich, 1993, pp. 26)
subversive wit.”  

Cabaret, a perfect medium for coping with the complexities of modernity, took initial root in the eternal capital of education, science and culture of central and eastern Europe around 1900 – but it’s purpose and tone was under constant interpretation. Like the Chat Noir in Paris, much of what influenced the priorities of Berlin cabaret were political and economic conditions; but unlike its Parisian counterpart, these influential conditions were nothing like those found in France twenty years earlier.  

Prior to the First World War, social class and even some forms of censorship restricted the venues that most resembled cabarets. Halls like the Wintergarten were often used to showcase variants of vaudeville and variety theater, but their clientele, or their program, or both, were limited in size and scope. “The Berlin cabaret, throughout the first few years of its existence was, to the disappointment of certain critics, polite and content with the social milieu in which it operated.”

In Berlin, the artistic liberties of cabaret were taken at will; so were its intents and purposes – not that the advocates of cabaret were forewarned: “The Parisian prototypes demonstrated that such ventures could be centers of artistic innovation, experimentation, and conviviality, but could also just as easily degenerate into commercial kitsch.” The universal, over-arching cabaret dogma after World War I, especially in Berlin, became overtly economic amidst the proponents of various self-righteous sects of the German

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41 Even Goethe noted the sharp-tongued nature of the citizens of Berlin. “That ‘sharp tongue’ came to be called ‘Berliner Schnauze’ (literally, ‘Berlin Snout’). The Berliners were believed to have a corresponding style of wit, one marked by disrespect of authority and cynical skepticism toward received values.” (Jelavich, 1993, pp. 30-31)
42 “Berlin cabaret was born in an age of optimism and comfort, not in an age of despair.” (Houchin, 1977, pp. 239)
43 “A cabaret journal of 1902 noted in retrospect that ‘Julius Baron, the former director of the Wintergarten, was probably the first person to build a large and wide bridge between vaudeville artistry and bourgeois society.” (Jelavich, 1993, pp. 22)
44 (Houchin, 1977, pp. 239)
45 (Jelavich, 1993, pp. 27)
cabaret movement. This is an important aspect of cabaret to consider, as it pertains all the more to modern contexts and applications of this art form. As early as 1890, “cabaret was mentioned in guide books and had become a tourist attraction, especially for English visitors. Newspaper advertisements for the cabaret called it ‘The Capital of Laughter.’”

Cabaret had become a competitive, commercial undertaking.

Following the fall of the Second Reich and the economic stronghold of mainland Europe, new breeds of popular entertainment sprouted all around the metropolis. “Some were full of revolutionary political sentiment, while others boldly catered to the new found sexual liberation which swept Berlin.” After the armistice, a truly cosmopolitan air fertilized the city; theaters and cabaret sprang up everywhere, “thriving on the death of censorship.” One cabaret, Die Wilde Bühne (Wild Stage), after opening in September 1921, became a veritable stomping ground for the “Who’s Who of Berlin Cabaret.” One young playwright in particular, Bertolt Brecht, sought career advice from the Wild Bühne’s house poet, Walter Mehring, and subsequently became engaged at the cabaret himself. Most attribute the success and unusual longevity of the Wild Bühne to its *female* conférencier, Trude Hesterberg.

The hyperinflation of 1923 caused by a stagnant economy and insurmountable war reparations did not leave cabarets unscathed. The fanatical and dire economy led to a sudden rise in ‘amusement cabarets.’ “Mass hysteria seized Germany, especially Berlin. It was as if the end of the world would come at any moment, and people set out to enjoy themselves before it arrived. Spending money became an obsession. It was considered

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46 “The Chat Noir was a symbolic expression of the new popular culture.” (*Fields*, 1993, pp. 20)
47 (*Houchin*, 1977, pp. 128)
48 (*Appignanesi*, 2004, pp. 125)
foolish to go to bed with money in one’s pockets.” But, even amongst the milieu and fanfare of these less-than-pure cabaret variants, cabaret conventions like artistic social reflection were still found. A creative way to step outside of the constructed paradigm of the time: “Die Damen vom Olymp” (The Goddesses from Olympus), staged at Rudolf Nelson’s cabaret on Kufürstendamm, “brought several of the Greek deities back to earth to see how human beings were behaving in the twentieth century.” Some cabarets were so hard bent on surviving the dodgy economy that they would travel from country to country, promoting their crafts. Jasha Jushny’s “Der Blaue Vogel” (The Blue Bird) “enjoyed tremendous success, appearing in twenty countries and giving more than 4,000 performances.”

By the time the new Weimar currency, the Reitenmark, stabilized the German economy in 1924, a new amalgamation of cabaret emerged. John Houchin refers to these establishments, made of fragments of preceding versions, as ‘compromise cabarets.’ The fragments, all at one point or another embraced and accepted in one cabaret setting or another, generally were from three distinctive sections: the ‘pure’ cabaret section, the variété portion, and the theater segment. Lisa Appignanesi, on the other hand, surmises these offspring as ‘cabaretistic satirical revues.’ “Abandoning intimate space so as to gain a slightly larger audience, these revues incorporated the satirical tone of the cabaret, often softened its sharpness and political critique just a little, dropped the improvisational flavor, and introduced a loose, thematic continuity into the sequence of acts and sketches.

50 (Houchin, 1977, pp. 155, 165, 169)
51 “The emphasis given each of these three parts depended, to a great extent, on the area of town in which the cabaret was located. Yet even some of these blatantly commercialized institutions assembled programs which included socially progressive artists.” (Houchin, 1977, pp. 179)
Verbal wit generally, but not always, played a secondary role to music and dance.\textsuperscript{52} Either way, it is this form of cabaret that crested the period of relative political and social stability leading up to the depression and into the Third Reich. Most, if not all popularized nostalgic recreations of cabaret resemble this variant in most respects.

In the United States, thanks to Christopher Isherwood’s \textit{Berlin Stories}, the music and lyrics of Kander and Ebb, and director/choreographer Bob Fosse, the prevalent image most people hold of cabaret is a cross between variety show and burlesque house featuring a derby-toting, garter-wearing Liza Minnelli straddling a chair. Despite the vast limitations the stereotype signifies, this time-capsuled recreation of cabaret (as a book, as a musical, and as an Academy Award-winning movie) does incorporate a key element that is truly cabaret-esque. Its title song, professing life to be a “Cabaret,” is contextually interwoven throughout the film; encouraging one to leave his troubles outside, only to reflect, analyze, and criticize them inside. “In here, life is beautiful,” recants Joel Grey – the delectable emcee of the Kit Kat Klub. Another great example of this element, specific to the movie, is the augmented, funhouse-like mirror that opens and closes the film. Lowered onto the stage, the mirror projects skewed and accentuated reflections onto the audience – an audience of all social backgrounds – where anything is subject for scrutiny and ridicule.

“Whatever the quality of the entertainment offered and however interesting as a mirror of (and outlet for) contemporary social and political antagonisms, as in interwar

\textsuperscript{52} (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 187)
Germany (and so well depicted in the film *Cabaret* of 1972), the cabaret ceased to be the embodiment of a changing sensibility, the manifest anticipation of a new art, of the avant-garde. Cabarets were now viewed as places of entertainment.\textsuperscript{53} Granted, many artists who had achieve modest recognition and success during the heyday of the ‘pure,’ non-capitalist-prioritized Berlin cabaret period appeared on these stages, “but such men constituted only a fragment of the total offering.” In 1926, perhaps the greatest Emcee in Germany began an extended engagement at the ‘Kabarett der Komiker’ (The Comedian’s Cabaret), Berlin’s largest and longest-lasting cabaret. Even the other conferenciers of Berlin regarded Paul Nikolaus as the most prestigious among their ranks – he copied no one and was always fresh. He felt his role centered more on an investigator of contemporary reality, than that of a intermittent comedian.\textsuperscript{54}

But the reality remained: the purely literary, or idealist cabarets – that most mimicked the intents and purposes of the original French model – had disappeared. “Producers were no longer motivated by pressing political or social issues. They desired a wide audience appeal, not innovative art forms or social commentary.”\textsuperscript{55} Venues, artists, and acts were chosen according to potential commercial value. Producers searched for a program that would draw the largest, most diverse audience possible; and that program was best achieved through ‘compromise’ cabarets.\textsuperscript{56}

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\textsuperscript{53} “Their facilities were expanded and enhanced, their doors thrown open to an ever larger paying public, their programs more professionally arranged and managed, and their spirit tranformed from artistic excuslivity and experimentation to commerical divertissment.” (Segel, 1987, pp. xxiv-xv)

\textsuperscript{54} (Houchin, 1977, pp. 189, 194-195) and (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 198, 200) “Every evening Nakolaus would have the next day’s papers, still wet, rushed to him by a press contact.”

\textsuperscript{55} (Houchin, 1977, pp. 189)

\textsuperscript{56} “Owners and directors maintained that the literary cabaret had outlived its usefulness and had to be discarded in favor of a genre that entertained audiences rather than raised their social consciousness.” (Houchin, 1977, pp. 23, 177)
Today, cabaret has lost most of its original meaning and purpose. “In our own culture, ‘cabaret’ is distinguished from ‘nightclub’ almost wholly on the basis of size and atmosphere. Indeed, the two terms are often used synonymously, further blurring distinctions. Generally, the nightclub is perceived as physically large, the cabaret, by contrast, small and intimate,”57 as the title of James Gavin’s novel implies – *Intimate Nights: The Golden Age of New York Cabaret*. The entertainment at such modern venues are restricted to, or rather dominated by just a few performers – with heavy preference towards singers. “In America, the *torch song*, with its melancholy tones and passionate or casual delivery, joined the blues and jazz to become the staple of the intimate nightclub stage in the late forties and fifties.”58 Apparently, to achieve intimacy in this day and age, not only a reduction of audience and spatial configuration, but also a reduction of artists is required.

“The cabaret form itself has been dismembered into its component parts – song, sketch, stand-up comedy, artistic experiment – and put back together again, or transformed, on stages large and small or television. The mass distribution of records, tapes, and CDs, has brought varieties old and new into every home. The warmth of a gathered and live public, the small, lone oppositional or experimental voice, a stage from which a performer can respond to her audience – all this still carries some resonance in an age of globalized mass media and virtual encounters.”59

The closer to present day, the harder it becomes to document, evaluate and formulate cohesive chapters on cabaret. “Certainly the last decades of the twentieth century saw small stages and impromptu platforms play host to artists of a vast diversity.” One core aspect of cabaret lives again in stand-up comedy clubs. Originally

57 “The entertainment offered in the nightclub tends towards the gaudier and more in the tradition of the revue: a raised stage, and orchestra, a chorus of dancers, singers, and a standup comedian or two. The audience is seated at tables, food and drink are served, and the space separating audience from performer usually serves the customers as a dance floor in between “sets” or programs. Admission to the nightclub is open to anyone and the performers are all paid professionals. *(Segel, 1987, pp. xiv)*

58 *(Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 217)*

peaking in the mid-seventies, the boom and popularity of stand-up comedy is still going strong twenty-five years later. “Perhaps the most enduring of the cabaret’s progeny has turned out to be the stand-up comedian whose often self-scripted barbs are aimed at political or personal hypocrisies, in short, at the way we live. Saturday Night Live, born in 1975, provided a national television cabaret showcase.”60

Whether due to the effects of over commercialization, shifts in world populism, or advents of new popular artistic mediums like television, cabaret has never reclaimed the popularity it garnered before WWII. In all fairness, with few exceptions, the turn-of-the-century cabarets were short-lived, as transient as the trends the poked at: “Cabaret was a mutable, transitory art form subject to the whims of directors, writers, singers, recitors and critics. They looked out on their city and on the world, witnessed events and commented on them. They did not attempt to formulate eternal truths. It was a mirror for its age, reflecting whatever passed before it.”61

Cabaret’s effects and influences are still present in society’s collective culture; but questions remain: can cabaret be resurrected and applied to the here and now? To what purpose or benefit would such an undertaking merit? Is it economically feasible? Would a modern cabaret be as effective in communicating poignant social commentary as its predecessors? What are the modern limitations and unique attributes of cabaret? Furthermore, would modern audiences even be receptive to a dated and (to some) seemingly ‘high art’ form?

The prospect of a cabaret rebirth is promising … will it be as effective as before? This calls for a more proactive case study of cabaret, the perfect vehicle for social

60 (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 6, 218, 239-240)
61 (Houchin, 1977, pp. 242)
criticism. In the following pages (Phase II), many of these questions will find demonstrated answers in what has been a successful and thoroughly documented modern-day cabaret workshop. As for the subsequent conclusions about the modern contexts of this seemingly more-nostalgic-than-practical art form, they are found in Phase III.
PHASE II

SYNOPSIS OF WORKSHOP PROJECT – A TIMELINE

The tumultuous work that went into the second phase of this thesis project – the drafting, organizing, marketing, networking, composing, rehearsing, printing, editing, filming, counting, borrowing, polling, recording, and performing began last December. My initial production calendar had a slough of priorities from equipment rental to food budget, from poster fonts to piano tuning; but even before I had a venue, I knew I had to mobilize a talented troop of actors, musicians and various other artists. I also knew that if I wanted to hand select this potent brigade, I needed to act fast.

