Cloud Tectonics

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Introduction

This Senior Capstone Experience represents much more than a thesis submitted to fulfill the academic requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree. It also comprises a cumulative collection of personal experiences and a narrative that is the culmination of an undergraduate program. As my grand finale, it is a memorable "racconto" that illustrates my challenges, fears, and hopes.

The house curtain is open, and the show is about to begin. It will start with my SCE goals, the reasons, the fit for this type of experience, my hopes as a theatre artist, my intuitive response to the play I have chosen, and why I find this choice relevant for Washington College and the Chestertown community.

The play I have chosen is called *Cloud Tectonics*. It was written in 1995 by Jose Rivera, a Puerto Rican playwright who grew up and lived in New York City. Jose Rivera is very well known as the screenwriter for the following movies: *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004), *Letters to Juliet* (2010), and *On the Road* (2012). The play premiered at the 19th Annual Humana Festival in 1995 and was produced at the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California the same year.

Chapter One: The Goals

On the pages before the prologue, the playwright includes a list of interesting quotes related to the story. One of them in particular caught my attention: “Ah déjame recordarte como eras entonces, cuando aún no existías,[1]” by Pablo Neruda (1904–1973), a Chilean poet and politician who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971. This is related to why I chose this type of SCE, and why I think it is a good fit for me.

When I was accepted as a transfer student in 2023, I immediately realized that the next two years would be particularly complicated. I decided to go back to college because I needed a bachelor's degree to get a full-time position at work. Therefore, and if I remember all this now as it was before it existed, as Pablo Neruda cleverly expressed, there was a passionless need and the commitment to go through the process. I am a person who clearly defines his goals in life and works resolutely to accomplish them. However, before the end of the first half of my first semester at Washington College, I started feeling the impulse to express my passionate feelings towards what I was doing. This is another personal characteristic, and I cannot work hard without getting involved with what I am doing and leaving passion aside. Then, I had a conversation with Professor Dale Daigle, the Theatre & Dance Department Chair, and that familiar craving sensation that was hidden in me started coming out. It can be described as an urge for more knowledge and experiences. That was the same feeling I had when I approached Recrearte, a theatre group managed by Magaly Avila, a Mexican director and choreographer, in Buenos Aires in 2006.

Even though I consider myself a performer with experience in acting, singing, and dancing, directing would also allow me to develop my acting talents and leadership skills.

[1] Oh let me remember you as you were before you existed, https://hellopoetry.com/poem/9920/every-day-you-play/

Directing implies stretching my acting capacities to use them from the other side of the counter, knowing what can be done to help and guide the actors. Professionally, I have always worked as a teacher and mentor. I still coordinate two work teams, one in Argentina and one in the United States. Also, directing would help me confront one of my biggest challenges since joining Washington College classes as a student: generational concerns. I am at least forty years older than most of my classmates. Even though I consider myself friendly and outgoing, and I love socializing within my context, the generational and cultural differences have not allowed me to express myself fully. Directing would help me implement most of my coaching and mentoring skills, and the age gap would be helpful for all the parties involved.

Throughout this process, I hoped to narrow the gap between my classmates and I because I have much to learn from them. Opening up to this artistic pathway from the perspective of the director of a play would allow me to create interactions that would benefit the actors, the theatre community at Washington College, and myself. I have always been a strong father figure for my children, my grandchildren, and some of my friends. I hoped to use those skills to guide my actors into becoming better performers and better human beings, while allowing me to become a better leader and person.

As a theatre artist, I have little experience with costumes, lights, and setting design in general. I also did not know some of the aspects of stage management work. However, my assistant stage manager practicum for *The Revolutionists* gave me more developed tools for directing. A director does not necessarily need to be an expert in design. Nevertheless, directors must understand every aspect of the theatre's performance chain to make clear and clever artistic decisions. *The Revolutionists* helped me to understand the processes from within, and to grasp

the dynamics inherent to the management procedure, such as blocking, working on and off book, as well as the integration with the other technical and design aspects of a play.

Choosing the play was the most challenging part of my SCE proposal at the end of last year. I had lots of ideas in mind about what I wanted and what I did not. My conversations with Professor LaRonika Thomas, and the other members of the Theatre Department, paved the way for what was about to come. Perhaps I could not put my thoughts into words, but I knew the play had to mean something to me. I read many plays and worked on limiting my choices to at least five. I expected to read a play and feel the magic, which never happened. Not only do I need to believe and understand a project I decide to undertake, but I also need to feel passionate about it. However, that was not happening, and I was approaching my deadline. That was when Professor Polly Sommerfeld gave me an instrumental piece of advice. I had borrowed Marisol, a book with three plays by Jose Rivera, and she suggested I should reread them. I did not reread the first two plays, because even though they were interesting, I knew staging them would be a big challenge, and I was not sure whether that was the right topic for me. I wanted a play that could make a statement that audiences could take home with them aside from entertainment. I also knew I was looking for something more emotional, where simple human aspects were involved. I then reread *Cloud Tectonics*, and the magic started to happen. Afterward, I read it for a third time, playing "*Por el Amor de una Mujer*[2]," the bolero mentioned in the stage instructions, and I knew this was the one.

I have always been a fan of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and his magic realism in most of his work. When I read Jose Rivera's biography and learned *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was one of his favorite plays, and that Marquez had been one of his mentors, I immediately understood

[2] For the love of a woman (my translation).

there was a strong connection between me, Cloud Tectonics, and the writer. I believe that portraying magic realism on stage is a great creative challenge.

In *Cloud Tectonics*, Celestina del Sol and Aníbal de la Luna live through a beautiful love story. Even though this play can be considered the typical and conventional boy-meets-girl love story, their relationship and connection are unconventional in so many forms. This is what I loved about the play, and that is why I think it is a perfect match with what I was looking for and who I am. I want to show this to the world, and this is what I wanted the actors in my play and the audience to experience. It may sound like a cliché, but true love exists. According to the Ancient Greeks, there are several words for love which enable us to distinguish clearly between the different types of love[3]. True love transcends a romantic relationship, and it is unexplainable and indescribable. It needs to be felt, which I planned to explore during the rehearsals for this play. I wanted actors to go through the process of feeling love, creating a radiance that would be noticeable to the audience like a magic aura. I still did not know who the actors were going to be, and they were probably going to be too young to conceive this sort of love magnitude. Therefore, my plan was to work on their own experiences and examples, and provide them with movies, books, and stories that can reflect other types of love paradigms.

In addition, *Cloud Tectonics* possesses the metaphysics component of the passage of time. For Celestina, time does not go by. She does not know what an hour is, or what a certain amount of time implies, and time stops wherever she is. She does not care about time. What would life be like if we did not care about time? Is there a before and an after, or is everything happening simultaneously? Why do human beings consider time as something linear? Is time something so important in our lives?

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[3] Suggested by Professor LaRonika Thomas, and extracted from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201606/these-are-the-7-types-of-love

According to *Britannica*, magic realism is "chiefly a Latin-American narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction." In my opinion, Jose Rivera explores this concept perfectly well in Cloud Tectonics. Celestina does not know what time is, how it works, and what time length means. Besides, she is naïve; she trusts people and does not understand the concept of love. However, all this does not prevent her from experiencing realistic love, the eros, the romantic and passionate love, and the philia, the affectionate and friendly love, as the Greeks used to describe. She lives in a dream world. Nevertheless, this does not mean that what she experiences is unreal.

In addition, this play can also be considered naturalistic, as its characters are meant to be realistic and authentic while exploring human behavior. Even though naturalism and magic realism can be viewed as opposite terms, Jose Rivera manages to combine them and interrelate them.

Even though this is an appropriate SCE and a suitable play for me for all the reasons mentioned above, I would like to add another important motive: the play takes place in Los Angeles. The three characters were born into Hispanic families. The Hispanic element is present not only in their names but also in a few words and expressions they say in Spanish or in the quesadillas Aníbal cooks. It is also present in how the characters interpret intimacy and use their bodies to express what they feel.

I have been living in the United States for eight years, and even though I got used to the lack of physical contact with the people around me, I sometimes feel I miss that important component of human relationships. We express our "cariño" with our bodies, and this is something the characters in this play do. "Cariño" can be translated as love or affection.

However, I am using the Spanish word because, in my opinion, “cariño” is a special kind of affection where there is no shyness, caution, or reticence to express what we feel with freedom.

