

SO THIS IS LOVE

BY

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In Partial Fulfillment of the bachelor's degree
With Honors in

Film & Television

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Approved by:

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SO THIS IS LOVE Project Link: <https://youtu.be/8Ab87QvpSkk>

Abstract:

So This Is Love is a short adaptation of the classic Cinderella tale told entirely through dance and title cards. Eva, after receiving a magical invitation and a visit from her Fairy Godfather, attends the Rainbow Ball and instantly falls in love with a princess. However, a presumptuous prince and her own sexual confusion keeps on getting in the way of Happily Ever After. This film experiments with new ways of storytelling while investigating the fairytale and magical realism aesthetic. It also discusses ideas around attraction, heteronormativity and societal structures that impact personal expectations.

Film & Television Honors Thesis Written Statement

By Sasha Reist

Project Advisor: Lianne Skyler

For my Film Honors Thesis, I created a short, fiction film entitled “So This Is Love.” The film is a gay adaptation of Cinderella without any dialogue, instead using dance and thematic title cards to tell the story. I started this process in the spring of my junior year (Spring 2022), working on pre-production until I filmed over three days in the middle of May. I concluded the project and completed all post-production during my senior fall (Spring 2022). The goal for my project was to replicate the experience for the BFA Thesis Film experience as a BA in Film & Television. I wanted the opportunity to create, direct and edit my own short narrative film and experience all aspects of pre-production, production and post-production. Beyond that, I experimented with the relationship between film and dance and aimed to discover a new way of storytelling without any dialogue.

In this process, I not only achieved my learning outcomes, but gained much more knowledge than I could have imagined. In pre-production, I taught myself how to write a screenplay. With the guidance of my classmates, I learned all of the necessary pre-production tasks, including making a shot list, organizing craft services, location scouting etc. I had practice making a budget, organizing and communicating with a large crew and working with both my assistant director and cinematographer to prepare for the day and casting. I had the added responsibility of choreographing, rehearsing and preparing my dancers for the camera. Most importantly, as many problems arose just a few days before set, I learned how to overcome challenges and problem solve quickly. There was a second that I was worried that I would have to postpone my whole shoot, but I figured out a way and I couldn't be happier with the results.

I had never before been on a set behind the camera. Therefore, with the supportive guidance of my peers, I very quickly gained a substantial amount of knowledge about how a film set works and how to run one. I learned how to make decisions quickly, coordinate between people of different jobs and have an answer for every question thrown my way. I practiced working and directing actors and figuring out what communication was the most effective in getting the desired result. I learned how to stay both true to my vision but efficient in the process, how to keep morale high and the environment as fun as possible and the power of experimental and creative solutions. I am also grateful for all of the technical knowledge I acquired from observing other jobs, such as lighting, the

relationship between lighting, the camera and the actors, continuity, setup and teardown, etc.

In post-production, I learned a lot from the process of getting notes. I learned how to decipher what's at the root of a note so that I can make the most effective change. I figured how to make the story clearer to different audiences without jeopardizing the core aspects and objectives of the film. Most importantly, I learned how to let go of my "favorite parts" when they were not working for the plot. In the notes specifically, I learned a lot about continuity in editing, tools for effective storytelling and skills to be concise.

In order to complete this project, I utilized a lot of the film skills I have acquired through my classes here at the U of A, such as Documentary Production, Sound Design and Experimental Production. I utilized the editing skills I've developed through my coursework and outside practice. I combined the different story building processes I've learned to help develop the plot of this film. I also relied heavily on the leadership and organizational skills I've cultivated through my studies.

I believe my film was successful in taking traditional narrative structures and adapting them to an inventive way of storytelling. It takes the spectacle and emotions from dancing while eliminating the ultra "experimental" aesthetic that turns off many audiences. My goal was to make the new approach enticing rather than foreign and I believe that building off of standard approaches of filmmaking helped create that. My other objective was to take spaces that are usually very heteronormative, such as fairy tales, and make room for LGBTQ+ voices stories. This film, while playing into the exciting nostalgia of princesses and magic, tells an authentic story of love that is usually undervalued and under shared. I wanted to make my film fix an itch for people who feel underrepresented in media, while still being relatable to all audiences. Love, feeling stuck and figuring out your identity are all universal experiences.

I am very proud of my finished product. The film turned out better than I expected and I am hopeful for the festival circuit. I think the stressful moments of conflict, confusion, critique and doubt in both pre-production and post-production allowed the film to push past the boundaries and expectations I set for it. Although I am very satisfied with the outcome, I think the true success of my thesis lies in the amount that I learned. I am just as grateful for the knowledge that I learned from my mistakes as I am from the information I gained from excelling.