

JUST PRETENDING:  
A CABARET PERFORMANCE

By  
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A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors in Fine Arts degree  
With Honors in  
Musical Theatre

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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## Honors Thesis Abstract

By: Marissa Alexandra Munter

Kailyn Toussaint and I combined our Honors Theses to create a two-person cabaret called *Just Pretending*. This 50-minute cabaret is a culmination of Musical Theatre and pop songs inspired by events from our past, present, and imminent futures. The fall semester consisted of collaborating with my advisor and hers, Professor Danny Gurwin, on choosing the material for the evening and hiring a pianist. The spring semester consisted of rehearsals and writing the script for the evening. The script is written in bullet point format, which gave us the freedom to organically converse with the audience while still hitting the main ideas that made it a cohesive story. Throughout the process, Kailyn was responsible for the dialog and flow of the show. I handled the business side including: official correspondence, marketing, and overseeing the budget. We performed *Just Pretending* on April 26<sup>th</sup> at The Scented Leaf with 30-35 people in attendance. We also Facebook Livestreamed the show for those that couldn't make it. This project was a wonderful first experience creating and producing our own cabaret, an invaluable skill for our careers, as well as a wonderful way to wrap up our four years here at the University of Arizona.

*Just Pretending - Final Script*

**Opening Song: Anybody Have a Map**

From: *DEAR EVAN HANSEN*

Music/Lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

- (Over opening vamp)

Marissa: Hey Kailyn aren't you excited! It's closing weekend of our show, and we graduate in a week!

Kailyn: Yeah that's great (*nervous laughter*) yeah... I haven't packed yet

Marissa: What? (*"side argument" away from audience*) What do you mean you haven't packed yet?

Kailyn: I mean I haven't done it, there's my room, and the kitchen, I haven't even started on the living room (*freak-out improvisation gets bigger and bigger*)

Marissa: **Pianist Cue: Woah woah** - lyrics: "Can we try to have an optimistic outlook?"

- (During musical interlude after first verse)

Kailyn: Okay you're right it's all going to be fine, but I have to bring Bella! How are you supposed to move a pet all the way across the country? And my Dad and I are going to have to *drive* her to Connecticut

Marissa: Woah wait... you're bringing Bella?

Kailyn: Um yeah, I'm bringing Bella. You're bringing Matt

Marissa: Yeah that's not the same thing

Kailyn: Yes, it is.

Marissa: **Cue: No, it's not. She's a cat for one**

Kailyn: Okay we'll talk about this later. lyrics: "Another stellar conversation for the scrapbook"

- (During musical interlude before final duet section)

Kailyn: Okay you're right it's going to be fine. We're going to move we'll audition for all kinds of new theater and people it'll be so exciting

Marissa: see it'll be great! You know the only time I auditioned in New York I quite literally fell on my face... oh my god what if I do that again?

Kailyn: **Cue: Oh my gosh that was so funny...** lyrics: "Another masterful attempt ends with disaster." through to the end of song

Marissa:

- Thank you so much for coming
- Welcome to: Just Pretending!
- Explain what an Honors Thesis is

Kailyn:

- Explain how the evening is a culmination of stories inspired by past and future changes in our lives

- We are going to start just pretending for a living and we're also just pretending to know what we're doing
- Thank you to Shane and Tommy
- Filling The Scented Leaf with theatre students, a rare occurrence
- Go get tea at any time

Marissa:

- **Cue: Actually, that sounds good I'm going to go get some for myself.**  
(Marissa exits to the tea counter)

### Song: Welcome the Rain

*Music by Marcy Heisler with Lyrics by Zina Goldrich*

Kailyn:

- Love that song because: really identify with learning how to welcome the good and bad times in life, also because of childhood and mothers
- My mom is here!
- Marissa your parents are here right?

Marissa:

- My parents are also here
- Speaking of my parents some of you may have notice **Cue: my mom has an accent; which I actually have never been able to hear but am told is there.**

### Song: Travel

*From: STARTING HERE, STARTING NOW*

*Music by David Shire with Lyrics by Richard Maltby Jr*

1st Story

- *(Spoken over vamp)* So, for those of you that don't know, my mom is from Paraguay. That's kind of the beginning of my weird melting-pot upbringing which has made me **Cue: love traveling to this very day**

2nd Story

- *(Spoken over 3<sup>rd</sup> verse)* So, because of my dad's job we traveled and moved around a lot.
- My siblings were both born in South America, but me I'm the "gringa" of the family, which means I'm the American one. I don't have any cool dual citizenship.
- 5 years of my childhood in Tokyo, Japan. So as someone who was culturally confused for the first seven years of my life. **Cue: Figuring out what culture I identified with has always been a strange thing for me.**

3rd Story

- *(Spoken over musical bridge)* I wasn't born in South America like my siblings so to me that meant well I'm not technically Latin.
- I knew I wasn't Japanese, but I felt connected to that culture.
- "Our new student from Tokyo, Japan"
- Even though this sounds like it would lead to an identity crisis, it's actually one of my favorite aspects of my childhood. Growing up with kids from all over the

world, **Cue:** where it wasn't "different," it was actually just normal. And I loved it.