The actors, writers, and musicians I had in mind were very busy and sought-after individuals. Over the course of first semester exams, armed with little else than a coaxing vernacular, I garnered the support and commitment of over a dozen Boston College undergraduates, ready and willing to turn my proposed experiment into the real deal – for no compensation. As it turned out, once the premise of my project was explained, most students I talked to were not only excited, but ambitious to take part in such a project. By the end of the semester, I had nearly a full team of cabaretists. The merit that goes hand-in-hand with creating an act of personal design, this sense of ownership was a big influence – I learned in subsequent discussions – in the commitment of so many students. The spirit of the original cabaret model was already in motion.

Any lack of confidence voiced by the actors was address in my first email, sent out in mid-December, explaining, among other things, my confidence in them:

“\textit{I know some of you don’t think you’re creative enough to muster up an original piece of performance art, and to this I will say two things. First, I will not force you to do anything you haven’t the time or gumption to do, but second, I will challenge you to challenge yourself and take some initiative in}
the creative part of this project. ... Each and every one of you brings a unique skill set to this project and I know you’ll build off each other well. Though it is not mandatory, music plays a large role in cabaret-style art. One of the many reasons I hand-selected this group (instead of holding open auditions) is because I could shape a great balance in musicianship in the ensemble. Through voice, or piano, or guitar, or whatever, your music ability will be put to use on top of your creative ingenuity.”

The email also gave rough guidelines as what to expect in the next few months: from a production standpoint as well as a creative standpoint. It also had the hidden intention of generating excitement among the participants. I made it a personal objective to ebb skeptical thoughts wherever possible. Case-in-point, general email number two, dated January 15th, 2005: “I am unfathomably excited at how promising this project has grown in the last month.”

The second email was followed soon after by a very pivotal meeting, held on January 19th. At the meeting, after pizza, soda and a thorough assimilation into the mindset of a ‘cabaretist,’ the ensemble brainstormed at length over not only what acts each one could contribute to the production, but general concepts as how to modernize the show as well. This initial meeting was wrought with ingenuity and innovation; I could tell the group shared the excitement I had by the end of the evening.

As a cast, we met very infrequently; up through mid-February, only every fortnight. The idea behind it was to give each artist enough time to put energy behind their projects. During the hiatus between rehearsals – which were more production meetings than staging rehearsals – I met with any artists that needed encouragement or help. I met with both pianists and recorded their original melodies. Playing them for the cast was a real treat at the next meeting. The group fed off each other’s ideas very easily, and the production as a whole benefited tremendously. Actors and musicians that I didn’t
The Bastard (De Smeerlap) – 1895

by Eduard Jacobs

Ladies and Gentlemen, as usual I’ll sing you some songs from my own repertoire. But for those of you who aren’t familiar with the realistic intentions of my verses, I had better begin with a brief explanation. I sing about general conditions and specific people and I do it in a way that strikes many people as strange and daring. That’s because I use words which you all use every day, or at least quite frequently, when you’re among friends. I do the same thing here, but I do it in public. The reason is that I want to break with what is supposed to be decent and proper and won’t allow ordinary life to call a spade a spade. Now it makes no sense to me why I should use in public a language different from the one I’d use in private. This concerns the form of my cabaret songs. But I think I also better mention something about their content. When you become acquainted with some of my pieces you’ll notice that they have a serious moral basis. That’s the reason I totally reject the notion that my verses are immoral. After this brief introduction, ladies and gentlemen, which was quite necessary for many of you, I will first present you with “The Bastard.”

“She loved him from love’s brimming cup,
She didn’t know he’d knocked her up,
Didn’t understand her sick condition.
God damn him to perdition.
She wrote a lengthy note to him,
Dared call herself his poor victim.
The bastard ignored her petition.
God damn him to perdition.
She told his dad what he had done,
He paid her, though he blamed his son.
Her silence was his one condition.
God damn him to perdition.
She’s brought to the delivery room
And there she dies that afternoon.
The bastard sent flow’rs in contrition.
God damn him to perdition.”

(Senelick 1989, pp. 54-55)

think would work well together, found each other on their own. What the group was refining was electric.

GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES

I developed a great appreciation for management and foresight skills, as I endured my tenure as a first-time producer. My mind was always running; luckily I was able to focus enough to communicate my intentions to others. One of the main concerns I had, as the producer of a rather unique (or seldom seen) art form, was that I wanted to make sure my artists had the background and material with which they could build from. In my emails and at the workshop meetings, I made it a point to emphasize certain guidelines. At the first meeting, in particular, I gave them actual packets of information that we went over. In dictating the goals of the project, I was able to highlight examples that they could fall back on and relate to instantly.
The creative packet was crucial for several reasons: it prompted the artists to define for themselves what ‘cabaret’ was; it listed a wide variety of topics to work with; and it provided examples of cabaret-esque acts over the past century. Besides reading written script examples (see “The Bastard” excerpt on page 27 and “Egon and Emilia” script on right), I also played music and video clips and passed out song lyrics (see “Mack the Knife” lyrics on page 29).

The media clips were especially helpful. I was reluctant to show clips from the movie Cabaret (and at the same time re-institute the archetype that cabaret falls into), but many of the actors had never

**Egon and Emilia** (Egon und Emilia)
*Not a Domestic Tragedy*  c. 1901
*by Christian Morgenstern*

(The stage represents a cozy living room. In the left corner a chimney nook with a settle. Center a round table. Windows, doors.)

EMILIA: (Pulling Egon into the room by his hand.) In here! That’s right, in here, my darling Egon! Oh how happy I am, how happy your Emilia is! (She gazes at Egon with eye aglitter.) But you say nothing at all –

EGON: (Sits on the sofa and holds his peace.)

EMILIA: Have you no word for our happiness? But surely –

EGON: (Is silent.)

EMILIA: (On the settle.) I should have guessed it! I should have foreseen it! I’m a wretched creature! I’m a fool! But my God, all may yet be lost – am I right, Egon (she leaps up, in intense anguish), am I right, Egon?

EGON: (Is silent.)

EMILIA: Oh, I implore you! Speak but a word, just one single little word!

EGON: (Is silent.)

EMILIA: (At the round table.) Oh, for heaven’s sake – is it so impossible, this thing I ask for, no beg for, plead for! I do not want your forgiveness or your understanding, no, not for a long while yet, we still have a good five acts for that, but let me have some point of contact, don’t deny me some cue –

EGON: (Is silent.)

EMILIA: (Out the window.) Egon! Egon!! – Egon!!!

EGON: (Is silent.)

EMILIA: Are you aware, shameless creature, that this is the death of me? That now I cannot develop into a character – all on account of your infamous silence? That I must now leave this stage, exit into the nameless void, without ever having acted or lived? (She pulls out her watch and waits for a full minute.) No answer, no inarticulate sound, not even a glance! Stone, stone, ice. Cruel wretch, you who have murdered my role, unnatural man, you who have strangled a domestic tragedy in its diapers . . . He is dumb, he sits there dumb, I go. Now, curtain, ring down once more, though you have scarcely been up; dear people, return home. You saw, I did what I could. All in vain. This brute wants no tragedy, he wants his peace and quiet. Farewell. (Exits)

EGON: (Rises.) Quite right; I want my peace and quiet, I want no domestic tragedy. For your sake, dear spectator, am I to be at the mercy of this Niagara Falls of a woman? To be implicated with her in endless rigmarole before your lovely eyes? I think not. Now go home and consider that today for the first time in your life you have seen a truly rational man on stage, a man who not only pays lip service to the adage “Speech is silver, silence is golden,” but fearlessly lives by it. Farewell. (Exits.)

*(Senelick 1989, pp. 72-73)*
seen the movie – so showing clips under guided, idealistic cabaret narration was productive and purposeful. We talked about the advent of *Saturday Night Live* and how some of their best skits poked fun at social conventions by the introduction of a foreigner – like John Belushi’s “Bees” or Dan Akroyd’s “Coneheads.” Audio recordings of fresh and edgy stand-up (like Margaret Cho and Eddie Izzard) provided further insights into what topics were really open for discussion – namely, anything.

The best media examples though, were from a DVD archival concert of Bette Midler from 1980. Midler got her start in New York in the late sixties by setting the city’s nightlife on a new, ennobling course. “Given her natural flamboyance, Midler could have found no better place for a full-scale debut than the [Turkish] baths, where listeners came to have a good time, loved the outrageous, and roared their approval. Midler sensed the potential of that setting and designed her act accordingly. She billed herself as ‘Trash with Flash,’ a tacit assurance that to be trashy – or to be anything once scorned by society – was now chic and could even have a flair of its own.”

These cabaret-esque attributes were captured in the concert tour, especially in her self-parody of a foreign and faded lounge singer (the foreign bit being that she was a mermaid). Her antics onstage showed another dimension to where our show could go.

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*Mack the Knife*

*Words by Berthold Brecht*
*Music by Kurt Weill*
*English words added by Marc Blitzstein*
*written in 1928 for “Theme From the Threepenny Opera” (first made famous by Louis Armstrong in 1955)*

Oh, the shark, has pretty teeth, dear....
and he shows them pearly white
Just a jackknife has MacHeath, babe.....
and he keeps it, out of sight

When that shark bites with his teeth, dear....
scarlet billows start to spread
Just a gloved hand, has MacHeath, dear....
and he never shows a single drop of red

On the sidewalk...Sunday morning,
lies a body oozin’ life
Someone’s sneakin’ round the corner...
could that someone be Mack the Knife?

There's a tugboat....down by the river.....
with a cement bag, hangin’ down
Oh, the cement’s just for weight, dear...
five’ll get ya ten old Macky’s back in town

Ole Louie Miller disappeared, babe...
after he withdrew all his cash
Now MacHeath spends like a sailor...
could it be our boy’s...done somethin’ rash?

There's Jenny Diver, and Sukey Tawdry....
Miss Lotte Lenya, and ole Lucy Brown
Oh, the line forms on the right, babe.....
now that Macky's back in town

I said that line forms on the right, babe.....
now that Macky's back in town.

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62 (Gavin, 1991, pp. 298-99)
Another benefit from all the use of media examples—besides unintentionally accenting the importance and heavy reliance on in-home media in this day and age—was showcasing the various versions of the *theme song*: a recurring song that becomes the hallmark of the evening; opening and closing the set and setting the tone of the evening. From Kander’s “Wilkommen” to Midler’s “Friends,” these clips furthered the brainstorming of the group at large.

What also furthered the creative progression of the group was a list of relatable topics that came to my mind over the better course of a year. Some of the topics came from courses I’d taken, others from conversations I’d had, but some were random scratches that arose mid-slumber.

**A selection of potential topics:**

- Bureaucracy (A long ways to a means)
- **Personal Identity Construction (PIC)**
- Physical Gender Construction
- “CEO Nation” (multimedia)
- Masculinity Dramatization
- Life Experimentations
- “Hall of Stereotypes”
- Poverty Exercise
- On Conformity
- Media Moguls
- Culture Shock
- On Abortion
- On Power

Perhaps providing topics to “go off on” might seem like I was leading the actors down roads that they wouldn’t normal pursue unprovoked; but in retrospect, I was conscious of my boundary in coaching the artists. One tactic that worked especially well was having every artist take charge of at least one act. This way almost guaranteed ownership to a certain degree of each piece. It facilitated each actor’s need to get behind the piece. I reserved the right to edit or critique an act, but I basically gave the artists free reign. Though at times it gave way to self-indulgence, I was able to ebb the few instances it appeared.
The show was coming into form very similarly to the model I had researched. Few aspects of the production took more than a simple encouragement to set into motion. Modernizing the show was a concept I had little reference to go by, other than modern-day life. With the help of the group though, we incorporated several key features that worked well in the contexts of the evening. Arguably, the hardest spot to fill in the production was the bass player, who was found only a week before performance.

On a technical tangent, this production was made possible by a remarkable amount of favors that I called in, and subsequently assembled by an equally large favor I asked. The Honors Program, in particular Mark O’Connor and Susan Michalcyzk were exceptionally helpful in all areas of the production. Through them, I reserved the best place on campus to serve as the production venue. Knowing that the “cabaret room” on Lower Campus would be occupied that week for a housing lottery, I knew that Honors Library had the best potential for exuding the ambiance of a cabaret. When I drafted a floor plan (above), the transformation proved to be nearly effortless, as the room already had couches, chairs and a grand piano.
Theatrical lights were borrowed free of charge from my work-study at Robsham Theater and the sound equipment was borrowed from one of my roommates, who also volunteered to play drums for the project. Rudimentary video recorders were loaned out, also free of charge, from the university’s Media Technology Services, as was the projector screen. The seven 6’x 3’ assembled platform that created the raised stage were obtained and delivered by the Bureau of Conferences – free of charge.

The production staff was headed by Katie Mihalko, who voiced her interest in the project very early on. Her input ranged from light arrangements and sound levels, to program order and flyer layout. During the run of the show, she ran all the technical and multimedia elements of the performance. The production assistants (or “minions”) in charge of surveying, observing and counting the audience, were recruited through abuses of email listservs.

Speaking of email listservs, they were used to promote and advertise the event itself as well. Besides a mass electronic mailing to every student in the Honors department, mass mailings were sent to large theater and music groups on campus. Invitations (see right) were delivered to faculty mailboxes. The most notable

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You are cordially invited to attend

AN EVENING OF ORIGINAL CABARET PERFORMANCES

Presented as part of a senior honors thesis

avec Matthew Thompson, ’05

Mon., February 28th: 7pm and 10pm
Tues., March 1st: 7pm and 10pm
A piece of advertising though, was another favor I called in with another one of my roommates, who had just finished his term as the managing editor of the university’s independent newspaper, The Heights. The paper published a public interest story (see following page) about my project on the day of the first set of performances. This was probably one of the more significant advertising tactics, as The Heights is the most circulated and seen billboard on campus. Furthermore, it too was free.