There are several reasons why this play is relevant for the Washington College and Chestertown community today. In my opinion, knowledge is the best way to address racism and discrimination. By making stories of Hispanics or other cultures visible, I am helping to understand how they live, what they aspire to, and their concerns. The more people get used to it, the less they will discriminate. Besides, these Latino characters are dealing with love in one of its most pure ways. They embrace and accept love in all of its forms. We live in times when the country and the local community need a broader understanding of issues such as inclusion, identity, and segregation and how they impact our students and our community. This piece can provide awareness of how integration works and how love is a fundamental weapon for dealing with the unknown and the unexpected.

There are other components of the play and the plot that can raise debate: How does time affect our lives? How can the weather and other meteorological phenomena influence the way we live? Can people who are entirely different connect? Is love a means to communicate with other people? Is love the way to accept those who are different? How can Celestina experience love so quickly and without any boundaries? When does time actually stop? What is unconventional? Is there actually anything unconventional? How can fear prevent us from experiencing love? There are multiple possible responses to these questions, which are neither right nor wrong.

As mentioned above, I wanted to produce and direct a play that could make a statement. I wanted that statement to be political, particularly for the current fascism Argentina, the United States, and some other countries in the world are experiencing. I read plays dealing with

dictatorships and with victims of de-facto governments. I grew up with the worst military dictatorship in Argentina during the '70s. Therefore, when I chose *Cloud Tectonics*, I felt I was not being true to myself. This is not a political play. There is no cruel government torturing any victims in this story.

However, after reading the play more than six times now, I am starting to understand that every situation is political, and that there is always a statement and a connection with what the world is currently experiencing.

This play speaks about love, the freshness and spontaneous aspects of love, and how we can all connect if we can let love enter our lives. Is there anything stronger than the power of love? As I mentioned before, there are many clichés associated with love, and most of them are true weapons in today's world. We are so consumed by our need to be complacent with this capitalist world that we usually forget how important love is. Then, one day, we are invited to watch a play, and we leave the theatre house with our hearts full of love, feeling that there is indeed a better world and a piece of that world in each of us.

I want *Cloud Tectonics* to raise the flag of love and become a vehicle for connecting different people and cultures. I planned to research what other theatre communities were doing and how they deal with the current social and political situation. Hopefully, *Cloud Tectonics* can raise awareness and help start a positive societal debate. As I mentioned at the beginning, my SCE came as a culmination of something that started in a completely different way. My goal was to now steer this project to a scenario where we can discuss love, but also immigration, the role of the Hispanic community in the United States, how young college students can make a change in this society, and the role of theatre within this context.

Chapter Two: Research and Analysis

Introduction

Saturday, February 25, 1995. The rehearsal schedule for the daily call sheet of *Cloud Tectonics* shows a first call from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm, and a second call from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Robert Montano, Javi Mulero, and Camila Sanes, the three actors of the Actors Theatre of Louisville's production of *Cloud Tectonics,* attend their rehearsal from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Exactly 30 years ago today. Michele Steckler, the stage manager wrote: "Everything is cool… Everything's okay…" This gave me goosebumps. I was reading through the prop notes, the calendar, the daily calls, and the rehearsal notes, and I had the thrilling feeling of being there.

There is even a typewritten letter by José Rivera to Tina Landau, the director, that starts like this: "I found this image in a book of primitive artists, and I really fell in love with it. It may not have anything to do with *CLOUD TECTONICS* in a design way—but I love the feel of the painting and it seems there's something in the image that resonates with something in me when I think about *Cloud*." Handwritten and signed "Jose."

I looked at the black and white picture of a "California Dream House," and from my perspective, I completely agreed with the playwright's opinion; it has nothing to do with the 1915 craftsman working class house described in the play. It does not matter because, while going through these pages, I felt that I was there sharing my dramaturgical experience with the

original cast, feeling what they were feeling, and wondering what they were wondering. I fell in love a bit more with the idea of this play.

Part One: Dramaturgical Research

When Professor Polly Sommerfeld recommended Jose Rivera as a possible playwright who explores the Latinx concept in his plays, I borrowed *Marisol*, probably his most well-known play, which he wrote in 1992. I read it and liked it a lot, but I knew this was not the play to be staged at this moment. *The Siskiyou*, The Voice of SOU Students, wrote on its website a review in 2012: "Marisol, a hard-hitting exploration of theology, sex, fear, paranoia, and human relationships. Angelic warfare, mental illness and the disintegration of modern society are the themes of this disturbing and disorienting play written by Jose Rivera." After that, I read *Cloud Tectonics*, and by comparison, I decided that the latter was the right play for the Washington College community.

While researching the binder of the first production of the 1995 play at the Actors Theatre of Louisville that Professor LaRonika Thomas facilitated, I understood the reasons for my choice, which are very similar to the reasons why Jose Rivera wrote this play. In the letter he wrote to Tina Landau, the director, he stated: "I wrote the play, as I write almost all my plays, as a reaction against my previous work. You can see how different in tone and style it is from *Marisol*. That's intentional." Then, he goes on to explain that he wanted to write a play about the other side of his nature, the side that is not as obsessed with power and anger and social injustice, his more "Puerto Rican side," which is "deeply romantic, dreamy, dangerously close to

sentimental." He added that he wanted to write "to the elusiveness of love, to its slippery mysteries, to the language of love, which is always imprecise and subjective."

Unlike *Marisol*, which deals with apocalyptic violence, *Cloud Tectonics* takes a gentler look at the world. He says the play was inspired by something that happened to him five to six years before, when he was driving in Los Angeles. He drove past a pregnant hitchhiker. Afterwards, he began to wonder what her story was, why he went on, and what would have happened if he had stopped.

Jose Rivera was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1955. When he was five years old, his family moved to Long Island, New York. His work is mostly influenced by the small town where he grew up, his parents' religious background, some TV shows of the '60s, and the New York State public school system. During his high school and college years, he also studied Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Moliere. Later in his career, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian 1982 Nobel Prize winner in Literature, became his mentor at the Sundance Institute, and Rivera fell in love with *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* Marquez's most famous novel, written in 1967.

While reading the material in the binder, I came across this quote from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that produced an impact on Rivera's decision to include the metaphysical concept of time in *Cloud Tectonics*: "Time has accidents and leaves fragments of itself on the floor." It suggests that time is not something that flows continuously, but time is marked by events that are unpredictable. Time is the essence of what we experience.

But before I move on to talking about the setting the story revolves around, mostly in connection with true love and the metaphysics of time, I would like to dive into the first productions, the characters, something more about Rivera's work after this play, and the setting in which the play was written.

As I mentioned above, the play premiered at the 19th Annual Humana Festival in 1995. The Humana Festival of New American Plays was an internationally renowned festival which celebrated the contemporary works of American playwrights. It took place every year from 1976 to 2021 in Louisville, Kentucky at the Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Variety wrote about *Cloud Tectonics*' first production in its review on July 3, 1995: "Tectonics proves sweet and touching, a mystical love story for the millennium," and in reference to the title of the play, they added: "Rivera's phrase borrowed from geology to describe the enigmatic ways clouds break up and re-form. It's his central metaphor for unexplainable fates and the magic of fortunate confluences." Clouds rearrange all the time. They create unpredictable and unexplainable forms, as all the events in our life do. Those events mark the passing of time. Therefore, my direction would be aimed at making the audience wonder how time and the unpredictability of events connect in their own lives.

La Jolla Playhouse in California produced the play that same year, as did Playwrights Horizons of New York City two years later. But of all the productions since then, in my opinion, Jack Barry's review for the Yale News in 2016 captures the essence of the story in its headline: "Reality Clocks Out in *Cloud Tectonics."* The play was staged at Yale Cabaret, a performing arts theater at Yale University. Some of his quotes read: "Love is a funny thing. It can make days seem like seconds," "Love is patient, but life is not," and "*Cloud Tectonics* considers carefully what it means to have a love that lasts a lifetime." All these quotes connect the essence of time with the idea of love, because it can make days seem like seconds, or seconds can also represent a lifetime.