**Song: "I've Got A Crush On You"**  
*Music by George Gershwin with Lyrics by Ira Gershwin*

Marissa (during musical interlude before the refrain):

- Story about Matt asking me out me saying no
- I am my mom's daughter – short story about my dad asking my mom out
- Calling best friend from back home for advice
- In case you didn't know this man's name is Matt and **Cue: he's sitting right over there.**

Kailyn: Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for Marissa Medina Munter!

*Kailyn takes a seat at the piano and Danielle and Marissa exit SR*

Kailyn:

- Faith is a big part of my life
- My family is not religious
- God is the most consistent thing in my life.
- With all the changes coming up, I know that won't change

**Song: Good to Me**  
**From: FORTUNATE FALL**  
*Music/Lyrics by Audrey Assad*

Kailyn: (As Danielle takes a seat back at the piano)

- Introduce and thank Danielle (*Kailyn crosses center with Marissa*)
- My mom traveled 3,000 miles to come here,
- Soon it'll only be a 2-hour train ride

Marissa:

- My parents only took an hour flight
- But once we move they'll have to start traveling 3,000 miles to see me
- **Cue: In college you get used to travelling to see your family, but once you graduate you also have to get used to traveling to see your friends.**

**Duet: Many the Miles**  
**From: LITTLE VOICE**  
*Music/Lyrics by Sara Bareilles*

Kailyn (over first vamp):

- A lot of people in this program go to either LA or Chicago or New York,
- The two of us are about to be East-coasters
- No matter where we are or where you are, we will always travel many the miles to see you

Marissa:

- We graduate in 2 weeks
- As an actor what's the one question people always ask:

Kailyn: What summer stock are you working at this summer?

Marissa:

- That's right! I've never worked at a summer stock
- The only one I auditioned for I fell flat on my face that's a true story
- **Cue: and if you didn't guess already no I did not book it**

**Song: Summer in Ohio**

*From: THE LAST FIVE YEARS*

*Music/Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown*

- But for all of you that did book, and are headed to Ohio for *Tecumseh* this summer, this one's for you

Kailyn:

- **Cue: Speaking of moving to New York...**

**Song: I'm A Star**

*Music/Lyrics by Scott Alan*

Marissa: Give it up for Kailyn!

Kailyn:

- Whew! I wasn't really sure if that note was going to come out
- Fake it 'til you make it
- Last call for tea refills. Encourage people to go get them now.

Marissa:

- Kailyn's song reminds me of when you're little and you want to be "a star" when you grow up
- As you get older the reality of the career hardships gets scarier
- **Cue: This next song is one that I really love because it talks about the ups and downs of an actor's confidence, which I really connect with**

**Song: Way Back to Then**

*From: TITLE OF SHOW*

*Music/Lyrics by Jeff Bowen*

- (*Spoken over vamp*) but just like this song says I hope that I'll be able to find that 6-year-old me confidence when I move this summer

Kailyn:

- Big chapter coming up for the senior class
- I feel a million emotions everyday
- Some days I'm crying because I love Tucson, some days I can't wait to get the hell out of Tucson
- I feel all over the place
- Just pretend to have it all together and know what I'm doing
- **Cue: Above all of these emotions though, I am mostly grateful.**

**Song: Take Me to the World**

*From: EVENING PRIMROSE*

*Music/Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim*

- (under the new beginning vamp): I'm grateful for everything this school has given me and everything that's to come. It's a big step all the seniors are about to take, and I can't wait to see what the world brings us.

Marissa:

- Wrapping up the night. This is our last song of the night, but that means now we get an H on our diploma!

Kailyn:

- Woohoo!! Thank goodness!
- I am so tired.
- And then tomorrow, a lot of us start a whole other weekend of shows.

Marissa:

- Freshmen and Sophomores, you have your showcase coming up

Kailyn:

- And then the Alphies, and finals

Marissa:

- **Cue: And then graduation**

**Finale: Hear My Song**

**From: SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD**

*Music/Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown*

- (under musical intro) we know everyone is exhausted and stressed, so it means a lot that you all came tonight.