The flyer was an interesting project to tackle. First, what attention-grabbing picture could personify the message of rousing social and political theater? This was definitely a scenario where Liza Minnelli could not do justice. Also, though sponsored, or rather advised by the Honors Program, the department had little to do with creating these original student works. Unfortunately I lost the argument with the Office of Student Development to include the name we gave ourselves (in the spirit of the Chat Noir’s Hydropaths) – “the Establishments” – so the flyer (as seen below) included the Honors Program’s sponsorship, for the sole reason to be approved for display by ODSD.

The Dis-Honored Library never had it so good!

An Evening of Original Cabaret Performances
Sponsored by the Honors Program

Jenks Honors Library, Gasson Hall
Monday, February 28th: 7pm and 10pm!
Tuesday, March 1st: 7pm and 10pm!

Questions? Call Matt: 5-4850

(Heights Article)
My role during the show was that of conférencier, Master of Ceremonies, or “Emcee.” It was a very peculiar role, one that I had never filled before, but I grew keenly aware of the position and purpose it filled, tying all the acts together while perpetuating the tone of the evening. By the second evening of shows, I developed a very comfortable pace at which to keep the moving and kept the audience at bay. Since this type of performance isn’t frequently done nowadays, my role also fulfilled the role of educator.

Despite being the Emcee, I wrote the final song of the show. Even though I knew that if I wanted to remain true to the original role of conférencier, I should have remained separated from the acts; I felt that my song – or rather my composition set to an existing poem – was a vital element of the original cabaret doctrine that wasn’t represented in any of the other acts. So I felt my song was justified.

The following pages is a cumulative working script of four shows staged successful and consecutively over two nights on February 28th and March 1st, 2005 in the Jenks Honors Library in Gasson Hall. The shows (and sometimes, the audiences watching the shows) were recorded and videotaped (see attached media discs). The script is an amalgamation compiled from rough scripts of the acts, individual notes, and video clips.
“WORKING” SCRIPT

WORKSHOP CABARET SHOW
(Feat. original student-written work)

STEPHANIE BISSONNETTE
MATTHEW CULLINAN
KELLY DOYLE
JAMES FAGAN
ANDREW “CURLY” GLYNN
JARRET IZZO
STEPHANIE MARQUIS
GREGORY O’KANE
BRYCE PINKHAM
JACKYLN RADA
IAN STOKER-LONG
MATTHEW THOMPSON
LACEY UPTON

MARK DESROSIE, bassist
THOMAS “T.J.” GORDON, drummer
MARY “KATIE” MIHALKO, stage manager

First performed on Monday, February 28th, 2005
Jenks Honors Library, Gasson Hall, Boston College

dir. Matthew Thompson, ’05
AN OPENING NUMBER
Music by: J. Izzo
Lyrics by: J. Izzo & M. Thompson

JARRET:
I NEED AN ESCAPE
WE ALL NEED AN ESCAPE
COME IN, SIT DOWN, AND WATCH OUR LITTLE SHOW.
SO TURN DOWN ALL THE LIGHTS
THERE GO ALL THE LIGHTS
GET READY FOR THE CABARET TONIGHT!

MATT:
You know, it’s been a long hard couple of years we’ve had here. So hard, that I can’t even remember my opening monologue without looking at my notecards. Most people have been a little on edge and it’s a funk that – It really wasn’t that funny – that just won’t go away. Every story that becomes the talk of the nation arouses some passion, eh? It doesn’t matter if it’s the government, or natural disaster or sports. Well, especially sports. Nothing can be over without six weeks of discussion over an hour of information. I think I’ve had my fill. I think . . .

JARRET and MATT:
I NEED AN ESCAPE
WE ALL NEED AN ESCAPE
WHERE THE NEWS WON’T FIND OUR SORRY SELVES.

LACEY:
I’LL HOP A PLANE TO PARIS

CURLY:
I’LL BOARD A BOAT TO BANGKOK

KELLY:
I’LL DIG A HOLE, ‘CAUSE I DON’T WANT TO FIGHT.

MATT:
Sure can’t fault the public for apathy, no. Seems that there’s marches and signs up just about everywhere for every cause in the book. Why, there’s even marches protesting the “book” itself. I, for one, would be more partial if protesting weren’t so passé. Haven’t we gotten enough angst out already? Well no. I’m kidding. But it does seem there’s so many people acting out against so many different things that we can’t focus and get anything done . . . like memorizing my cards. It all gets a little overwhelming. Each demonstration is the next “million gender-neutral march.” You’d think voter turn-out would be higher, no?

ALL:
I NEED AN ESCAPE
WE ALL NEED AN ESCAPE
COME, RELAX AND WATCH OUR LITTLE SHOW.
SO SHUT DOWN ALL THE LIGHTS
THERE GO ALL THE LIGHTS
GET READY FOR THE CABARET TONIGHT!

CURLY: "Broken Boys" tonight!

STEPH: "Virgins" tonight!

IAN: I think there’ll be a “slap fight” tonight!

KELLY: "Lesbians" tonight!

LACEY: "Pick-up Lines" tonight!

MATT: There might be a “War” tonight!

GREG: “Hitting on your TA” tonight?

ALL: IT’S BEEN A TOUGH COUPLE OF YEARS
A ROTTEN AGE TO FIND OURSELVES
BUT WHY SHED ALL THOSE TEARS?
YOU’RE HERE! WITH US! YOU’RE HOME!

I NEED AN ESCAPE
WE ALL NEED AN ESCAPE
SITTING DOWN TO WATCH OUR LITTLE SHOW
SHUT DOWN ALL THE LIGHTS
THERE GO ALL THE LIGHTS
GET READY FOR THE CABARET TONIGHT!

JIM: (from audience) Hey Thompson! That sucked!

MATT C: Yeah it did!

JIM: Hey, didn’t I hear something about virgins in there?

MATT C: I remember when we were virgins.

JIM: I remember it like it was yesterday . . .

MATT C: It was yesterday!

BOTH: Oh, ho ho ho.

- - -

MATT: Right.

Welcome everyone! My name is Matt Thompson, but most of you knew that already. Thanks for coming out to this, the performance phase of my senior honors thesis. But we’ll talk more about that later.

On to our first performer, Curly Glynn.

Curly! Get up here and entertain the good people.
CURLY: Hello, my name is Curly Glynn.
And well, my song is about good guys and how they often get screwed over by, well . . . bitches.
Jarret, you ready?

BOYS CAN BE BROKEN
Music by: J. Izzo
Lyrics by: A. Glynn

CURLY: I GAVE YOU MY HEART
I LOVED WITH NO SHAME
ALL I HAD WAS YOURS, BABE
AND ALL I GOT WAS PAIN

YOU TOOK MY CARE
YOU TOOK MY MONEY
YOU TOOK EVERYTHING YOU WANT
AND LEFT ME NOTHING

WHAT MORE COULD I DO, BABY?
I’D BE YOUR EVERYTHING
I’M TRYING TO BE STRONG BUT . . .
BOYS CAN BE BROKEN
ALL THEY WANTED WAS FOR YOU
TO LOVE AND HOLD THEM LIKE THEY DID TO YOU.

YOU NEEDED A BREAK - HA!
IT WAS TOO INTENSE
IT WASN’T ME, YOU SAID
IT WAS ABOUT TIMING
OH, YOU TORE ME DOWN
AND LEFT ME CRYING, CRYING

WHAT MORE COULD I DO, BABY?
I’D BE YOUR EVERYTHING
I’M TRYING TO BE STRONG BUT . . .
BOYS CAN BE BROKEN
ALL THEY WANTED WAS FOR YOU
TO LOVE AND HOLD THEM LIKE THEY DID TO YOU.

- - -

MATT: Curly Glynn, everyone! And of course Jarret Izzo on the piano, T.J. Gordon on drums, and Mark . . . what’s your last name?

MARK: Desrosiers!

MATT: One more time.

MARK: Desrosiers.

MATT: Very Good. Alright, we’re gonna talk a little bit more about cabaret’s history to get it all out on the
table and out of our way so we can enjoy the rest of our . . .

(LACEY enters wearing a black leotard, tights, a derby and garter; plants her foot on a chair)

LACEY: I’m ready, Matt.

MATT: Um, Lacey . . .

LACEY: Wait, this isn’t “Cabaret the Musical?”

MATT: No. No.

LACEY: Matt, I’m ready to sing “Mein Herr.”

MATT: Yeah apparently. Yes.

LACEY: Matt, I’m sorry, but I’m all dressed up to be Liza tonight.

MATT: No, you’ll never be Liza.

LACEY: Do you people agree? I’m sorry. Fine then.

I’ll be back!

(exit LACEY)

MATT: We had to split up the divas into different sets because too much diva in one set is a bad thing.

Alright. Cabaret was a great, interesting thing that happened in the 1880’s originally when it started in France, in Paris – and you guys weren’t even supposed to be there. It was just a place for local artists to hang out in a pub, grab a pint, and escape the conventional critics of the day to test out their own original work.

And so that’s what we’re doing tonight; except now you guys are here.

The stereotype that Lacey just perpetuated, popularized by “Cabaret the musical” and “Cabaret the movie,” happened in the 20’s and 30’s when cabaret became overly commercialized – and grew a tad bit, uh burlesque. And then cabaret in the 50’s when the music you heard when you came in, very lounge-singer-esque, was used by one actor or actress to advance, or if they were washed up, salvage their career. But we’re gonna stay true to the original cabaret ideal and show you all sorts of original student works tonight. And because it’s a 21st Century cabaret, we’re going to contemporize it a little bit and start off with some multimedia with Kelly and Jackie. Kelly and Jackie, everybody!
A VIDEO COLLAGE ON FEMINISM
Filmed by: K. Doyle & J. Rada
Edited by: M. Cullinan

KELLY: Back in the day when M. Chaz Thompson asked us all to express ourselves, Jackie and I thought it might be interesting to uncover some truths about the feminist stereotype. We set out to interview people on the subject, expecting to hear words like "lesbian," "dyke", "feminazi", "bull-dyke", "pro-golfer", etc.

JACKIE: However, we were wrong. Unbeknownst to us, a large population at this school actually knows what feminism is, you know, in some sort or the other.

(on screen, a series of film clips is played)

(Title: What comes to mind . . . when you think of "feminism"?)

MAN 1: The first thing I think of when I hear the word feminism is a rally for women's rights; a group of women very passionate about their rights in society and voicing their opinion.

WOMAN 1: Equality.

MAN 2: Feminism? The 70's.

Because that was the whole big feminism movement, and that was the decade that feminism really came into perspective. And really a big, big . . . it was really when, I think, the term feminism kind of flushed out.

WOMAN 2: Fighting for women's rights: socially, economically, politically.

WOMAN 3: When I think of feminism, I think of people like me, who don't necessarily fit the stereotype, because I'm not butch lesbian.

MAN 3: Feminism. Feminism is a movement toward women's equality - so issues involving women and their struggle throughout time especially in the mid-20th century up to now in search for equal rights. That's feminism.

MAN 4: Empowerment.

MAN 5: Gloria Steinem; because she was a feminist. She started "MS." magazine. She was very vocal in the woman's lib movement in the late 70's and 80's. She tried to help get the "Women's Bill of Rights" passed. So I think of her when I think of feminism.

MAN 6: I just think of women . . . that's about it.
MAN 7: Feminism? Standing up for your own rights.

WOMAN 4: Feminism is the idea that women should be treated equally in society. And I think it's not an issue that's not paid attention to enough and it absolutely should be because a lot of people - whether they even think it or not - act or subscribe to ideals that aren't feminist. Like I had a big fight with my boyfriend the other day about whether or not he felt superior to me, and I won, obviously, because I'm a woman . . . but, yeah, I think it's important, it's essential, and people should really start to take stock in the fact that this is no longer a world dominated by physical strength but by intellectual capacity. And in that sense I feel that women are 100% equal and they should be treated as such.

(end video clips)

KELLY: These interviews made us wonder: why are there such shitty stereotypes associated with feminism if, when interviewed one on one, people really have a handle of the true definition? We know that it exists, otherwise we wouldn't have this character in our head of the "feminazi."

JACKIE: Is it the media that creates this stereotype? I mean, look at the music we listen to these days. When Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera perform concerts with no clothes on, they are popularly accepted and given icon status. However, when a woman writes her own music and dresses suitably for the weather while on tour, she's classified under the "lesbian pride" section of iTunes. Does the media equate a woman's freedom of expression as some sort of lesbian feminism?

KELLY: Look at the Lilith Fair. It started out as a haven for women's music and turned into dyke central. Why does the celebration of women's music ultimately turn into a celebration of lesbianism?

JACKIE: Maybe it is the media that brainwashes us, making us equate feminine strength with lesbianism. I can tell you one thing: it's not Boston College. The Boston College campus really let me down. The kids were a lot smarter than I gave them credit for. Except for maybe a few people.

(on screen, a series of film clips is played)

MAN 8: All right, feminism. Don't get me wrong, I believe that women deserve similar rights to men. However I don't like it when certain feminists get a little overboard . . . I don't like the ones who demanded to be treated as equals but also want to be treated as
princesses at the same time because, as we know, it just doesn’t work. So I say, if you’re a feminist, you got to get your priorities straight: either you want equal rights for women, or you want to be treated like a princess. Not both. All right? Make up your mind, damnit.