There are three characters in this story, including Celestina del Sol, who is hitchhiking on a very stormy night near Los Angeles Airport, and who is picked up by Aníbal de la Luna, who

works for American Airlines as an airport luggage staff. In reference to them, Barry says, "time works differently around Celestina. Her 'papi' called her cursed. Celestina asks Aníbal if years are longer than hours because she can't tell the difference. She confesses that she is a 54-year-old woman who has only aged as far as 25. When she left her home in search of her baby's father, she was newly pregnant." The third character is Nelson de la Luna, Aníbal's younger brother, who is in the military and has just returned from Germany. According to Barry's review: "If Aníbal is the quiet rumbling thunder of the storm, Nelson is the bolt of lightning—loud, quick and electrifying. Nelson is brash and oozes machismo, a stark contrast to his soft-spoken and tender-hearted brother. *Tectonics* plays with the two types of men: one sensitive, one passionate. Nelson's effusive compliments to Celestina distract her from Aníbal's attention as she is swept up in his hyper-masculine display of affection."

Regarding the choice Rivera made for his characters' names in this play, Rossini says that "at one level the play is also making an argument about archetypal mythic figures with inverted gender identities: the woman is Celestina del Sol (of the sun), and the men, Aníbal and Nelson, are de la Luna (of the moon)" (162-3).

At the beginning of the play, Celestina is described as: "She looks exhausted, as if she's been wandering on foot for days. It's impossible to tell her actual age. It's impossible to tell if she's rich or poor. She's very, very pregnant." According to Rossini, the use of "as if" by the playwright "is an attempt to clarify the terms of Celestina's apparent exhaustion—it is the fatigue of someone who has traveled for a time" (164). It is that fatigue of someone who has been looking for something exhaustively but ends up finding something else. Celestina runs away in search of Rodrigo Cruz, the father of her baby, but ends up finding the love of a lifetime.

Not only does *Cloud Tectonics* revolve about the concept of time, but the play also reflects on the desires of its three characters. Rossini says: "Celestina is on a quest to find the father of her baby; the only man she has ever had sex with. Sex for her is an obsession, although not in the sense that she desires everyone but rather that she desires sex with the right person." Thus, the author is "pointing toward the idea of the spiritual and the timeless in the act of physical human connection." However, at the same time, "she becomes the object of desire and fantasy for both Aníbal and his brother Nelson. Although their interest is not particularly predatory, they still seem drawn to Celestina" (165).

When analyzing and reading about Rivera's work, the term magic realism pops up. According to Rossini, it is a term with multiple genealogies, "often conflated with the fantastic, manifest in an assumption that it creates a space outside the real and outside the normal logic of the dramatic or fictive universe" (148). It becomes a term that makes me wonder what is inside or outside the real universe of the play. Nevertheless, Rivera has pointed out that "his plays have their own logic, but that logic is operating in an altered universe where events that might seem improbable, mythical, or dreamlike have the same material status as events audiences more regularly encounter. The key is that everything is happening within the same event horizon; there is no gap between what might be labeled real and what might be labeled magic" (148).

The term magic realism was used by many writers and scholars of Latin America to talk about other writers' works during the 1940s. Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), a Cuban novelist and essayist, first spoke about "lo real maravilloso," "the marvelous real, an aesthetic specifically tied to the space of America and to the experience of this geography. Lo real maravilloso was placed in opposition to the presumed artificiality of European surrealism" (Rossini 149).

Rivera's work has also dealt with subjects of political and sociological nature. *Marisol*, for instance, turns our attention to the problem of homelessness in New York City. He also wrote the screenplay for *The Motorcycle Diaries*, a 2004 film based on the life of Che Guevara, a Marxist revolutionary, guerrilla leader, and a very politicized figure. Two years later, he wrote a play that deals with the last few hours Che Guevara was alive, called *School of the Americas*.

He has been a prolific playwright. Among his other well-known plays, we can mention *Each Day Dies with Sleep* (1990), *Maricela De La Luz Lights the World* (1995), *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* (2000), and *Sonnets for an Old Century* (2000). He worked on the translation into English of *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* (2010), and he is currently working on the screenplay for the remake of *La Bamba*, the 1987 film about the life of Los Angeles teenage singer Ritchie Valens.

Cloud Tectonics was written in the early '90s, when the world was watching the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Serbo-Croatian war, also known as the Bosnian War, which took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When in the play Nelson comes back two years later, which completely confuses Aníbal, as only twenty minutes have passed for him, Nelson is mad because he says that all the letters he had sent to his brother came back. "You think it was fun being out in fucking Bosnia and not hearing from you all that fucking time!?" Aníbal cannot understand what his brother is talking about, and Nelson replies: "The war? The Battle of Mostar? Are you stoned or what? Don't they get the news in LA?" He reaches into his raincoat and pulls up a handful of medals. While time and its references are not important in this play, Nelson brings the outside world into the scene and is thus showing us that this is the year 1994.

When the Epilogue starts, Celestina goes to the microphone and talks. It is forty years later, she is no longer pregnant, but she looks the same. It is another stormy day, and she is

talking about the rain. She says that The Big One was finally born, a monster with seven epicenters, releasing unimaginable waves of energy and killing many unprepared people. She then added, “Los Angeles died for a while. People went back to New York and the Midwest. There was a long sleep. But people came back.” On January 17, 1994, at 4:30 am, residents of the greater Los Angeles area were rudely awakened by the strong shaking of the Northridge earthquake. This was the first earthquake to strike directly under an urban area of the United States since the 1993 Long Beach earthquake. It lasted approximately eight seconds, and it was the largest earthquake in the area since 1971. Fifty-seven people died and more than nine thousand were injured. The Southern California Earthquake Center states: “The earthquake occurred on a blind thrust fault and produced the strongest ground motions ever instrumentally recorded in an urban setting in North America. Damage was wide-spread, sections of major freeways collapsed, parking structures and office buildings collapsed, and numerous apartment buildings suffered irreparable damage. Damage to wood-frame apartment houses was very widespread in the San Fernando Valley and Santa Monica areas, especially to structures with ‘soft' first floor or lower-level parking garages.” This natural disaster shows the same point in time, the year 1994.

As I mentioned above, the metaphysical concept of time and of what can be possible is also present in *Cloud Tectonics*. José Rivera is mentioned in the first production papers as someone who has always had this obsession with the many possible paths people may take, and that every choice one makes can impact ten others. Consequently, Aníbal’s decision to pick up the very pregnant Celestina and take her home during that stormy night makes an impact on their lives and on all the people around them.

The metaphysical concept of time is also a key element in understanding what is going on between them. “Clocks and calendars create the illusion that we live in a world of mathematically measured segments of time,” says the article in National Geographic (130), the same article in the binder used for dramaturgical purposes for the first production of the play in 1995. Rossini adds that “Rivera imagines a human body that operates outside time, a woman whose presence exerts a similar transformation on her immediate environment. Her reality, in which time has acquired a different meaning because of its lack of coherence and consistency, is shaped by memory” (162-163). Is time linear, or circular? Do events happen one after the other or are they parallel, everything happening at the same time? Does Celestina have the ability to stop time, or is time a relative concept? All these questions about the nature of time are necessary to understand why the connection between love and time is important. Love transcends time, and when love is present, time becomes a relative concept. The love of a lifetime, as Aníbal and Celestina say at the end of the play, explains why love is so powerful. Because even if it takes an hour in our linear time, it can be considered a lifetime.

The National Geographic article explains that Isaac Newton declared in 1687 that “time flows equably without any relation to anything external” (118). Albert Einstein in 1905 said that “the very measurement of time intervals is affected by the motion of the observer” (118). There are also theories that predict that “a clock will slow as its speed of motion increases” (116), as when inside a spaceship that travels at almost the speed of light. We have all wondered what time means for each of us, and we have all experienced how time seems to have different speeds, depending on what we do or where we are. “One thought is that time is something itself and acts as a background in which events are situated. We think of this time as flowing and having a direction” (Mumford 55). When Aníbal talks about time, Celestina gets agitated. She does not

understand the concept of time, and she does not know what a year means or what an hour implies. “We speak of time flowing but, while we can measure the speed of a river, can we really do anything similar for time? If time passes, how quickly does it pass? Presumably one second per second? Does that make sense? Could there be any other answer?” (Mumford 56). But we cannot determine or explain what a second is, and because we are not aware of this, we simply accept this as a fact. But Celestina is aware of this, and that is why she gets so anxious, because she is not accepting the concept of time.