*Collective moment of "Oh my god did we do it" improvisation*

- **Cue: As applause starts to die down start playing "Summer Highland Falls"**

Kailyn: oh! An *Encore!!*

**Encore: Summer Highland Falls**

*From: TURNSTILES*

*Music/Lyrics by Billy Joel*

Marissa:

- Thank Hank and Danny and everyone for coming
- Thank our Pianist Danielle Pfeiffer

Kailyn:

- Shane and The Scented Leaf

Marissa

- Tori for lighting
- Marcus for sound

Kailyn:

- Sophia for taking our marketing picture, and Conner for editing it
- Finally thank you everyone for coming!

*"Summer Highland Falls" fades out. The End.*

## Reflection

*Just Pretending* was a labor of love and an invaluable experience. The night itself on April 26<sup>th</sup> I am proud to say went extremely well. We were only given a 45-minute window to set up, and thankfully with the help of eleven people we were able to transform the space into an intimate venue complete with lighting and sound. The road to creating such a piece was eye opening for me not only because of the creative process, but also because I was able to tie in my minor in Business Administration. Figuring out how to wear these different hats throughout the process was difficult, but incredibly rewarding because Kailyn and I had complete control over our work from day one to April 26<sup>th</sup>.

We began our process last August when we met to discuss the tone and theme of the evening. After bouncing ideas off of one another for a while we settled on the idea of change, which became our prompt for our essay in the fall semester that we used to pull song ideas from. I had never created a cabaret before and was actually surprised at how easy it became to link songs to our past, present, and imminent futures. The show as a whole we decided would be chronological beginning with solos that reflected moments from our childhood, then college, and then moving to New York City and starting our careers. The duets in turn acted as road markers for transitioning to different time periods. For example, “Many the Miles” separated college experiences from this coming summer and moving to New York.

My solo songs actually changed quite a bit due to conflicts with “ballad gridlock,” which is when there are too many ballads one after another. This slows and can even stop the flow of the evening. To modify this, Kailyn and I had to move the set list order around and even completely

change a few songs to keep the momentum up so the audience would stay engaged. Once the set list was solidified we began to write in the script and slowly but surely the show took shape.

Being able to create a show in this manner was extremely freeing as an actor. Often times as actors your job is to interpret someone else's work. However, in today's industry self—producing and writing has become the new staple in an actor's bag of tricks. I however have always struggled with this. For whatever reason creating my own artistic work did not come naturally to me and learning how to unlock and cultivate that has always been a goal of mine. I had no idea that when Kailyn and I decided to make a cabaret together that this would be my first project exercising these creative techniques. I'm happy to say that it was a good first experience. Not only was the creative process enlightening, especially with our advisors teaching us all kinds of techniques for formulating a cabaret, but I also discovered that I thoroughly enjoyed handling the business aspects for the event.

As the person tasked with handling the business side of this project my responsibilities ranged from marketing, producing, to overseeing the official correspondence and budget for the event. I quickly discovered that communication above all was the most important as well as the most time consuming. I had to ensure that everything I was in charge of was updated constantly so that everyone involved was on the same page at all times particularly because we never had an opportunity to get everyone in the same room prior to the event. Most of our correspondence existed over emails, text messages, and google documents. This became especially important when communicating with our pianist Danielle Pfeiffer. Due to budget constraints, we were only able to have three in person rehearsals with our pianist before the show. Therefore, a great deal of explaining musical cuts, set list order, underscoring, and cue lines were done online. Thankfully Ms. Pfeiffer proved to be an extremely gifted pianist and was able to adapt quickly to changes,

which was crucial due to all the alterations made to avoid ballad gridlock. Ms. Pfeiffer's talents coupled with ensuring we stayed on the same page with her made the process fairly smooth.

Figuring out how to exercise virtual management methods throughout this process was a valuable experience for me. With how fast technology is advancing today coupled with the millennials' growing desire to work from their computers rather than in person, knowing how to manage in this way is an imperative skill. Though I still have a lot to learn, I am proud to say that nothing went horribly wrong. I found that managing in this way allowed all of us to work at our own pace while still of course meeting collective deadlines, which I'm happy to say were achieved with little to no delay. However, I did discover that as the person in charge of all of this very rarely, if ever, was I off the clock. This may have been the first time I've understood the value of having a work and personal phone.

Learning how to work as the creator, performer, and producer I discovered though difficult, is a crucial experience as we embark on our careers because self-produced work is the way of the future. Most actors these days seem to crave more control over their work and have achieved this by also becoming writers and executive producers of their own projects. I never thought that a year ago when we settled on a cabaret for our honors thesis that it would turn into our first self-produced project, but I am incredibly thankful that it did. It is my hope that *Just Pretending* is only the first of many projects in my career where I am able to wear so many different hats during the process.