WOMAN 5: Shut up! I’m on my period.

WOMAN 6: The thing that bothers me with feminisms is that I don’t think the situation is all that bad as compared to how it used to be. And people make a big stink about it all the time, and you know, I don’t think we have it all that bad. I mean, granted, there are still some inequalities or whatever, but I feel like you in particular, one type of person that says, that relates everything to feminist point of view, and it just gets a little irritating sometimes, from these radical feminists.

I also have problems with feminists because they make fun of my idol, Britney Spears, and say that I can’t idolize her for being a hot, sexy bitch and flaunting her stuff . . . and that’s all I want to do. Okay? Thank you.

MAN 5: I think all feminists . . . are lesbians. (laughs)

WOMAN 7: I don’t like feminists, because I would trade my right to vote to not have to work and be able to bake brownies all day.

WOMAN 8: (obscene gesture towards the camera)

MAN 9: I’m scared, because as a male, you always wonder . . . what’s next?

(Text: “Edited by a Staunch Anti-Feminist”) (end video clips)

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MATT: Kelly Doyle and Jackie Rada, everyone!

Okay, another thing about cabaret: it was not restricted to your normal types of performance – song, dance, poetry readings, etc. Often times, even in the 1880’s, you would go into a cabaret and there would be an artist painting a mural on a wall.

So we wanted to incorporate a fine arts element into our show – courtesy of Stephanie Bissonnette. We have photography exhibit, a series of twelve photos that will be unveiled and displayed over in the
corner throughout the evening. The theme is gender issues, going along with the feminism bit we just heard; and to go along with that, here's a quote by Anne Pollina:

Gender issues for both girls and boys begin in the cradle. It has been said "Little boys are supposed to be men right away, and little girls are supposed to be little girls until they are 30." What pressure on both! Our culture imposes on young boys the need to be tough and independent long before they are ready to do so while it encourages our girls to postpone that independence far longer than they should.

And with that, the first of six, entitled "Femininity #1": If priests are meant to be compassionate, understanding, and to put their ego aside, why are we not letting women do it?

And now I give you Jim and Ian, part one.

IAN: Hey Jim, I took some notes from the last set and I thought maybe I try my song again. You know, kinda bearing that stuff in mind, and maybe it'll be better.

JIM: . . . if it’s entirely possible.

IAN: I DON’T CARE IF IT RAINS OF FREEZES LONG AS I HAVE MY PLASTIC JESUS RIDIN’ ON THE DASHBOARD OF MY CAR. COMES IN COLORS, PINK AND PLEASANT, GLOWS IN THE DARK, ‘CUZ HE’S PHOSPHORESCENT WITH MY PLASTIC JESUS I’LL GO FAR.

JIM: Ian. It’s good.

IAN: I don’t see that getting any better.

JIM: Wait and see.

IAN: Alright. This song is instrumental and it means something to me, and it probably means something entirely different for Ian. And it might mean something different for each of you . . . except for Greg O’Kane. He has no soul.

DEALDUS’ SON
Music by: J. Fagan
Lyrics by: J. Fagan

(Long introduction between two acoustic guitars, played by JIM and IAN.)

(. . . eventually, Jim sings.)
JIM:  HEAT, TURNS LEAVES BROWN  
THEY FALL AS SNOW;  
AND THE ICE BELOW  
MAKES FOR UNEASY FOOTING;  
AND TRY AS I MIGHT,  
WHEN I FALL INTO YOUR EYES,  
I SEE THE SKY  
AND I THINK IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT,  
I'LL FLY TO THE CENTER OF THE SUN.  
I WILL FLY, HIGHER AND HIGHER,  
TO THE CENTER OF THE SUN.  

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A MONOLOGUE ON VIRGINS
Written by: S. Marquis

STEPH:  I love virgins. Especially women. I love them  
because . . . because I love how they smell. Like  
fear. I love how they taste like warm vanilla  
pudding. I love the slight waver in their voice and  
the nervousness in their laughter. In this day and  
age it’s terribly difficult to be a virgin. Some  
forms of radical feminism encourage sexual freedom  
for women in order to break out of a patriarchal  
society’s fixation with women’s purity and virginity.  
So if you do participate in this sexual abandon, are  
you ever actually respected for having sex with a  
guy, all his friends, and the entire football team?  
And if you don’t want to be a whore or feel  
oppressed, but still want to express some feminine  
power, well, then you’re a lesbian. The angry  
virgins are considered lesbians by the general  
public, which is of course, only partially true.  

So then there are some of us who just get angry when  
the sexual freedom that promised us respect only  
brings us scorn. Furious at the system, we try to  
beat it at its own game; we find scapegoats. So let  
me modify my first statement. I don’t love all  
virgins. Not the angry ones. I respect those  
people, because I think they figured something out I  
never did. The scared virgin is the one I love. The  
one that doesn’t really know why she’s a virgin . . .  
she’s just too afraid not to be. The options placed  
before her are simply too overwhelming. And I know,  
I know, I should nurture her and make her feel safe  
in this terrifying world, but I don’t.  

I like to sidle up to her and ever so gently caress  
the inside of her arm or breath lightly on the side  
of her neck to watch her smooth skin shiver at the  
prospect of another person molesting her, seducing  
her, taking her. I love the look of tight-lipped  
panic when you press her against a wall, watching her
chest rise and fall as she feels my hot breath in her ear. Most of all, I love when she finally gasps “yes,” and I’ve won. I wish everyone I met were a virgin, and they were terrified of what I exemplify.

I don’t even remember losing my virginity. I was 13. We were both cheating on someone else, and he wanted nothing to do with me afterwards. I don’t even remember what it felt like. I only remember feeling like a fool. I’m sure he remembers a rush similar to what I strive for now. I thought sex was power. It took me awhile to realize that only taking sex is power, not giving it.

So maybe, just maybe, if I keep stealing innocence, some of mine will come back to me. I will someday regain all that I’ve lost.

- - -

MATT: Ladies and Gentlemen, the voluptuous Stephanie Marquis!

You’re all sitting around like bumps on a log. I’m warning you, don’t make me do something about it.

Continuing on with our lovely art exhibit, entitled “Femininity #2,” or for you German people at home, “nummer zwei,” . . .

Where’d that come from? I don’t even know.

Wow. I need to dab myself with something dry. Alright, Femininity # 2: . . . Wow.

If women . . .

Shut up, I’m working.

If women can run a company and a household, what’s stopping this country from electing a woman president?

Yeah, talking briefly about the difficulty with this show, is finding original things. I don’t know it any of you have found yourself in a similar situation, but over the past couple of months in assembling this show, we had a difficult time finding anything really original.

Pay attention. This is a reoccurring theme.

Because everything nowadays, especially culturally, is a copy of something or inspired by something else or has the same chord progression as another song.
You recall all those songs you like that sound identical. If you read the architectural reviews in the New York Times, like I do . . . right. Um, architecturally we read that this person has blended the famous this of this guy and the spires of that guy and made his own new thing. It’s not his own new thing. He stole from two other people and just put it together. However innovative, nothing really is original anymore.

So when we were confronted with the idea of an original dance. Um, we think we found one. It is put to my favorite type of music that one can dance to, courtesy of the European continent: Techno music. And through this dance we hope we’ll be able to flush out some animosity among the various schools here at Boston College. I’m going to introduce Greg O’Kane, who will preside over the dance. Ladies and Gentlemen, representing the Lynch School of Education, Mr. Greg O’Kane!

GREG: Good evening, everyone. We’re in for a special treat tonight as we are showcasing one of Boston College’s first intramural “slap fights.”

But for you to understand what’s going on, we have a few basic rules for a one on one slap fight:

- The slap fight may commence anywhere within the boundaries provided, which is anywhere on the stage we have set up here, and only when the official says “SLAPFIGHT.”
- Points are scored by slapping the other player in the face.
- In a single engagement, scoring slaps must come from alternating hands.
- For a point to count, the slapper must say “point” upon slapping. If the slapped player contests, the official may be brought in to settle the discrepancy. Then, and only then, is it acceptable for the official to intervene. If the players are engaged on the ground, the official must allow them to “slap it out.”
- The first player to reach 10 points is declared the winner.
- Games need not be won by two points, but they may.
- And hiding is frowned upon.

Now let’s introduce our players!

On my left, the Carroll School of Management, and on my right, the College of Arts and Sciences and his tag-team partner, the Woods College of Advancing Studies . . .

BRYCE: (off stage) Better late than never!
GREG: Best of luck. Fight music ready? Are you ready?

JIM: Stop holding me back, O’Kane.

GREG: SLAPFIGHT!

**AN ORIGINAL DANCE (a.k.a. A SLAPFIGHT)**

Concept by: J. Fagan & I. Stoker-Long  
Music by: J. Rada  

(A dramatic fight ensues over a techno groove; during the fight several things happen: 1. The Connell School of Nursing walks between the audience and the fight holding a sign indicating which round it is, 2. The Woods College of Advancing Studies tags in several times for the College of Arts and Sciences, 3. and ultimately distracts the Lynch School of Education from seeing the College of Arts and Sciences cheat - by means of a book, which is used on the Carroll School of Management’s back, ending the fight.)

GREG: I declare A&S the winner of the first-ever slapfight!

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I have a treat for you today... my latest work: “Femininity #3.” Why can’t women fix the pipes in the kitchen without being seen as a lesbian or playboy centerfold?

As you can see, I don’t have anything really original to say in-between acts, because everything I have is prepared. For one, I like to copy things. If you recognize something that I say up here on stage that I stole, either from a comedian, or a movie, or a song, call me out on it... and see if I care. K?

That being said, it’s now high time for a state change. And don’t say I didn’t warn you. You all are looking painfully droopy, so you all now have to move to a different seat. Can I have some musical chair music, please? Thanks. Socialize! Mingle! That’s it... etc.

(Brief reprise of SLAPFIGHT DANCE music.)

(*Note* -- If someone in the audience doesn’t move or participate, single them out afterward.)

There. Don’t make me do it again. Next up, a skit featuring the lovely Lacey Upton.
LACEY: And now for something completely different.

A SKIT ON PICK-UP LINES
Written by: L. Upton (& J. Donne)

LACEY: My freshman year at college, I was lucky enough to be offered a research assistant position for the summer for a professor studying John Donne. John Donne, I thought, English poet of the early 17th century? The intellect, the wit, the complexity! Little did I know that in studying John Donne I would the prototype for every BC man I have ever met. You see, we were studying the love poetry of John Donne - passionate, sensual, erotic, and always with a touch of the manipulative. And there's something really timeless about that. Pretty soon, I was hearing John Donne everywhere, in every pick-up line and every morning after conversation.

But here, let me show you.

"Break of Day" (projected on screen)
'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?
O wilt thou therefore rise from me?
Why should we rise? because 'tis light?
Did we lie down, because 'twas night?
Love which in spite of darkness brought us hither,
Should in despite of light keep us together.

(from a different part of the stage)

STEPH: Where are you going?

GREG: Uh, it’s morning.

STEPH: You didn’t seem to care much about the time last night. . .

GREG: Well, that was last night.

STEPH: Come on, stay, relax for a while . . .

GREG: Sorry honey, I got work to do.

STEPH: God, it’s always work with you! I see where your priorities are.

GREG: It’s day! I have to get going.

LACEY: "The Ecstasy" (projected on screen)
To' our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.
GREG: So . . . is tonight the night?

STEPH: Oh, Greg! You said we were going to take it slow.

GREG: I know what we agreed, but darling . . . I really love you. What are we waiting for?

STEPH: Oh, I just don’t know about this . . .

GREG: They’re just bodies! It isn’t going to change how I feel about you. This is how our bodies can express what is in our souls.

LACEY: “Woman’s Constancy” (projected on screen)

Now thou hast loved me one whole day,
Tomorrow when thou leav'est, what wilt thou say?
Wilt thou then antedate some new made vow?
Or say that now
We are not just those persons, which we were?
Or, that oaths made in reverential fear
Of Love, and his wrath, any may forswear?
Or, as true deaths, true marriages untie,
So lovers' contracts, images of those,
Bind but till sleep, death's image, them unloose?
Or, your own end to justify,
For having purposed change, and falsehood, you
Can have no way but falsehood to be true?
Vain lunatic, against these 'scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
Which I abstain to do,
For by tomorrow, I may think so too.

GREG: Look. Tonight has been great, but we need to talk.

STEPH: Oh, here it comes. Now that you’ve gotten what you wanted out of me, what excuses are you going to come up with? Say that we simply aren’t the same people as we were when we met? Or that anyone can break promises made in the heat of passion? Or maybe that we drifted apart while we were sleeping? How about that you’ve always said you were a bad boy and that you’d never settle down? Look, you asshole commitment-phobe, I could argue and win with all of these bullshit excuses, but I won’t . . . for by tomorrow I might think so too.

LACEY: “The Good-Morrow” (projected on screen)

GREG: Dude, you are so awesome.

STEPH: Awe. (laughs)

GREG: Seriously! What did I do before I met you? All those parties, girls . . . they were just fucking around. I used to brag that I could walk into a bar and get any hottie I saw. But you blow all of that
away. If I ever saw, wanted, and of course, got some girl, ’twas but a dream of thee.

But a dream of thee?

(looks at screen)

Oh. Right.

’Twas but a dream of thee.

STEPH: Oh, Greg.

LACEY: I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers’ den?
’Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, ’twas but a dream of thee.