Love is as relative as time is in *Cloud Tectonics*. Rossini explains this concept, stating that “in Rivera’s work love becomes a transformational element that wrights the world around it. Being in love and recognizing a connectedness transforms not only the individual but also various elements of the symbolic environment; there is a change in the perception of space and the psychic mapping of that space within the reality created” (159-60). Therefore, love transformed Celestina in the past, transforms Aníbal in the present and in the future, and transforms Nelson in a parallel time as well. Rossini adds that “love is the force that transforms all of the languages of the body, and desire becomes a means of passing through time” (167).

Language is also an element in this triangle that connects time, love, and the characters in this play. “For Celestina, Spanish is the language of love, and during an extensive monologue in Spanish she talks about loving Aníbal through his entire life. Unfortunately, this one moment in which she seems to consider the passage of time something worth observing passes by Aníbal, because he has forgotten Spanish” (Rossini 167). Celestina can connect with her roots, and Spanish is the language that means home, that represents love. However, Aníbal still needs to come to terms with his past and accept who he is.

As a conclusion, I would like to point out that we can spend hours or endless intervals of time discussing, questioning, and providing dramaturgical information about time and love, and we will never come across the right answer—or we will, and it will represent the correct answer for us today, but it may be completely different for someone else at any other time. This was the feeling that I, as a director, would like the audience to experience when they leave the play. They would certainly feel the love connection and the passing of time, and it is now time to elaborate on what they have experienced.

Part Two: Dramaturgical Script Analysis

I started to analyze the script by establishing the foundations of the plot, which denote the overall conditions of the play and how it takes place. In the following lines, you will find the collection of features that create the special world of the play.

The time of the play's action is 1994. Even though there is no specific allusion to time, there are references to world events, such as the war in Bosnia, which took place in 1994, and the big earthquake of the same year in Los Angeles. Therefore, I would set the action of the play to 1994.

The dramatic time passes in a particular way in this play, as time is a key circumstance for the development of the story. When Celestina meets Aníbal, time stops for Aníbal and for them, but not for the rest of the world. Therefore, when Nelson leaves for Death Valley and comes back two years later, only around half an hour has passed inside Aníbal's house. This situation creates a lot of confusion for the siblings. Then, Celestina runs out of the house, and Aníbal tries to search for her. That is the end of *Cloud Tectonics*. The epilogue starts forty years later, consequently ten years from today, in around 2035. Celestina describes the events that took place during that period, without giving specific reference to any lapse of time. But when Aníbal appears, he is in his seventies, even though Celestina is as young as ever.

Another important element of the dramatic time is the reference that Celestina makes when she is sitting next to Aníbal's bed during the epilogue. He cannot remember her, and she tells him they were in love. Aníbal is surprised and asks her how she knows this, and she responds: "We lived together for two years, didn't we?" That was the time that Nelson was away, even though for Celestina and Aníbal, it was no longer than thirty minutes.

The next circumstance to analyze is place. The general locale is the city of Los Angeles. The play starts on the corner of Virgil and Santa Monica, to be more precise, where Celestina is hitchhiking under a terrible storm. Aníbal gives her a ride to his house in Echo Park. The location where Aníbal picks her up is around fifteen minutes from his house, and forty minutes from Los Angeles Airport, where Aníbal works. Echo Park is considered a diverse neighborhood and is located around ten minutes away from downtown Los Angeles, and thirty minutes away from Hollywood Boulevard.

The specific locale is Aníbal's house, a craftsman house built in 1915. According to Architectural Designs[4], "a craftsman style house is known for its low-pitched, gabled roofs with wide overhangs and exposed rafters." Aníbal's house has a combined living room and kitchen with a small eating area. It is all decorated with second and third-hand furniture. The door in the living room leads to the front porch, and there is another door that leads to the bathroom. The bedroom is located on the second floor. During the epilogue, forty years later, the house is exactly the same, but the bed is on the first floor.

Regarding the social system that governs the play, they are all working middle class, with no higher education than high school. Nelson is in the Army, and Aníbal loads luggage for American Airlines at the Los Angeles Airport. They were all born in the United States from

[4] Architecuraldesigns.com

Hispanic families, so they are all heritage speakers of Spanish. According to Celestina, she spent her whole life in her room, eating in bed, reading detective stories, and making love to herself, while her parents worked very hard. She escaped when her parents died. They must have been a very religious family; since her parents thought she was cursed, they kept eighteen statues of Jesus Christ in her room. Nelson was in Germany for the Armed Forces, and he was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia. He is separated from his wife. Aníbal was in a relationship with Debbie. They met in high school. She then went to college, married her English professor, and moved to Ohio. He was in several relationships after that, but none of them worked. He even fell in love with a series of women who turned out to be lesbians. One day, Debbie left her husband and called Aníbal again, and they started a relationship after that. During the epilogue, Aníbal mentions that "he knocked her up" and he married her. She died one week before Aníbal and Celestina met again.

Spanish is a very important aspect of the culture surrounding the three characters in this play, particularly because they seem to have spoken the language at home, but they cannot remember it, except for isolated words. During a moment of intimacy, Celestina speaks a whole paragraph in Spanish. When Aníbal is surprised about this, she says in Spanish that she only speaks Spanish when she is in love. When Aníbal describes his family, his details depict a typical working-class family who immigrated from Puerto Rico.

Spirituality is present in the form of how Celestina appears to the rest of the world. Her stories are unbelievable. However, there is no proof of something different whatsoever. She is described as "mentally disturbed" by Aníbal to Nelson. We do not know whether she is insane or not, but we can definitely assert that her mind works very differently from most people's. She could be described as a "good crazy," someone who is spontaneous, authentic, fearless, and bold,

ready to disrupt the social order. Also, the social order of the play is disrupted by the fact that time stops when and where Celestina is present. This fictional social order creates confusing situations, which do not affect the world the characters create and how they relate to the given circumstances of this world.

It is now time to expose the unseen events of the play, and to discuss everything that happened to these three characters before the beginning of the play. We learn that Aníbal was not successful in his relationships, and he was somewhat obsessed with Debbie. He met her at their high school in the Bronx. She then married her professor and Aníbal wanted to kill himself. After that, he met several women. For one of them, when he took her home to meet his parents, his father made a pass at her. The rest were either alcoholics, or had problems with drugs, or were lesbians. When he met Debbie again, they decided to go to L.A. She wanted to get rich on the movies, and he wanted to get away from the racist people in New York. His family used to live in New Jersey. He had thirteen cousins, and one of them went to Vietnam, and Eva, his older cousin, was the first woman Aníbal had sex with.

Nelson is Aníbal's younger brother. They have not seen each other for the last six years. We discover that their mother seemed to have loved Aníbal more than him. He threw a grenade at his ex-wife when she was drunk, and she called him a "fucking little greasy Puerto Rican." It did not go off well, and they got divorced.

Celestina left her house in Montauk Point when she started her journey. She lived in a room in her parents' house. Her father sailed boats for tourists. Rodrigo Cruz is the father of her baby. His father hired him to work on his boat, "The Celestina." Her parents had removed all the clocks from her room. She would live in that small room and that was her whole world. Things were everywhere, on top of everything. She would sleep in her clothes, eat in bed, and read

detective novels. Her parents thought that she was cursed. She would daydream about Rodrigo and sex. She was obsessed with Rodrigo and with sex. Her Papi bought her a bicycle to give her something else to think about beside her body. One day, she was allowed to ride around the house, because her father wanted her to count numbers over and over. He also wanted to teach her the nature of time. Then Rodrigo was hired, and she would stare at him from her window as he worked. After Rodrigo knocked her up and left her, she noticed the house was too quiet. Then she went to her parents' room and found them dead on their bed. They were holding hands. They were naked and pale and covered in long grey hairs. Then she called the police, got dressed, and ran out of the house because she was sure they would blame her. When she ran away, she met a trucker who drove her all over the country, until she left him. He would not stop touching her knees. She was already pregnant when she met him, and they spent more than two years together.

Now, I would like to discuss the plot of the play, its structure, and the arrangement of the parts in relationship to each other. The plot can be considered linear. It starts when Celestina and Aníbal meet. It moves through a series of situations between them and with Nelson, and it ends at a point in the future, forty years later, when they meet again. It is divided into three parts. The prologue, when Celestina is hitchhiking under the storm and Aníbal drives her to his home. When they get home, Nelson is back and leaves again. Celestina and Aníbal spend part of the night together, Nelson arrives back two years later, and Celestina runs away. And in the epilogue, when she returns forty years later, Aníbal cannot recognize her.

According to Freytag's Pyramid, the play consists of five distinct parts. Firstly, the exposition and inciting action, when Aníbal makes the decision to invite her to spend the night at his house. Secondly, the action rises when they feel connected to each other, when they touch

their bodies and they feel they want to be with each other. Thirdly, the climax is reached when Nelson is back and thinks that Celestina is pregnant again, and his brother is the father, and Celestina runs away. Then, the action falls during the epilogue, when Celestina meets an old Aníbal. Finally, the resolution arrives when Aníbal speaks Spanish, and they discover they were each other's love of a lifetime ("el amor de toda una vida"). The obstacle in the story is the arrival of Nelson, and how madly he falls for Celestina. This blocks or delays the progress of their relationship, and it helps the story to advance, because Nelson is back, he thinks his brother and Celestina are in a relationship. He gets mad, he fights with his brother, and Celestina vanishes in the middle of this confusing situation. According to Aristotle, there is recognition because there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, just as Celestina acknowledges that her problem with time prevents her from having a normal relationship with another man. She runs away, and this becomes the reversal that changes the circumstances of the plot.

By analyzing other aspects of the plot formation, we can determine that the play possesses a late point of attack, because most of the onstage dramatic time frame is constrained by the need to narrate so much background story. More talking, to understand how they got to that point, and less action. The primary event is the moment when Celestina, who is already pregnant, runs away from her house and starts wandering all over the United States with a truck driver.

To discuss some aspects of the characters in more detail, Celestina and Aníbal are the two protagonists of this story, and Nelson could be considered the antagonist, with whom the conflict arises. Celestina's dramatic action is directed toward Aníbal, and vice versa, until this is interrupted by Nelson. Celestina wants to love and to be loved. She does not seem to be looking for answers, or even to be understood, but she does want to be accepted the way she is. Aníbal's

goal is to be in a relationship where somebody will finally accept him as he is. Nelson wants to have a woman, and a big family. At the end, they all want the same thing, with different psychological and physical ingenuities, motivations, values, and willpower, as they all have different background stories.

Celestina is naïve and straightforward at the same time. She is not afraid of what most people are and can experience and feel love at many different levels. As she cannot understand or even feel what time is, she brings another conflict to the story, as those around her cannot understand this. The actress playing Celestina would need to work on how time affects our lives, and on how difficult it is for human beings to experience the present moment. Celestina does not have a job, or a profession, and she does not go to school or have a house to take care of. She simply lives with what comes across her life. She is also intuitively smart and has the willpower to accomplish her objectives.

Aníbal's personality is shaped by a background where male members of a family are expected to be strong, sensible, robust, superficial, and unsympathetic. However, he is exactly the opposite, and the light Celestina shares with him allows him to be who he really is. This makes him feel different and confused, but calm, protected, sheltered, and secure. He loves his brother, and he embodies the life he would really like to live. He is not the macho type at all, so he adopts a fatherly attitude with his younger brother; therefore, he can have some male representation within his family and his context.

Nelson is a sweet predator. He is charismatic, charming, and affectionate, but can be manipulative, strategic, or dominant at the same time. He is interested in war, sex, and in all things men are supposed to be. He is not afraid of showing who he really is and what he actually wants. He is a family man. Having a wife and children can provide him with comfort and

security. Consequently, he goes through life looking for a wife and children and not being very selective. His choices are made by looks or similar objectives, rather than by personality, or love-driven forces. He does not understand his older brother, but he accepts him.

The last aspects I would like to discuss from the playscript analysis are the themes/ideas, the dialogue and its tempo, the rhythm, the mood, and the style in the way Jose Rivera treats the different elements of the play.

To discuss the idea of this play, we need to understand two thought patterns spoken about and displayed by the characters here: love and time. This is a love story; however, it is not the conventional boy-meets-girl narrative. Love can be felt throughout the play in the way the characters open up to each other. Love is something that, even though they have exchanged minimal physical contact, will last a lifetime. This is revealed during the Epilogue, when Aníbal talks and sounds like a young man and says: "I never saw her again. All I kept were memories of that extraordinary woman and a night that had that dream feeling for it, you know that feeling: there's a sound like suspended music, air that doesn't move, time that doesn't add to itself" (Rivera 30). The second theme is time and hereby expressed in a metaphysical form. Time is of no importance in Celestina's life. The way she used to live did not require the knowledge of time. Then, once she starts connecting with other people, time becomes what separates her from the rest of the world. This is also explained by the second part of Aníbal's monologue during the Epilogue: "It took me years, but I finally understood that I had encountered a true mystery that night, that I had taken a living miracle into my house. That Celestina del Sol was from a world I would never understand. That sometimes Nature improvises. That Nature created a woman that lived outside the field of time and may never die. That someday everyone who ever knew her

and remembered her would be gone. That she would live forever in that physical perfection like some kind of exiled and forgotten goddess" (Rivera 52).

The dialogue flows informally throughout the play, with mostly long sentences when Aníbal and Celestina share their past with each other, showing slowness, calmness, and thoughtfulness. However, dialogue changes abruptly when Nelson is present, with more vulgar words, and short sentences, denoting speed, impatience, and urgency. There are a few long speeches, particularly when the protagonists tell their stories or share intimate memories. They are carefully orchestrated to express the matters associated with the play's themes. At the same time, the tempo, rhythm, and mood of the play accompany these dialogues and speeches, creating a relaxing, sensual, harmonious, and even spiritual atmosphere when Aníbal and Celestina are together. On the contrary, the presence of Nelson creates a completely different mood. The pace is faster; there is urgency, uncertainty, and disconnection.

Finally, Jose Rivera's style is characterized by very simple language in this play. The surrealism involving the magical elements of the play is presented in an effortless and natural way, which produces a sense of spiritual awakening and a need to explore the threshold between realism and symbolism.

As part of the dramaturgical script analysis, I will now divide the play into French scenes, and I will discuss the length, the role of the characters, the plot, the setting, and the time for each of these units.

French Scene: 1		
Length		Page 1: from "Celestina del Sol is standing at the bus stop" until page 2: "The microphones are suddenly awash in red light." No lines. It will take about two minutes.

	Celestina	The scene opens with Celestina standing at the bus stop. She's hitchhiking and eating saltine crackers. It is impossible to tell her actual age, or whether she is rich or poor. She is very pregnant.
Characters	Aníbal	---
	Nelson	---
Plot		There is a terrible storm, and Celestina wants to be taken somewhere out of that place. A car stops.
Setting		It's raining. There is a storm. It's outside on the road. It's nighttime.
Time		The time elapsed in this scene represents around 30 to 40 minutes.
Design		The prologue begins with the bolero *Por el Amor de una Mujer*. A glass wall represents the bus stop. Celestina is wearing a maternity dress and carrying a small shopping bag. Sounds of storm and lightning. Sounds of a car approaching. Headlights on Celestina.

French Scene: 2		
Length		Page 2: from "Aníbal de la Luna enters and goes to the microphone*"* until page 6: "End of prologue.*"* Four pages. It will take about six minutes.
	Celestina	She is shivering and gets in Aníbal's car. She wants to know where she is. She talks about her experience with the trucker. She wants to find Rodrigo Cruz, her child's father. She talks about her family and Rodrigo, and how she became pregnant.
Characters	Aníbal	A pleasant-looking man in his thirties, dressed in an American Airlines ground crew uniform. He is nervous. He talks about his time in New York. He is confused about this woman who is pregnant and does not even know for how long. He doesn't know whether to take her to the police or a hospital. He finally invites her to spend the night at his house.
	Nelson	---

Plot		Celestina meets Aníbal who is concerned about her being pregnant and alone in the middle of such a storm at night. There is something about her that makes him rely on her, and he invites her home.
Setting		It's raining. There is a storm. It's outside on the road. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene is long, but the time elapsed with this conversation is actually what it takes to change the streetlight from red to green.
Design		As soon as Aníbal appears, two microphones on C-stand are suddenly awash in red light. Their conversation takes place on the microphones, both looking at the audience and between them. During the prologue, Aníbal's house is being unveiled: the black tarps that cover the setting of his house are removed.