And so, from the 21st century to the 17th, thank you, John Donne, for showing us that men always have been “like that”. But there is reason to hope! Later in his life, Donne became an Anglican minister and renowned preacher, and gave up love songs in order to pen some of his most famous works, the Holy Sonnets. I’m not so sure that we can expect this from our friend Greg, but nevertheless, Donne’s insight into the games that men and women play is almost unparalleled and certainly timeless. After all, ask not for whom the pick-up line is told; it’s told for you.

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MATT: Thank you, Lacey. I expect great things from Greg.

How are things going? Good? No? Too bad. We’re on time and that makes me happy.

We’re going to end the first half of the show with Jarret Izzo, singing an original song in a most unoriginal style. Ladies and Gentlemen, Jarret Izzo giving us his best “Billy Joel.”

RUST BELT BLUES
Music and Lyrics by: J. Izzo

JARRET: MOVIN FROM HOME WAS A HARD BITE TO TAKE,
THE PRESSURE ON TO POP THE CORK:
FRIENDS START TO RUN AND THE CROWDS ALL JEER,
WHEN YOU’RE FROM WESTERN NEW YORK.
"WHY DIDN’T I MOVE AWAY SOONER?"
ASKS EVERY EX-PAT OF THEMSELVES.
IF I WENT TO COLLEGE IN CLEVELAND OR ERIE,
MY LIFE WOULD SURELY BE HELL.

I FEEL FOR MY RUST BELT NEIGHBORS.
THE STEEL AND THE RAILROADS HAVE CHOKED.
SO WHILE BOSTON COURTS US AND L.A. SEDUCES,
OUR CITIES BACK HOME HAVE GONE BROKE.

SO STAND TALL MY FELLOW GREAT LAKERS,
YE HEARTY OF THE COUNTRY NORTH.
THE STIFF ERIE BREEZES RUDDY OUR CHEEKS,
AND POINT TO A LIFE WITHOUT MIRTH.

MOVIN’ FROM HOME WAS A TRIAL BY FIRE,
THOSE DOWNSTATERS WILL COMMENT QUICK:
"MY STATE REP’S BETTER THAN YOUR STATE REP,
HE BRINGS HOME MORE PORK FOR HIS DISTRICT!"

SO STAND TALL MY FELLOW GREAT LAKERS,
YE HEARTY OF THE COUNTRY NORTH.
THE STIFF ERIE BREEZES RUDDY OUR CHEEKS,
WHILE THE BILLS GET A PLAYOFF BIRTH.

Rust Belt Role-Call!
Erie! Detroit! Toledo! Buffalo! Euclid!
Rochester! Love Canal!!!

IT’S GREAT TO BE AN UPSTATER,
STANDING TALL WITH THE WIND IN OUR FACE.
WHEN THE REST OF THE NATION COMES CALLING,
IT’S ONLY LONG DISTANCE THEY WASTE.

SO STAND TALL MY FELLOW GREAT LAKERS,
YE HEARTY OF THE COUNTRY NORTH.
THE STIFF ERIE BREEZES RUDDY OUR CHEEKS,
AND ALL HAVE NEGATIVE NET WORTH.

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MATT: Jarret Izzo, Ladies and Gentlemen. And of course T.J. Gordon on drums and Mark Desrosiers on bass.

We’re gonna plow right on into the second half of our program this evening with some multimedia acts in our feeble-minded attempt to modernize the genre that is cabaret. And to open the second set, a song for piano by the lovely Jackie Rada.
AN "OVERLY DRAMATIC, ROCK-INSPIRED, EASY LISTENING BALLAD, INSPIRED BY THE LIKINGS OF TORI AMOS AND DAVID LANZ, WHOSE COMPOSITIONS ARE BUILT ON REPETITIVE, ARPEGGIATED TRIPLITS, OUTLINING SIMPLE CHORD PATTERNS THAT ANY PIANO PLAYER WITH 15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WOULD LAUGH AT FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF SIMPLICITY; BUT A RENOWNED MUSICIAN LIKE TORI AMOS CAN RECORD THESE REPETITIVE TRIPLITS, ADD SOME WHALING LYRICS OVER THE TRACK, PLACE IT ON HER LATEST CD, AND OVERCHARGE AN IGNORANT FAN LIKE MYSELF FOR HER SUPPOSED BRILLIANCE; THEN THE MUSICALLY EDUCATED YET IGNORANT FAN LIKE MYSELF WILL LISTEN HER MUSIC, DISCOVER IT TO BE INSPRATIONAL OF SORT WHILST REJECTING THE MUSIC KNOWLEDGE IN HIS OR HER BRAIN THAT WANTS TO DESPISE THIS POP SONG, THEN PAY $85 FOR A FRONT ROW TICKET TO TORI’S NEXT SHOW, TO WITNESS THE DISPLAY OF MINDLESS ARPEGGIATION; AND THEN THE BRILLIANCE OF TORI AMOS’ MUSIC COMES THROUGH THE CREATIVE ART FORM OF HUMPING A PIANO BENCH, WHICH DISTRACTS THE AUDIENCE FROM HER NOT SO BRILLIANT MUSIC, WHICH CONFUSES THE MUSICALLY EDUCATED FAN EVEN MORE SO – BUT THE GIMMICK WORKS, SO THE IGNORANT FAN PROVES TO BE NOT SO IGNORANT AS HE OR SHE GOES HOME, COMPLETELY COPIES THE STYLE OF TORI AMOS, ADDS A LITTLE BIT OF SPICE FROM DAVID LANZ, CALLS IT HIS OR HER OWN, AND MAKES A FORTUNE WHILST ENTERTAINING OTHER MUSICALLY EDUCATED YET IGNORANT FANS WHO WANT TO REJECT THEIR MUSIC KNOWLEDGE FOR THE MERE PURPOSE OF ENJOYMENT” SONG
Music by: J. Rada

(Song title projected on screen)

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A SKIT ON CORPORATE AMERICA
Written by: K. Doyle & M. Thompson

(skit projected in its entirety on screen in an instant messenger program)

(CEO Nation signs on)

THE CULLI: CEO Nation!

CEONATION: Yeah?

THE CULLI: I can’t believe it’s really you! I have so many questions to ask you.

CEONATION: Oh, yeah?

THE CULLI: You’re my role model.
CEO Nation: Wow. That’s . . . . that’s really great, kid.

The Culli: I have so many questions, I don’t know where to begin.

CEO Nation: Yes?

The Culli: CEO Nation, is it wise to invest in a diverse stock portfolio?

CEO Nation: Yes.

The Culli: Nation, . . . can I call you Nation?

CEO Nation: No, you cannot.

The Culli: Can I really claim part of my 401K plan deposits on my tax returns?

CEO Nation: Yes. All if you pay your accountant enough.

The Culli: CEO Nation, who did you vote for in the last election?

CEO Nation: Um, do you even have to ask?

The Culli: Well, can I have it for the record?

CEO Nation: No.

The Culli: (starts to type) Not even for a . . .

CEO Nation: No.

The Culli: (erases) “Not even for a . . .”

Well who was your favorite President of all time?

CEO Nation: Reagan

The Culli: Really?

CEO Nation: Yes.

The Culli: See, I would have thought Lincoln, since he gave you the same rights as humans and such.

CEO Nation: Yes, but he also took away our large stockpile slave laborers.

The Culli: Ah.

CEO Nation: Oh, how I miss those days.

The Culli: Well, what do you do with all those gianormous tax breaks you get from the current republican administration?
CEONATION: I buy my own happiness in the form of gorgeous women like Stephanie Marquis and (random woman in the audience).

THE CULLI: Nation, I’d ask you to stop flaunting in front of the have-nots . . . but I don’t want you to cease to exist, simply by contradicting one of your dogmas.

CEONATION: It’s basically a lose/lose situation for you then, isn’t it?

THE CULLI: I suppose so.


(pause)

back.

THE CULLI: CEO Nation, why do good things happen to bad people?

CEONATION: Because only the good die young. That means that bad people stay around longer, so their chances for good things happening to them are greater than good people’s chances of good thing’s happening to them.

THE CULLI: So why do bad things happen to good people then, like dying young?

CEONATION: Because good people don’t make enough money to pay off Jesus.

THE CULLI: . . . oh.

CEONATION: It’s true.

THE CULLI: What’s your favorite movie?

CEONATION: Wag the Dog.

THE CULLI: Seriously?

CEONATION: Yes.

THE CULLI: In light of recent events, who do you hate more: anti-trust lawyers or unionized laborers?

CEONATION: I hate them both equally. And not-for-profit workers.

Damn hippies.

THE CULLI: CEO Nation, would you consider yourself an equal opportunity exploiter, or do you favor exploiting certain races, genders, creeds, and countries through sleeper organizations like the WTO?
CEONATION: CEO Nation just passed out in her cubicle.

THE CULLI: LOL

CEONATION: Um. Pass. Your questions are boring.

THE CULLI: CEO Nation, do you condone the use of prophylactics as a means for contraception?

CEONATION: That's how you spell "prophylactics?"

I never knew.

THE CULLI: I have no idea.

CEO Nation, how does one blatantly dodge questions?

CEONATION: That's how you spell "dodge?"

THE CULLI: Point taken.

Wow, you sure are goo, CEO.

good*

But I guess you could be goo, too.

CEONATION: Listen kid, a word of advice. Stop spending your time chatting away on your labtop and get out and make something of yourself before you end up in a box under a bridge bugging me with more incessant questions, sans teeth.

You need to be aware that it is YOU and not me who is responsible for your well-being. I care about one thing and one thing only: my shareholders. I perform for them, and only them. Expect in those damn social democracies of Europe . . . where I have to be "accountable" to the community and "responsible" for the disadvantaged.

But in America, where we are equal in the eyes of the law . . . you are on your own. And I have Washington on my side . . . who do you have?

THE CULLI: No one.

We have no one.

(insert:) 😊
CEO Nation, what’s the meaning of life, economically speaking?

CEO NATION: Make as much money as you can, retire early and get many transportational vehicles such as leer jets, hummers, and submarines that destroy the environment with their greedy use of natural resources.

THE CULLI: Wow.

Golly, I hope I can make ample use of such volatile chemicals when I get out of college.

CEO NATION: You, too, my friend, have the power, ability, and promise to destroy mother earth.

Good hustle. See ya out there.

(CEO Nation signs off)

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MATT: Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you stage manager extraordinaire and my good friend, Katie Mihalko!

With the second half of our show, comes the second half of our exhibit. A fair balance, I feel: "Masculinity #1." Why do men always have to shell out money for flowers? Why can’t girls give us flowers to decorate our bedrooms?

And with that, here’s Jim and Ian, part two.

IAN: Jim, it’s great to be on the same stage with you again.

JIM: How’s you nose buddy?

IAN: You should just consider yourself lucky.

JIM: I really got you there with that book.

IAN: What was that book called?

JIM: “Care for Frail Elders.”

IAN: Well, I think that about sums it up.

JIM: This song is a song about apathy .

Thank you. That was appropriate, as most of you were apathetic about that.
WHAT'S THE POINT
Music by: J. Fagan
Lyrics by: J. Fagan

JIM:

EVERY MORNING WHEN I WAKE UP,
DRAG MY FAT ASS OUT OF BED,
ITS THE RITUAL I TAKE UP.
PAY HOMAGE TO THE SHOWER HEAD.
TRY TO MAKE MYSELF LOOK SEXY,
CAUSE THAT'S THE WAY I'M TOLD TO BE.
NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN,
NEVER KNOW WHO YOU MIGHT SEE—MORE IMPORTANTLY, SO
WHATS THE POINT?

WHATS THE POINT WHO CARES?
WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT A SHOT?
WHAT'S THE ANSWER TO THIS LIFE?
DRINKIN BEER AND SMOKIN POT.
    OR NOT.
WHAT IS YOUR FLAVOR?
DO ME THIS FAVOR:

AND THE DAILY WAR WAGES ON,
WITH EVERY DREARY STEP I TAKE,
AND THE STATUS QUO RAGES ON,
KILLING PASSION IN ITS WAKE — ITS A BIG MISTAKE —
SO WHATS THE POINT?

WHATS THE POINT, WHO CARES?
WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT A SHOT?
WHAT'S THE ANSWER TO THIS LIFE?
WHY DON'T YOU SHOW US WHAT YOU GOT:
WHAT IS YOUR FLAVOR?
DO ME THIS FAVOR:

WHATS THE POINT OF LIFE?
KICK YOU IN THE CROTCH, SPIT ON YOUR NECK,
WHERE THE FLOWERS GROW.
IS IT HEAVEN, IS IT HELL, IS IT PURGATORIAL?
NO ONE KNOWS.
SO WHATS THE POINT?
WHATS THE POINT?
WHATS THE POINT?

---

MATT: Jim Fagan and Ian Stoker-Long, everyone!

Anyone else notice they’re not wearing shoes?

Moving on, we’re going to have a look at a showcase now. I’m not the only senior doing an honors thesis with a performance element. So I asked my good friend Bryce Pinkham, who’s doing his show on April
Fool’s Day, no joke, and the day after in the Bonn Studio . . .

Ha, I worked really hard on that last bit, but it’s his creation, not mine – It’s not original.

. . . um, this is going up in the Bonn Studio in Robsham Theater on that Friday and Saturday, April 1st and 2nd, and he took time out to show you a little excerpt from his show. So enjoy. Bryce Pinkham!