French Scene: 3		
Length		Page 7: from the beginning of *Cloud Tectonics* until page 19: "Celestina goes to the bathroom and closes the door." 12 pages. It will take about 15 minutes.
	Celestina	Celestina opens up to Aníbal. She talks about her parents, about Rodrigo, how she lived before, when she left her house, and how Rodrigo got her pregnant. She mentions how important sex is for her. She shows her total lack of knowledge of time, and she wants to know how time is felt.
Characters	Aníbal	Aníbal opens up to Celestina. He tells her about Debbie, what he thinks about friendship and sex, and he talks about sex at work. He feels attracted to Celestina and finds her extremely beautiful. He wants to understand why she cannot tell him how old she is or how long she has been pregnant.
	Nelson	---
Plot		They get to know each other, creating the necessary level of intimacy that builds up until they kiss and they hold each other.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.

Time		This scene is long, and it represents at least one full hour.
Design		Lights on the setting of Aníbal's house. A living room, a kitchen, and a small eating area in one room. Full of family pictures, and second and third-hand furniture. There are two doors, one to the porch and another one to the bathroom. There are some subtle plaster cracks on the walls from a recent earthquake. There are different appliances, and a water dispenser with an empty bottle. The digital clock shows 8:05. The glass wall is now part of the house. There is a platform with the bed on top of it. Sounds of keys, the door opens, and the clock immediately changes to 12:00, and it stays like this for the rest of the scene. Aníbal gets a new water bottle from the porch. Every time the door is opened we can hear the street sounds with sirens, cars passing by, and the storm.

French Scene: 4		
Length		Page 19: from "Aníbal is alone" until page 19: "*A*níbal goes to the door and opens it. Sirens." One line. It will take about two minutes.
	Celestina	----
Characters	Aníbal	Aníbal checks the telephone, the radio, and the TV, and they are not working. He hides the knives in the kitchen.
	Nelson	---
Plot		Aníbal is confused and tries to understand what is going on.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents only a few minutes, while Celestina is in the bathroom.
Design		Sounds of static when he turns on the radio and the TV. Knives are needed in the kitchen.

French Scene: 5		
Length		Page 19: from "Aníbal's younger brother, Sergeant Nelson de la Luna is there" until bottom of page 22, when Aníbal says: "Nelson—Doooooooon't!" 3.5 pages. It will take about five minutes.
	Celestina	----
Characters	Aníbal	Aníbal is happy that his brother is here and complains because his brother is going to be home for only an hour.
	Nelson	He is taller and broader than his brother, and he has a baby face, short hair, and a little mustache. He is wearing an Army issued raincoat and Army boots. He is happy to see his brother and his house. He talks about where he has been. He shows he is desperate for sex.
Plot		Aníbal's younger brother appears. They talk about where he has been, the house, how much they have missed each other, and Celestina. It ends up with a brotherly wrestling scene.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents only a few minutes, while Celestina is in the bathroom.
Design		Sounds of static when he turns on the radio and the TV. Knives are needed in the kitchen.

French Scene: 6		
Length		Page 23: from "Celestina comes in. She's got a gun" until top of page 27, when Nelson goes off and says: "A man would." Four pages. It will take about six minutes.

	Celestina	She points a gun at Nelson as she thinks he is attacking Aníbal when she comes out of the bathroom. She feels well, is comforted by Nelson, and feels that he likes her.
Characters	Aníbal	Aníbal is confused about his brother's sudden love for Celestina.
	Nelson	He was married before and now wants to marry Celestina. He thanks his brother for introducing him to the woman of his dreams. His watch stops, and he leaves for Death Valley because he does not know how long he has been there. Duty calls.
Plot		Celestina meets Nelson. Nelson falls in love with her, asks her to wait for him for two years, and promises her he will be back and he will become the baby's father.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents around half the time Nelson stays in his brother's house, approximately 30 minutes.
Design		A gun is needed. Sounds of a storm and sirens when the door is open.

French Scene: 7		
Length		Page 27: from "Aníbal watches Nelson driving away…" until top of page 36: "Nelson is there." Nine pages. It will take about 20 minutes.
	Celestina	She admits she is in love, and that is why she speaks Spanish.
Characters	Aníbal	He talks about his past life, how he met Debbie, his first sex story, his family. He becomes very intimate with Celestina. He is afraid of mixing his sad dreams with her wild ones.
	Nelson	----
Plot		Aníbal and Celestina start trusting each other, and they fall in love.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents around twenty or thirty minutes for Aníbal and Celestina, but it actually represents two years in real time.

Design		When they go to the bedroom, the rest of the house is in the dark, as if it disappears. Twinkling stars, a crescent moon, and dark silver clouds can be seen. Sound of sirens when Aníbal opens the door, together with the sounds of several water bottles. Pillows, blankets, and bed sheets are needed for this scene.

French Scene: 8		
Length		Top of page 36: from "Nelson looks different…" until top of page 39: "Celestina is in the living room." Three pages. It will take about four minutes.
	Celestina	----
Characters	Aníbal	He is completely confused about the way his brother looks, and basically about how one night can be two years.
	Nelson	He looks different, older, and without his Army uniform. He walks with a cane. He feels different, too; he has lost his childlike look. He is back to marry Celestina. He describes his time in Bosnia during the war. He cannot understand why his brother has not returned his letters.
Plot		Nelson comes back, and the whole situation is very confusing for him and for Aníbal. Two years have passed for Nelson, while Aníbal thinks that he left 20 minutes before.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents around ten or fifteen minutes in real time.
Design		Sound of sirens when Aníbal opens the door, together with the sounds of several water bottles. Letters and medals.

French Scene: 9

Length		Page 39: from "Nelson turns to face her…" until page 42, when Aníbal shouts: "Nelson? Nelson!" Three pages. It will take about six minutes.
Characters	Celestina	She is the only one who understands what is going on. She wants Aníbal not to be afraid of her, and she is sad for what is happening between the brothers.
	Aníbal	He cannot understand what has happened. He tries to protect Celestina, but he doesn't want his brother to run away again.
	Nelson	He is completely confused and mad because he thinks that they are in love, and they are lying to him.
Plot		Nelson cannot believe that Celestina is pregnant again, and thinks the baby is Aníbal's. He gets mad. Celestina tries to explain that she has changed the time around Aníbal. Nelson gets angry and body slams Aníbal onto the floor. Aníbal is hurt, and Nelson runs away.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents around ten minutes in real time.
Design		Sound of sirens when the door is opened.

French Scene: 10		
Length		Page 42: from "Aníbal gets up to follow Nelson" until page 42: "Aníbal runs out into the night…" One line. It will take about one minute.
Characters	Celestina	She is afraid of what could happen.
	Aníbal	He doesn't know what his brother is capable of doing.
	Nelson	----
Plot		Aníbal runs out behind Nelson.
Setting		Aníbal's house. It's nighttime.
Time		This scene represents around two minutes in real time.
Design		Sound of sirens when the door is opened.

French Scene: 11		
Length		Page 42: from “Celestina is alone” until page 42: “She goes to the door.” No lines. It will take about five minutes.
	Celestina	She is nervous and anxious. She gets dressed. She does not know how much time has passed.
Characters	Aníbal	----
	Nelson	----
Plot		Celestina waits for Aníbal to come back.
Setting		Aníbal’s house. It’s nighttime.
Time		The time this scene represents is uncertain, as Celestina has no idea of how long she has waited.
Design		Sound of sirens when the door is opened.

French Scene: 12		
Length		Page 42: from “Celestina runs into the night…” until page 43: “The digital clock stops blinking and…” No lines. It will take a few seconds.
	Celestina	She runs out into the night, leaving the door open.
Characters	Aníbal	----
	Nelson	----
Plot		Celestina runs away.
Setting		Aníbal’s house. It’s nighttime.
Time		The clock shows one minute later than the moment Celestina and Aníbal arrived at the house for the first time.
Design		Sound of sirens when the door is open. The digital clock stops blinking and a new time comes on: 8:06.

French Scene: 13

Length		Page 43: from “Aníbal closes the door behind him” until page 43: when Aníbal shouts “Celestina” offstage. 12 lines. It will take two to three minutes.
	Celestina	----
Characters	Aníbal	He comforts his brother, but now he realizes that Celestina is gone and gets desperate.
	Nelson	Looks for Celestina, too.
Plot		Aníbal brings Nelson back home, and now he can’t find Celestina and runs out.
Setting		Aníbal’s house. It’s nighttime.
Time		The scene represents a couple of minutes in the story.
Design		Sound of sirens when the door is open.