SHOWCASE: LOSTIN COLLEGE
Staged by: B. Pinkham

(A Silent Physical Comedy Routine: “The Newton Bus”)

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MATT: Bryce Pinkham, everybody!

Eh, Jarret . . . ?

JARRET: Yeah, what’s up?

MATT: Can I get some background music, something fun, something original, while I clean up the mess . . .

JARRET: I don’t know man, you’ve been asking for quite a lot.

MATT: . . . what “Mime Entertainment” has left behind? Thank you.

AN ORIGINAL SONG?
Music by: J. Izzo

(halfway through the number, interrupting)

MATT: Jarret, I said an original song.

JARRET: It is original.

MATT: Come clean, man.

JARRET: Alright, the piece did have roots in a genre I hold very close to my heart.

(song finishes, accenting the unoriginal theme that was stolen for purposes of this number.)

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MATT: Jarret Izzo, T.J. Gordon and Mark Desrosers!

How we doing? I’m not convinced.

"Masculinity #2." Maybe men like fruity tasting drinks. Why are we less men if we drink cosmopolitans or strawberry margaritas with an umbrella in it?

Alright Ladies and Gentlemen, up next on the row is a little skit entertainment, thanks in part to Kelly Doyle and Greg O’Kane.

A SKIT ON CONFIDENCE
Written by: K. Doyle & G. O’Kane

GREG:

So lately I’ve been having serious trouble in my Sociology class: It sucks! I picked the class as a joke, you know, it’s in a huge lecture hall so I could willingly fall through the cracks, copy some notes, and bam: three easy credits make for a breezy second semester. But no, we need to read two thousand pages a week and write “spending diaries” on “how I feel about my gender and ethnicity affecting my consumer patterns” and “vice versa.” Insightful observance or complete, academic bullshit? You be the judge.

Anyway I’m falling behind by about a mile and my friends keep chirping the same old line, “Go see the TA! "Maybe you should talk to your Teaching Assistant.” “This is why we have professor wannabes.” And my favorite, “Hey man, just hit on your TA. It’ll work.” Yeah. Just like that? This pseudo-solution yields a new problem: my TA is way too cute to be in such a craptastic job, but if I don’t talk to her about my take-home exam before next Tuesday, it’s all over and I’m here for an extra semester. It’s time to suck it up and face the beautiful music.

Hey, um, are you my TA? I mean, I know you are, but, you might not know that I’m yours.

KELLY:

You’re . . . my TA?

GREG:

Oh no, no! I’m your student. Well, we’re in the same class, you don’t teach it, but...

KELLY:

Right, are you here to see me during my office hours?

GREG:

Yes, that’s the one. It’s my take-home exam; some of the essays are just killing me. And the short answer questions!
KELLY: They are kinda difficult, but I think you may need to relax a little, find yourself a distraction before you can get to work on the test.

GREG: I swear, I feel distracted in class every day.

KELLY: Don’t tell anyone, but my eyes tend to wander too, some of these lectures are just... crap!

GREG: Yes!

KELLY: At least it all fits into the bigger picture of my Sociology Thesis.

GREG: (mouths: shit)

KELLY: Any idea what’s holding you back in class?

GREG: I just need to calm down, chill out or something. I thought I had it all under control at the beginning. I was totally on top of my game, right? Now everything’s coming back to bite me.

KELLY: It’s okay, I was a sophomore once, too.

GREG: I’m a freshman.

KELLY: Oh . . . really? I wouldn’t have guessed it.

GREG: Believe me, no one lies and says that.

KELLY: Point taken. You do seem older for some reason.

GREG: I try too hard.

KELLY: (laughs) . . . you’re funny.

GREG: I, thanks.

KELLY: You’re welcome.

GREG: I’m guessing you’re a graduate student?

KELLY: Too high, try again.

GREG: Senior?

KELLY: That’s more like it. Please, don’t place me out of my tax bracket, after 21 I don’t want to look mature.

GREG: I’m not sure why I thought that anyway.

KELLY: Well hey, it’s not about me, we need to discuss your exam.

GREG: My what?
KELLY: Your take-home exam, having some trouble... I thought that was why you came in here to see me.

GREG: Yes, to see you, right... my exam, I forgot it in my room. My roommate, he entered it in our hall's paper airplane contest.

KELLY: Right. Well, why don't you give me a call when you're ready to come back and we'll set up a meeting over coffee or something.

GREG: (pulls out cell phone) That sounds great to me...

KELLY: You have my number... it's on the syllabus.

GREG: So it is! Of course, ha. Go home, get the paper, drop a line. Got it.

KELLY: Good. Call soon, we have to get you back on track.

GREG: Everything's off to a good start: we came in second last week in the Upper Campus Regional Paper Airplane Competition.

KELLY: (laughs) Glad to hear it. Remember what we talked about!

GREG: You got it.

What was that encouraging quote that Doc Brown kept telling Marty McFly in Back to the Future? "If you put your mind to it, you can SCORE A DATE WITH YOUR TA!" Oh yes, sir. I think that was it. Did you see, she was so into me, why did I even bother feeling nervous? I'm such an idiot. We knew that already, that's why I'm in trouble to begin with. The next step... unfolding my exam booklet, setting up that hot date, and then it's time to turn on the charm machine.

GOT IT BAD, GOT IT BAD, GOT IT BAD
I'M HOT FOR TEACHER

Hello, mind if I interrupt your anthropology periodical study time?

KELLY: It's just People magazine.

GREG: Was that on our reading list?

KELLY: No, but I am on their mailing list.

GREG: Of course, you subscriber you.

KELLY: ... um, what are you reading these days?

KELLY: Hobbes, the philosopher?

GREG: No, the tiger.

KELLY: Oh.

GREG: I often find it easier when I can relate to what I’m reading.

KELLY: So you think you’re a tiger? Interesting.

GREG: Oh wait, don’t psychoanalyze me on that alone.

KELLY: Don’t worry about it, wrong department anyway. But I can tell you’re still uneasy about something.

GREG: Me, uneasy? No way, can’t be. I’m... I’ve still got my cool, you see.

KELLY: Uh huh.

GREG: You can’t fool me into telling you anything. You can’t twist my arm!

KELLY: Look, just tell me what’s on your mind.

GREG: There are some things better left unsaid.

KELLY: And there are some subjects better left untouched.

GREG: But . . . but . . . you were so nice to me, I thought we had some chemistry.

KELLY: Again, wrong department. You’ve got two problems here as far as I’m concerned: First, you need to pass this class. And second, you won’t be finding “happily ever after” in Edmonds.

GREG: When you asked me out for coffee, I thought you meant . . .

KELLY: Listen, you can confide in me all you like, but you can’t tell me everything.

GREG: That doesn’t even make sense. You just contradicted yourself.

KELLY: And you were just about to ask out your 21-year-old T.A. Do you see what I’m saying here?

GREG: I think I’m starting to understand the application of sociology to real life.
KELLY: And this is perfect material for my senior thesis!

GREG: Oh, sure, exploit my pain.

KELLY: Okay.

GREG: Damnit!

KELLY: See you in class tomorrow?

GREG: Shut up.

- - -

MATT: Kelly Doyle and Greg O’Kane!

Presenting the last of six photographs by Stephanie Bissonnette, “Masculinity #3.” Making hands and feet presentable is on the same level as shaving or wearing cologne, so why are men questioned because of it?

Okay, kids. We’re approaching the end. But we’re not over just yet.

I can’t hold her back any longer. I hope you’re ready, I know I am, for the one, the only Lacey Upton!

LIKE IT OR NOT

Music by: J. Rada
Lyrics by: L. Upton

LACEY: WHEN I WAS YOUNG I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD BE A GREAT PERFORMER
WELL NOW THAT’S DONE YOU’VE RATHER GOT TO TAKE WHAT LIFE DOES FOR YA
IT ISN’T ALWAYS EASY BUT WE DO OUR BEST AND SAY TO HELL WITH ALL THE REST!

SO COME ON IN, SIT YOURSELF DOWN, HAVE A DRINK AND RELAX!
 THESE MAY BE PLATITUDES, BUT I KNOW WHEN NOT TO FACE FACTS LIKE IT OR NOT WE’RE ALL TOGETHER IN THE END . . . I MIGHT AS WELL CALL YOU A FRIEND!

OH SOMETIMES I FEEL I’VE LOST MY WAY AND MY GLASS OF GIN DON’T HELP ME LIKE IT USED TO MY MOMMA, SHE TAUGHT ME HOW TO PRAY, BUT I’LL CONFESS I DIDN’T ALWAYS LISTEN. THAT’S WHEN I REMEMBER MY YOUNG DREAM AND AS THE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY, I BEAM!
SO COME ON IN, SIT YOURSELF DOWN,
HAVE A DRINK AND RELAX!
THESE MAY BE PLATITUDES, BUT I KNOW
WHEN NOT TO FACE FACTS
LIKE IT OR NOT WE’RE ALL TOGETHER IN THE END . . .
I MIGHT AS WELL CALL YOU A FRIEND!

"I might as well call you a friend."

Now I realize that it probably sounds pretty cliché,
but that’s really all it comes down to, everybody.
Just seeing the humanity in the guy standing next to
you.

Except maybe you . . . I’m not sure I like you.

But honestly, what does it matter if you’re black,
white, magenta, whatever. I mean, one state, two
state, red state, blue state! We’re all pretty much
the same underneath it all, aren’t we? So grab your
soda – sorry we don’t have anything a little harder
for you

I think this guy knows what I’m talking about
– and just try to enjoy what life throws at you!

We’re gonna do it one last time, and this time I need
all of you to sing as loudly as you can! None of
that reserved Honors Library bullshit in here, it’s
time to cut loose!

SO COME ON IN, SIT YOURSELF DOWN,
HAVE A DRINK AND RELAX!
THESE MAY BE PLATITUDES, BUT I KNOW
WHEN NOT TO FACE FACTS
LIKE IT OR NOT WE’RE ALL TOGETHER IN THE END . . .
I MIGHT AS WELL CALL YOU A FRIEND!

- - -

MATT: Ladies and Gentlemen, the incomparable Lacey Upton!

Wow. Okay. So we’re nearing the end of the program,
and although my job up here is solely to provide
transition between acts, one very important medium
that cabaret embraced from the get go has yet to
appear on the stage, and that is taking published
poetry and putting it to song. So, however
unorthodox to have me do it, I wrote it, so it’s
justified.

Harvey Shapiro, in an anthology of WWII poems, wrote
about man’s ability, indeed his compulsion, to turn
terror into art. He said these poems were neither
pious nor patriotic; "American Poets," he said, "viewed themselves as individuals caught in a giant machine that was so complex and far-flung the mind could not encompass it. They were astonished at the way their lives were altered." As I read through this anthology, I was continually taken aback at how the thoughts, the emotions of these poets — some soldiers, some civilians — were just as relevant and poignant today. I was particularly struck by a poem by Conrad Aiken, a fifty-something civilian, called Three Star Final.

I should have been ready for the message behind this piece. Mr. Shapiro warned that I wouldn’t find these poems antique. "Never since WWII, not even in the Vietnam period, have so many individual American lives been affected by our national role." And it is because of this simple, unfortunate reality, quite aside from the beauty of the poem, that this poem of a war fought sixty years ago continues to speak to the present moment.

THREE STAR FINAL
Music by: M. Thompson
Lyrics by: C. Aiken & M. Thompson

WAIT HERE, AND I’LL BE BACK, THOUGH THE HOURS DIVIDE, AND THE CITY STREETS, PERPLEXED, PERVERSE, DELAY MY HURRYING FOOTSTEPS, AND THE CLOCKS DERIDE WITH GRINNING FACES FROM THE LONG WALL OF DAY:

WAIT HERE, BENEATH YOUR NARROW SCRIP OF SKY, READING THE HEADLINES, WHILE THE SNOWFLAKES TOUCH ON SCARCE-DRIED INK THE NEWS THAT THOUSANDS DIE, DIE, AND NOT REMEMBERED OVERMUCH:

HOW CAN WE PATCH OUR WORLD UP, NOW IT’S BROKEN? YOU, WITH YOUR GUILTY HEART, WAIT HERE AND THINK, WHILE I STRIVE BACK THOUGH THE LIES AND TRUTHS UNSPOKEN.

IN THE WEST, SEE THE SNOW-SET SUN SINK.

YES, THE UNNUMBERED DEAD, WHO NONE ESTEEMED, OUR OTHER SELVES TO LATE OR LITTLE LOVED;
NOW IN THE DUST, PROUD EYES UNKNOWN, UNDREAMED THOSE WHO BEGGED PITY WHILE WE STOOD UNMOVED.

HOW CAN WE PATCH OUR WORLD UP, NOW IT’S BROKEN? YOU, WITH YOUR GUILTY HEART, WAIT HERE AND THINK, WHILE I STRIVE BACK THOUGH THE LIES AND TRUTHS UNSPOKEN.

IN THE WEST, SEE THE SNOW-SET SUN SINK.

YOU, IN THIS DEAD-END STREET, WHICH NOW WE LEAVE FOR A MORE EXPANSIVE, MORE EXPENSIVE VIEW;
SNOW FALLING ON A DISASTROUS CHRISTMAS EVE,
AND NEON DEATH SCROLLS ON DOWN THE AVENUE.

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MATT: Well, that’s about it for us. How do you think we did, Izzo?

JARRET: Hey man, that last one always gets me.

MATT: Eh, I try. But what do you think, Jarret?

JARRET: Well man, you know what I think?

MATT: What?

THE GRAND FAREWELL

Music by: J. Izzo
Lyrics by: J. Izzo & M. Thompson

JARRET and IT’S BEEN A TOUGH COUPLE OF YEARS
MATT: A ROTTEN AGE TO FIND OURSELVES
BUT WHY SHED ALL THOSE TEARS?
YOU’RE HERE!

ALL: YOU’RE HERE!

JARRET and WITH US!
MATT:

ALL: WITH US!
YOU’RE HOME!

I HAD MY ESCAPE
WE ALL HAD AN ESCAPE
STAND UP, STRETCH AND SET THIS PLACE A GLOW
THE DOORS ARE OPEN WIDE,
BRAVE THE WORLD OUTSIDE,
SPREAD THE LAUGHTER
SHRUG DISASTER
FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

MATT: . . . Get lost already!

ALL: GOOD NIGHT!!!
Original Score for “Three Star Final”
Original Score for “Three Star Final” (Continued)
Original Score for “Three Star Final” (Continued)
Original Score for “Three Star Final” (Continued)
PHASE III

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WORKSHOP SHOW

“The community’s culture influences its social structure, and vice versa; indeed, the two are intertwined and have been separated only for purposes of analysis. To understand the community, the sociologist must understand both. … We need to do more, however, than simply define culture and indicate how to distinguish it analytically from social structure. We need a way to conceptualize how culture and the social world come together or, in other words, how people in social contexts create meaning. To draw on both the humanities and social science views for our analysis of culture and to examine culture phenomena and their relation to social life.”

Wendy Griswold proposes a very simple an appropriate way to conceptualize cultural assessment through the use of a ‘cultural diamond.’ Though I do not dare pretend that the analysis of my workshop show will even attempt to be that thorough (as that would involve many more observations and experiments not available to me at this time), Griswold’s approach – establishing links between all aspects of a cultural event – provides a good starting point for this project’s assessment. In other words, simply relating my workshop cabaret to society at large – or even the Boston College community at large – will not produce an adequate assessment. I’ll need to consider other factors; similar cultural events, the role and contexts of such events, my role as creator, etc.

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63 (Griswold, 1994, pp. 11)
64 “Cultural objects are part of a larger cultural system that we may want to analyze. It is only when such objects become public, when they enter the circuit of human discourse, that they enter the culture and become cultural objects. … Both cultural objects and the people who create and receive them are not floating freely, but are anchored in a particular context. We can call this the social world. The cultural diamond is an accounting device intended to encourage a fuller understanding of any cultural object’s relationship to the social world. It does not say what the relationship between any of the points should be, only that there is a relationship. … Once we have a sense of how that cultural object fits into its context, we are on our way to understanding the culture as a whole.” (Griswold, 1994, pp. 12-13, 16)
65 A complete understanding of a cultural event or object requires more than the link between it and society at large. The object’s creator and the object’s receiver(s) play an integral part in investigating whether a cultural relationship exists or not. “We need to identify the characteristics of the object and how it is like some other objects in the culture and unlike others. We need to consider who created (made, formed, said) it and who received (heard, saw, believed) it. How is it that in this society some types of people get to be the creators of this type of cultural object and others not? How is it that some cultural objects reach an audience and others not?” (Griswold, 1994, pp. 16)
Before I make any leaps in logic, I shall explain the analytical methods I crafted to initiate the assessment. Though arguably much of what has been documented and recorded is sporadic and highly subjective, the following pages make a conscious and cautious attempt to be as objective as possible in making rational deductions. I would not hold these deductions as absolutes, and I encourage others to investigate or even challenge my reasoning.

In my initial proposal, I sought to analyze the workshop performance and the extent to which it served as an influential and removed critic of the society viewing it (namely, Boston College students and faculty). Also, as a synthesis of the entire project, I proposed to summarize the successes (and failures) of this experiment and what ultimately can be gained by applying such a powerful criticism machine in modern contexts. However hopeful this was, the assessment methods I developed prompted more results with the latter goal than the former. Through observed audience reaction and surveying, I was able to deduce more tangible statements about the potential cabarets have in modern day than their actual impacts on the audience viewing them.

Knowing full well that as the conférencier of the show, I would not be able to dedicate much energy to audience observation and assessment (other than their interactions with me up on stage), I developed two simple forms for my ‘production volunteers’ to complete during each show. The Patron Count form and the Observation form were recorded ways to have eyes and ears in the audience. Though the observations could imply any variety of things, very objective and simple observations (like how many people were smiling) hold palpable weight in the analysis process. The volunteers filling out these forms also gave instant feedback in regards to the progression of the show.
The main source of direct audience assessment, however, was a two-page questionnaire (see pages 77-78) that patrons filled out after each show. The objectives of the questionnaire were simple: find out what type of person came to the show (‘target audience’), why they came, what they thought of the show, and why they came to this show instead of going to a similar, perhaps more modern cultural event. After brainstorming with Professor Hecht in the sociology department, I came up with several categories of questions (to allow for a more diverse range of assessment options).

‘B’ and ‘C’ questions are demographics. What type of person came to this event? With the statistics available on the Boston College website, I knew I could make easy comparisons in regards to the ‘make-up’ of the audience. ‘D’ questions are audience motives and public relation questions. ‘F’ questions are cabaret-event specific to see how the performance resonated with the audience, whether or not they are the target audience for such a cultural event. ‘G’ and ‘H’ questions are overall performance ratings and comparisons to similar cultural events. ‘J’ questions are contemporary issues dealing with multimedia forums of entertainment, as competition for live performance. The questionnaire also left space for additional comments (the ‘Z’ question).

The next four pages contain blank copies of the three aforementioned forms: the two-page audience Questionnaire, the Patron Count form, and the Observation form. The code at the top of each – M7  M10  T7  T10 – allowed the production volunteers to specify which show was being documented. Though I am not including any filled out forms, I will summarize much of both the audience’s assessment of the workshop show, as well as my volunteers’ notations and comments.
Please fill out this response survey in its entirety. Your honest and anonymous responses are important to the assessment of this project.
Approx. time to complete: 7-10 minutes

For each question, please circle one (1) answer.

B-1.) What is your gender?
1. Female  2. Male

B-2.) How old are you?
1. under 18  
2. 18-20  
3. 21-35  
4. over 35

B-3.) In general, you consider most/all of your political views to be:
1. Very Conservative  
2. Conservative  
3. Moderate  
4. Liberal  
5. Very Liberal

C-1.) Are you affiliated with Boston College?
Yes, I am a:
1. Student  
2. Faculty/Staff

No, I am a:
3. ___________

C-2.) If you are a student, what class year are you?
1. Freshman (2008)  
2. Sophomore (2007)  
4. Senior (2005)  
5. Graduate/Other

C-3.) If you are a student, what is your primary major?

For each question, please circle one to three (1-3) answers.

D-1.) Why did you come to this event?
1. It was free  
2. I like live performance  
3. I knew one of the performers  
4. I knew one of the performers
5. The weekend fun stuff doesn’t begin until Wednesday  
6. Variety is the spice of life  
7. My Professor “highly encouraged me to attend”
8. Other: _________________________

D-2.) How did you hear about this event?
1. Flyer  
2. Professor  
3. Email Listserv:  
4. Heights Article  
5. Word of Mouth  
6. Other: _________________________
For each question, please circle one (1) answer.

In regards to the acts and views expressed within the show, did you feel . . .

F-1.) challenged? YES NO
F-2.) validated? YES NO
F-3.) offended? YES NO
F-4.) Were you able to relate to most if not all of the acts presented? YES NO

G-1.) How pleased are you at having attended this performance?

G-2.) FREE RESPONSE: Was this event unusual to you in any way or were you comfortable (at home) in the medium of the show? What aspect or feature from the evening intrigued or upset you most?

For each question, please circle one (1) answer.

On average, how many times in a year do you:

H-1.) Go to the movies? 0 1-3 3-7 7-12 12+
H-2.) Go to a comedy club? 0 1-3 3-7 7-12 12+
H-3.) Go to a jazz/live music club? 0 1-3 3-7 7-12 12+
H-4.) Go to the Theater? 0 1-3 3-7 7-12 12+
H-5.) As a whole, how entertaining did you find the evening, compared to other venues of entertainment you usually patronize?
1.) Less entertaining 2.) About the same 3.) More entertaining

J-1.) On average, how many hours a week do you patronize entertainment establishments such as Cinemas, Concerts, Theaters, and Clubs?
1.) 0-1 2.) 1-3 3.) 3-6 4.) 6-10 5.) 10+

J-2.) How many hours a week do you spend surfing political, social, or cultural websites on the Internet?
1.) 0-1 2.) 1-3 3.) 3-6 4.) 6-10 5.) 10+

J-3.) How many hours a week do you spend watching in-home entertainment?
1.) 0-1 2.) 1-3 3.) 3-6 4.) 6-10 5.) 10+

Z-1.) Comments: Feel free to share anything else you thought about the show or your experience here tonight.
Please write down visual observations of the arriving and departing guests throughout the evening. Generalizations are welcome, however more empirical data would be more useful: did they arrive in groups, pairs, alone; were they happy, laughing, sad, removed; were they quiet, loud, chatty, reserved; what did they do when they entered, did they find seats right away, did they mingle with friends, actors; what types of seats fill up first, last; etc. If you have a watch, try to keep a time record as well.

(Attach additional sheets if necessary)

Name:_________________________________________________
Please record periodically through each show how many people are in the venue. How many are sitting, how many are standing, how many are at the refreshment table, etc; as well as a total count. Estimates are welcome, as some people may have stepped out. Add a count of the total number of completed surveys handed out during and after the show at the bottom of the page.

Name:_________________________________

15 minutes to show:

5 minutes to show:

10 minutes into the show:

Sometime during the first set:

Sometime during the second set:

5 minutes to the end of the show:

Total count of completed surveys:_______
The main purpose for counting the audience was to gauge the participation rate of the questionnaire. The exceptionally high participation ratios can be seen as a reflection of the engaging, participatory atmosphere of the program. But this needs to be taken into perspective, knowing that the survey table was almost-but-not blocking the main exit to the venue. The fact that the evening took place in an educational setting, despite its overwhelmingly informal feel, might also have had an impact on the participation ratio. What the audience count also shows – because the volunteers made the detailed distinction – is that by the second set, most people had finished mulling and remained seated, content. The observed audience reactions confirm this.

The ambiguous function of the observation form – highly unstructured, offering only suggestions as to what to write down – allowed the production volunteers to note basically anything that struck them at that moment. Through these nonsequitur statements, random yet important observations came about unprovoked. One stark example: however comfortable the audience was with the concept of audience musical chairs (to encourage mingling), they were hesitant and reluctant to participate in the sing-a-long led by Lacey in the second act. The observation form was also useful in gauging general moods of the audience during different parts of the workshop show. Through these observations, assessment of the particular acts was more easily deduced; like the final act of the second act. The time-honored staple of cabaret, the poem put to song that I added last minute, was probably the second most popular act of the evening. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peak Audience Count</th>
<th>Completed Surveys</th>
<th>Participation Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 7pm</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 10pm</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 7pm</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 10pm</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
observed commentary documented the audience’s take on it: “Very attentive, about half of the eyes were on [me], the other half looked deep in thought.” Through this example, it can easily be imagined how effective such songs were 100 years ago.

In order to obtain a more detailed description of what type of person attended (and presumably, had interest in) this cabaret show, the questionnaire proved the most fruitful. General frequencies (or summaries) of the variables (or possible answers) of the questions asked by the survey gave great insight alone. When compared in a cross table to the general statistics of the society at large – the Boston College community\(^\text{66}\) – an even more comparative analysis can be made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey: Gender</th>
<th>BC Fact Book 2003-3004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This first figure demonstrates that though the university holds almost a perfect 1:2 ratio, in regards to gender, the gender make-up of the workshop audience was nearly 1:3. Furthermore, when the variables for majors were tabulated and condensed into but a few categories, a stark abnormality arises. As seen in the second table, students from the

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{66}\) Figures from the BC Fact Book were taken from [http://www.bc.edu/publications/factbook/03_04/](http://www.bc.edu/publications/factbook/03_04/) on April 25th, 2005 and condensed into identical categories. The gender figures are based on undergraduates only. The majors figures are minimally different, as BC Fact Book counts students twice if they have majors in two departments. The figures from the questionnaire do not count students twice if they double-majored.
audience majoring in disciplines from the humanities outnumbered all other disciplines nearly 2 to 1. This is exceedingly high considering that humanities majors comprise only 27% of the Boston College student body.

It follows then, that this cultural object is NOT directly or largely representative of the social world, or at least the Boston College community, based solely on attendance; yet at the same time, the demographic count bears extreme relevance. The ‘humanities’ crowd of languages, letters, and fine arts is the ‘target audience’ for the workshop show. Despite the academic specificity of the crowd, their subsequent reactions can still provide insight into the successes and failures of the show itself.

The original intention to correlate their reactions to the show based on their demographics, however, was too complex an undertaking to achieve at this point in time. Contrary to popular belief, political views didn’t play as anticipated a role in audience
members’ evaluations of the show, as all but one person found the show as entertaining or more entertaining than what they normal patronize for entertainment. But conversely, most acts in the workshop show weren’t overtly poignant, politically speaking. Several other questions from the survey backfired, or at least I didn’t get useful information from them. In general, the ‘F’ question set was very ambiguous and redundant; as confusing and interpretive ‘yes or no’ questions, they left no room for patrons to justify responses. (Some patrons even penciled in question marks next to these questions.) In retrospect, I’m not even sure what I intended to use those questions for. Perhaps if responses had varied more (see bar graph example on page 83), I might have had something to work with. Also, the ‘D’ question block was difficult from a technical perspective, as my knowledge of SPSS (a sociological statistics computer program) was basic. I was not able to code the variables appropriately so as to calibrate the three identical questions into useful comparative figures.