French Scene: 14		
Length		Page 43: from “The door closes with a slam” until page 43: blackout. End of Cloud Tectonics. Two lines. It will take one minute.
	Celestina	----
Characters	Aníbal	----
	Nelson	He calls out for Celestina.
Plot		Nelson looks for Celestina inside the house.
Setting		Aníbal’s house. It’s nighttime.
Time		The scene represents a couple of minutes in the story.
Design		The sound of rain stops.

French Scene: 15		
Length		Page 45: from “Epilogue: On the dark” until page 46: “The bolero ends or fades out.” A page and a half. It will take five minutes.

	Celestina	She is no longer pregnant but looks exactly the same. She is pushing a stroller and wearing Aníbal's suede jacket.
Characters	Aníbal	----
	Nelson	----
Plot		Celestina makes a speech about what has happened, how the earthquake has changed everything, and how the city is reborn.
Setting		It is 40 years later. The place is the same without the bus stop.
Time		The scene represents a moment 40 years later. It can be something Celestina is dreaming about.
Design		The bolero plays again. There is a microphone on the C-stand downstage. During her speech, the house is in the dark, and the bed is brought to the center of the stage.

French Scene: 16		
Length		Page 46: from "In the dark, Aníbal enters" until page 53: "Blackout. End of play." Five pages. It will take six or seven minutes.
	Celestina	She is sad because she misses Aníbal, and he cannot recognize her. She recalls how much she loved him and still does. She smiles sadly at the sweet memory and goes back to the bus stop holding her thumb up.
Characters	Aníbal	He is around 73 years old. When he feels her hands and starts remembering, he talks as if he were a young man again.
	Nelson	----
Plot		Celestina reminds Aníbal of the two years they spent together, but he cannot remember. Aníbal tells her what has happened to him. Then, he suddenly starts speaking Spanish and talks about the love of a lifetime and how much he loved her.
Setting		It is 40 years later. The place is the same without the bus stop.

Time		The scene represents a moment 40 years later. It can be something Celestina is dreaming about, or Aníbal is, or it can be real.
Design		The bolero plays again when Celestina gets to the bus stop and starts hitchhiking again.

As a conclusion, the special world of this play creates a setting where Celestina and Aníbal build up a strong and meaningful love bond. There is also an unexpected visitor, Nelson, who is in charge of connecting the outside circumstances with the internal world, and of disrupting the passing of time and the relationship between the two main characters.

Chapter Three: Approach and Vision

Introduction

Cloud Tectonics starts with a bolero, "*Por el Amor de una Mujer*," composed by Danny Daniel, a Spanish singer and songwriter, in 1974. The chorus reads:

Todo me parece como un sueño, todavía

Pero sé que, al fin, podré olvidar un día

Hoy me siento Triste, pero pronto cantaré

Y prometo no acordarme nunca del ayer.

The first line, with "*everything still seems a dream*," shows us how Aníbal feels at the end of the play, when he remembers his Spanish and expresses his profound love for Celestina. The following lines translate as: "*I thought I could remember one day. I am still sad, but I will be singing soon. And I promise I will never remember the past*." This shows us that Aníbal needs to forget the past in order to stop his suffering. In contrast, Celestina does not understand what the past is, because she lives in an ongoing present time.

The analysis of the spine of the play is therefore grounded by how Jose Rivera manages to mix this beautiful romantic relationship with the metaphysical concept of time. My plan, my directorial vision, and approach towards this play and its production would turn around the

notion of love and time and emphasize how the Spanish language is used within the Hispanic families in the United States, particularly in the case of heritage speakers, to symbolize the struggle to survive in a hostile discriminatory environment.

Approach and Vision

As mentioned above, Celestina does not understand what time implies, and therefore she lives in a permanent present time. As Dr. Joe Dispenza states in his book, *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*: "So much has been written about the importance of staying present. I could cite statistics on everything from distracted driving to divorce to support the notion that people have a really hard time staying in the present moment. Let me add to that body of knowledge by expressing this concept in quantum terms. In the present, all potentials exist simultaneously in the field. When we stay present, when we are in the moment, we can move beyond space and time, and we can make any of those potentials a reality. When we are mired in the past, however, none of those new potentials exist" (85). When we see time from this perspective, everything happens at once, and there is no before or after. Our human perception views time in a linear way, thus polarizing the before and the after. If we think of a pendulum that oscillates between two points, from one extreme position, the furthest possible point, to another, Celestina represents the equilibrium point.

This is easy to understand from the perspective of science, but almost impossible to apply to our everyday life, and that is the reason why Celestina is seen as "living in a dreamworld[5]."

[5] On page 22, Anibal tells his brother that Celestina is mentally disturbed or living in a dreamworld.

Consequently, what would happen if we could live on that equilibrium point? We would certainly reach the perfection of love, because there would be nothing to lose or to gain, only the continuous and permanent enjoyment of the present moment.

When discussing the paradox of time, Eckhart Tolle says: "On the surface, the present moment is what happens. Since what happens changes continuously, it seems that every day of your life consists of thousands of moments in which different things happen. Time is seen as the endless succession of moments. Yet, if you look more closely, that is to say, through your own immediate experience, you find that there are not many moments at all. You discover that there is only ever this moment. Life is always now. Your entire life unfolds in this constant now" (204).

On the other hand, time structures our lives, establishes our routines, dictates our tasks and chores, and organizes our lives and the lives of others. Therefore, what would happen if we could live without a time frame? We would undoubtedly have a totally unstructured life. "When we speak of the elimination of time, we are, of course, not referring to clock time, which is the use of time for practical purposes, such as making an appointment or planning a trip. What we are speaking of is the elimination of psychological time, which is the egoic mind's endless preoccupation with past and future, and its unwillingness to be one with life by living in alignment with the inevitable *isness* of the present moment" (Toll 207).

Celestina's dreamworld is characterized by this combination of a complete equilibrium, a point where there is not a before or an after, a world with a total lack of structure, a dreamworld where no human being usually inhabits. What is more, Celestina is referred to as "mentally disturbed" because we usually refer to those who live in the present time, without any structure, as lunatics.

Monica Gomez is a friend of mine who lives in Italy. She is a teacher of English and a counsellor. I met her in Argentina more than thirty years ago, and we exchange voice messages almost daily. She is like a sister to me. When discussing *Cloud Tectonics* with her, we shared our views about the characters, and Tomas, her only son, came to her mind. Tomas is a twenty-seven-year-old man with Down syndrome. She said: "Celestina is like Tomy, she lives without any restraints, any barriers, she lives the present time intensely, because that is all she has."

Instead, Aníbal's life has always been governed by social, family, and personal structures, and that is why Celestina becomes so attractive. She is the complete opposite, the mirror where Aníbal would love to look at himself. Celestina appears in his life to teach him a lesson, to let him get carried away by what he wants, without any time restraint, enjoying the present time, regardless of its duration, because whether it's a minute, an hour, or a year, they are all exactly the same. A minute can certainly become the love of a lifetime.

During their moment of intimacy, Celestina says in Spanish: "I wonder what it would be like to love you in every age of your life." She mentions how she could love him when he was a baby, a boy, and when he was growing up. She ends up saying: "the love of a lifetime." Her speech is in Spanish. Aníbal is surprised and says: "I did not know you could speak Spanish." She answers: "I only speak Spanish when I am in love," and she says this in Spanish. Aníbal recognizes that he has forgotten his Spanish.

Aníbal has probably not forgotten his Spanish, but children who are born in Hispanic families in the United States usually try to not use their family language inside and outside their family circle, as a way of fighting off a discriminatory hostile environment. They are discriminated by their skin color and their family origins; therefore, language can help them find a better place within the American standards.

However, at the end of the play, when they meet forty years later, and he suddenly seems to remember who she is, he repeats the same paragraph expressing his love to her in Spanish. Now, they are both in love, and they can speak Spanish. Therefore, English is represented as the language they use to survive, but Spanish is the language of love.