But advanced cross-tabulation of the more fruitful, responsive questions did garner interesting results; specifically involving the evolution of entertainment and the potential future of cabaret. As seen by the bar graph (on right), the amount of time spent patronizing live

![Bar graph showing entertainment time](image-url)
entertainment venues is almost exponentially related to the amount of time spent watching in-home entertainment. Identical results are seen when question J-1 is compared to J-2: how many hours a week one spends surfing political, social, or cultural websites on the Internet.

The free response questions (G-2 and Z-1) probably gave the best insight as to what the audience thought of the show. It was aesthetically challenging to the modern crowd. Surprisingly, the extent to which we achieved a truly cabaret-esque experience – or, how successful I was at producing a modern cabaret act, whether or not my intentions were met – can also be found in these responses. The following excerpts highlight certain successes or shortcomings from the workshop show.

“Casual and informal.” “I loved how relaxed it was.” “At home.” “I loved the atmosphere – very relaxing, comfortable.” The goal of creating a welcoming, intimate atmosphere was vindicated. Despite the high ceilings, the Jenks Honors Library was the best venue on campus to host such an event. The variety of seating contrasted with a minimalistic, slightly raised and slightly lit stage eradicated any barriers between performer and patron.

“I feel like its kind of unavoidable to have a cliquey feel. Like, the viewers weren’t supposed to be there.” As it was in the original cabarets; indeed, in between shows, all the artists continued to sing, dance and ‘putz’ around on their various instruments – crowd or no crowd. Perhaps the cliquey feel was an appeal to the initial mass public who first wanted to see a ‘cabaret,’ for it surely didn’t stop them from trying, and subsequently gaining admission.
“Comfortable, felt like we walked into a group who knew us and each other.”

This is a particularly interesting comment. Several of my friends who saw the show told me a few weeks later that they had seen one of the artists from the show since and had to consciously stop from going up to greeting him or her as a friend – because they claimed that because of the show, they felt like they actually knew that actor or musician. It’s amazing how a live performance, when mixed with an intimate setting, has residual effects on the patrons. I would be curious to hear what effects “considering a cabaret performer as a ‘friend’” would have on the audience’s reaction to the opinions voiced by him or her.

“Intrigued by femininity issues.” Everyone found particular resonance in at least one act, whether documented on videotape, through observation forms, or, like this quote, through the comments on the questionnaire. Though not having overly political acts, the acts were still diverse enough to keep the interest of the audience at large.

“The performers were talented and diverse.” My objective in hand-selecting the artists proved effective. But then again, I didn’t need audience opinion to know the caliber of talent that appeared on that stage. I am glad, however, that the audience caught on: “It made me forget about my exam and put a huge smile on my face. ... I felt extremely comfortable, like I was here with others for exactly the same reasons, desires, laughter, inspiration.”

“The crowd was polite and attentive.” This is unusual; normally, cabarets were rousing and riotous. I would attribute this to the generation most represented at the performances (namely, college age), who hold the stigma that cabaret is a high art. Luckily, I think the informal and casual nature of the production caught on over the
course of the show. Spurts of crowd interaction and commentary developed during every performance. We even set an example of it by making fun of “the Muppet Show” opening (where the two old Muppets in the theater box groan about the upcoming acts).

“I was surprised and intrigued by the variety and by the effect it produced.”

“I was intrigued by the various mediums used.” The use of the words INTRIGUE and VARIETY in the audience’s assessment of the workshop show is ridiculous. At least forty of the eighty surveys collected contained at least one of the two words, if not both. These words are also staples in the adjectives that describe cabaret.

“I really enjoyed the AIM conversation; I wasn’t expecting so technologically recent.” “I liked the multimedia aspects of the show, and the use of newer technologies and forms of entertainment.” “Loved the AIM conversation – unusual and interesting.” Arguably the most popular act, the internet conversation via AOL Instant Messenger between Matt Cullinan and Kelly Doyle (as the ominous being “CEO Nation”) was a great incorporation of technology into the cabaret doctrine in an attempt to modernize cabaret acts. But why was it so popular? Despite being multimedia by definition (something more relatable to the youthful audience), there was no audio – only video. And not even exciting video, just black and white text. But it had the cabaret spirit in tow; the act took a form of communication that everyone uses incessantly (despite the anti-social stigma it carries) and poked fun at it while voicing populist views about capitalism and corporations. The fact that everyone instantly related to the format of the act further accentuated the audience’s dependency on that form of communication.

Oddly enough, in applying more analytical methods, we were able to gain a better perspective at how well we captured the spirit of cabaret, and how well it was received.
Other elements of the show that I think need mentioning: the original dance, the mediocre ‘bar,’ and the apparent lack of staunch opinion in the acts. The fact that the workshop show disguised a childish (albeit original) fight game – underscored by an original theme – as an ‘original dance,’ showcases the frivolous and renegade exploits that cabarets can get away with on a nightly basis. It was also a great way to exalt something seemingly low class into an art form. The recapitulation of the dance theme song to get the audience on their feet for a rousing game of musical chairs was also extremely effective. Not only did the audience enjoy the participation element, it allowed for more actor/audience interaction, vocally and physically.

Though in theory, it would have been possible to obtain a wet bar for the workshop show, in development I decided against it for several reasons. First, the production did not have the time to wait for a liquor license from the city of Newton. Second, the subsequent Boston College police officer that would have been required to preside over the bar would have detracted too much from the rebellious and populist ambiance of the venue. (I couldn’t think of anything worse than having ‘the man’ required to be at an event that recreated a performance genre geared at deriding ‘the man.’) The third reason was the complete lack of a budget. Post-production however, the absence of an alcohol bar was a vital aesthetic that was missing from the atmosphere.

As mentioned before, I personally thought that the acts within the show lacked fervent opinion – not necessarily lackluster, but very passive in having an affirmative statement. Almost every act was relatively humorous. In retrospect, I attribute this to a fault in the production leadership (i.e. myself). As a producer managing an artistic team strapped for time, the acts themselves were not up to the caliber of social critique that
cabarets of the past have fostered. This does not imply, however, that such staunch and
critical acts cannot be recreated in modern contexts. Nor does it suggest that the
workshop show was belittling the critical nature of cabaret to attract a wider audience
base. But what can be taken from this reality is that, had time permitted, this project had
potential to demonstrate even more social relevancies.

CONCLUSIONS

From what was observed, from what was polled, from what was written, a general
assessment of this workshop show is possible. But what from the workshop show, in
tandem with the background research in Phase I (in regards to historical contexts and,
more specifically, commercialization), can be applied to deduce why cabaret has lost
much of its popularity and effectiveness in recent years? This is a cultural event that
cannot be assessed thoroughly by conventional means; it is quite subjective, in every
sense of the word.

Is it as simple as “cabaret evolved into other things” – that all things cabaret are
now represented in some shape or form in other mediums, other forms of entertainment?
The questionnaire does allude to a general mass patronage of in-home entertainment as
an abundant replacement for live entertainment. Not that it is not justified: in-home
entertainment is far more accessible than live entertainment, more affordable, and has the
same capability to be critical of the society it comes from. But does it synthesize art
forms and bridge social classes as effectively? Furthermore, does mass-produced, in-
home entertainment represent the culture in which each individual lives in, in all regions
of the country, let alone the world? Or does it restrict society’s ability to diversify,
culturally? The television medium is especially censored. The film industry, to most, is labeled as ‘too Hollywood. This argument is far too large to pick up this late in my project; however, the cabaret derivatives that popularize in-home entertainment are not exempt from this argument. But hope remains. Saturday Night Live, for example, “still waxes strong and acts as a testing ground for talent picked up on the live circuit. The movement between small stage, perhaps radio and then small and large screen with occasional dips back into the live circuit for re-energizing, has become something of a tradition for America’s stand-ups.”67

But I don’t want to consent defeat and claim that only the derivatives of cabaret have potential in an ever-evolving global culture. Does cabaret, as an art form, have potential to be as effective as it was? Communally therapeutic, it is effective in helping people articulate problems in their lives, dealing with them, getting over them. It is no wonder why Brecht was a cabaretist – this is perpetual theater as a heighten reality.

“One emphasis of post-war West-German cabaret was a critique of Adenauer’s restrictive politics and a desire for the establishment of social democracy. To this, the cabarets added a serio-comic analysis of the ‘national characteristic’ which had permitted the rise of Nazism and the atrocities of war to take place. [Also], in a time which desperately called for humor and irony, the cabaret provided . . . a school for laughter.”68

Cabaret holds particular significance, not only for the audience but the performer as well. In extreme, it also has the tremendous potential to be self-indulgent. But this vice is under a constant check and balance between the artist and the audience.

Cabaret still has a lot of benefits; unfortunately entertainment is not its main draw anymore – even though patrons were just as entertained by the workshop experiment show as they would have been in a more conventional entertainment setting. It bears

67 (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 240)
68 (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 218)
extreme relevance to the observed target audience – or rather, it was recorded that they received the show very eagerly. People are silently crying out for it . . . when they get it, they respond positively and constructively. Granted, the entertainment value to cabaret was hardly a first priority at its inception in Montmartre; but since its fusion with commercialism, the two concepts seem inseparable. What’s worse is that economically, cabaret is a ‘no-go.’ It has lost mass communication status, as cabaret depends largely on its ‘live character’ – which is hard to replicate in in-home venues. Ergo, cabaret, as a popular artistic exodus, has little future in the mass criticism of society.

So why still do cabaret? The prospect of sharing something with a live audience is hard to come by. As an educating medium, it is pure gold. Cabaret fosters skills that prompt people to step outside of their normal constructs, to remove themselves – even if momentarily – from preconceptions. Furthermore, an assessment of such self-removed reflection can have tremendous weight and bearing on a society’s function, on the people within, and the paradigms they live by. The potential to execute a successful cabaret is there. I did it. I documented it. But realistically, it won’t take the world by storm – at least not in the conceivable future. But if, like it has been, is kept alive in some shape or form, it will continue to harbor that potential to reach, teach, and reflect.

Cabaret is still a perfect vehicle for social criticism. If nothing else, it teaches us to look critically at the world around us. Cabaret is moving and fluid enough to adapt to the contexts of whatever society it springs up in. Political correctness, censorship, and civility don’t bog it down. There is always room for opposing objectives. Opinions are not forcefully pressed upon the populace.69  Cabaret, by its very nature, leaves room for

69 “These artists raised popular culture into an art which was to influence the literary mainstream. The Chat Noir public left revitalized by the critical impact.” (Appignanesi, 2004, pp. 15)
the largest audience possible because of the potential for a wide variety of opinion. From this perspective, cabaret would seem ideal for an era dominated with nothing but varying opinions (thanks, in part, to the Internet). Also due to cabaret’s nature, the audience is more or less forced to be more personally, directly, and actively involved in the topics addressed on stage. And due to this added element of participation and thinking, many people hold cabaret as a more ‘high art’ form, not to be frequented on a regular basis. But as mentioned before, current popular art forms are culturally limiting.

Any new mass-appeal attempt and adaptation of cabaret will still have an entertainment basis as a primary element; unfortunately the entertainment world is not currently seeking such fiscally risky endeavors. Why should they when they already have some of the best derivatives of cabaret packaged neatly into easily accessible cable television programming and affordable digital videodisks?

Cabaret has intrinsic value, whereas it is not restricted. My hope is that as long as one performer is still actively pursuing the objectives of cabaret, cabaret remains a living art form. And, so long as it stays alive, so too does the hope to achieve an honest, vibrant, uplifting, equal, cohesive, unified picture of society.

It’s not that cabaret lives . . . it’s ALIVE.

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70 Even at the height of its popularity, cabaret was subject to the constant influence of all other elements of society – especially the economy.
THANK YOUS

It goes without saying, that this project has had significant influences throughout every stage of the process – from development and brainstorming, to performance and execution – and without these talented and dedicated individuals, my thesis project would not have been possible … let alone feasible. Their contributions to my experience deserve recognition.

Professor Chadwick, for sparking the idea; Dr. Hecht, Professor Bayles, Professor McGrann, and Ryan Turner for providing guidance in my initial research; Prof. Hughes for keeping my grounded; and Prof. Resler for letting me wander.

The Honors Program, including Susan Michalcyzk for boosting my confidence and connecting me to the right people; Pat Dolan for spreading the good word and holding the keys to my success; and Mark O’Connor, who graciously lent out my performance venue and whose enthusiasm encouraged me all the more.

Howard Enoch and Shep Barnett from Robsham Theater for the light trees, Media Technology Services for the projection screen and the video cameras, and Jim Costa and the Bureau of Conferences for the platforms.

My roommates, especially Pete (who called in the favor at The Heights) and TJ (who supplied the sound equipment and a percussive expert). Katie Mihalko, for taking over technical production without even having to be asked.

My advisor, John Houchin, for taking in a strangler from outside his department, for providing a unique perspective in the research phase, and for the concise and articulate insight into what I had yet to take into consideration.

Only the artists themselves truly understand how appreciative I will forever be.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