The question now was how I, as a director, was planning to reveal the spine of the play to the world. My plan had three different stages. The first stage was recognition, the second was acquisition, and the third one was realization. These are emotional and sensorial stages and are not going to interfere with the regular structure of rehearsals. They are the principle that would guide my decisions during the rehearsal period, and they would deliberately not be shared with the actors. They would help me, as a director, to make decisions on the pace and rhythm of the play, and on the way actors are getting involved with their work.

During the recognition stage, actors would work on different physical, emotional, and behavioral exercises to understand and feel the lack of structure, the timeless and ageless structure of the human being, and to recognize what love actually means. There would be a lot of moments to share emotions, to work on what gives us love, and to exercise the power of giving love. This is the longest stage. It could have even taken as long as the rehearsal period before tech week.

The second stage was acquisition, the shortest of the three stages. When something is acquired, it is incorporated into our beings. It is produced naturally and spontaneously. It is learned at a sensorial level. The actors would now be out of the closet.

Once the second stage was accomplished, even if it took until the last minute before opening night, actors would be ready to realize what they wanted and needed to show the world.

They would be ready and willing to share the magnitude and the magnificence of love and the grandeur of spontaneity to their audience.

We all need to come out of our closets at some point in our lives. Our closet is built with the structures we grew up with, learned at home, and learned at school, with the constructs religion, society, and politics have given us. At a certain moment, we feel the need to step out of this closet, and to free ourselves from these chains that are only in our minds.

Aníbal learned this lesson from Celestina. Then, Aníbal could easily use the language of love. The actors would learn this from Celestina and Aníbal. The audience would receive this message, and realization would take place.

I, as a director, would only be a facilitator. I am a father, a grandfather, a husband, a teacher, a student, a student navigator, and a company director. I have experienced countless hours of therapy, and I have learned different strategies throughout my life to be able to help others. I am a natural helper, and I looked forward to being able to work with the actors to convey this message to the audience.

I am not a Celestina, per se, but I have gotten rid of most of the barriers that prevented me from enjoying life at its fullness. I am not a preacher, and my intention is not to teach a lesson. I consider myself an experiencer, someone who undergoes sensations, feelings, and events with very few restraints.

Accordingly, my directorial approach would be based on experiencing what Celestina is feeling. During rehearsals, we were all going to be Aníbal. We were going to observe Celestina and learn from her. We would recognize and acquire this freedom of love Celestina experiences; love in all the senses of the word, and not necessarily referred to as the romantic manifestation between two people. It can be love for a particular form of art, or sports, or plants, or animals, or

anything. Artists are always associated with the same idea of living in “dreamworlds,” where time and age are timeless and ageless, where there are no limits or boundaries, where their expression is infinite, and where endless opportunities exist.

My plan was to work on these concepts by creating warm-up exercises for every rehearsal where we would roleplay the core or the spine of this proposal: How can we experience life without any restraints? What are our boundaries? Can we identify our own closet? What do I need to step out of it? What am I afraid of? Am I living in the present? How? How is time structuring my life?

I was also thinking about developing exercises to generate connections between the characters that go beyond the script and the lines, but that can be perceived by the way they look at each other, or the way they deal with each other.

In my opinion, organization is a key element of every directorial approach. I love organization, and I know I can easily succeed within an organized environment. Even though Celestina does not understand what time is, I needed to have a clear structure of what needs to be covered on a weekly basis.

Nevertheless, my organization does not necessarily imply a limitation on what an actor can do. I had not started yet, but my plan was to divide the French scenes by specific feelings, reactions, or emotions. Then, I would start the rehearsal with a warm-up activity based on that emotion. After that, actors would act out the situation without their lines, prioritizing what they were feeling. We would end with the script and the blocking of the corresponding scene.

For example, on pages 36, 37, and 38, for French Scene 8, when Nelson returns after twenty minutes have passed for Celestina and Aníbal, but two years for him, the feelings and emotions here are centered on his confusion and his frustration, which lead to a terrible anger.

That is how rehearsal would start that day, with physical, voice, and body movements to express confusion, frustration, and anger. Actors would be encouraged to connect with their own confusion, frustration, and anger to understand what is going on here.

During rehearsals, we would also be playing with the metaphysical concept of time, and we would deal with different theories. For instance, human beings always think in terms of past, present, and then future. The past was the present at some point, and our present used to be the future before. However, a more logical conception could be ordering events into the future, then the present, and then the past—what will happen, what happens, and what happened. We would also try to understand what Celestina feels: What is two hours? What does a year mean? We would try to find definitions for these concepts. Can someone actually explain what an hour represents?

For this purpose, we would read paragraphs from the book *Metaphysics, A Very Short Introduction* by Stephen Mumford. For instance,

> "This last idea gets us to the heart of a very important matter: one on which there is another Platonist-Aristotelian divide. The divide has lurked in the background throughout this chapter. Do we treat time as an objectively real thing, existing in its own right, whether or not any events are happening within it? Or do we think that time is nothing more than the ordered sequence of events?" (62).

Actors would make decisions about time, whether it is just something that rules their routines, or something more abstract, which they can mold as long as they exist.

Another goal for my directorial approach would be to work on typical Hispanic habits and customs. We would explore what this community feels and experiences within the United States. We would watch movies and TV shows, for instance, *One Day at a Time*, and we would

comment on them during the warm-up period. I would invite guests from our community who could show the actors how Latinx live in this country. We would incorporate the affective way most Latinx relate to one another. We would learn the different words, food habits, and other cultural traits that are typical in some South American and Central American countries.

But most importantly, we would start our rehearsal sessions and warm-ups with different songs from several Latin American countries. We would use music to identify differences and to explore generalities as well as particularities of each culture.

Not only was I planning to get the actors and the audience involved in the spine of this project, but also the Washington College and the Chestertown community, as well as other organizations on the Eastern Shore.

I was thinking of working together with the Latinx Student Union to create a collaboration proposal to link my production to other Latinx events on campus. I had already reached out to their president to spread the word over the community and see if some other members of the union were interested in attending the Designer Mix and the auditions.

I was also planning to develop other collaboration initiatives with the Spanish Department at Kent Island High School and the ESOL Department at Kent County High School, both organizations I am currently in touch with due to my work. I would foster cooperations with John Schratwieser, the director of the Kent County Cultural Alliance, with whom I have worked with before, with EÑE, the Kent County Hispanic Alliance, and with the Easton Multicultural Resource Center. Moreover, my plan was to share this experience with all the ESL population of Chesapeake College and the different Hispanic organizations in the region.

For the opening performance, I was thinking of organizing an exhibition in the hall of Gibson at 6:30 pm. I would display the folder with the material for the first production of *Cloud*

Tectonics. I would deliver a short speech, and I would talk to the guests and the audience. The plan would also include some Hispanic food, such as tacos or tamales, with hot chocolate. As my project submitted for the Libby and Douglass Cater Society had just been approved, I would be displaying photographic material from my research in the City of Buenos Aires, and I would share anecdotes and reviews of my conversations with different stakeholders of the theater world in Latin America.

Furthermore, I would have liked to organize a post-production Q&A session, where the spine of the play could be discussed with the theatre minors and majors, as well as with other students at Washington College.

Even though *Cloud Tectonics* is not a political play per se, it deals with characters that represent a part of our society that has always been discriminated against, and that feels particularly under attack by the present administration. My project submitted for the Libby and Douglass Cater Society comprises different aspects of the theatre business, and how theatre can become the voice of those who are looking for social justice. If my project was approved, I would have loved to combine the play I was going to be producing and directing with the research carried out during the summer and organize an exhibition or presentation to start a clear and open debate on these social issues.

Before I end this chapter, I would like to discuss my plans to balance the production and direction roles. So far, I saw this project as a unit, and I could not think of a division between the two different roles. After the Design Mixer, and once I had the whole team organized, I could've probably started leading the production team on one side and thought as a director on the other.

Nevertheless, this was not something I was concerned about. I currently work as a Lead Intake Specialist for the Adult Education Department of Chesapeake College, I run my language

service company in Argentina remotely, I study full time at Washington College, I am a member of the Executive Board of MAACCE, I walk my dog every morning, I cook dinner for my husband and I every night, I go to the gym twice a week, and I talk to my daughters and my grandchildren in Argentina on a daily basis. I can wear several hats, and I think I am good at that. I have always had a serious deficit of attention, combined with hyperactivity, which, paradoxically, I have learned to manage by working on two or three things at the same time. Variety seems to enable me to cope with several tasks simultaneously.

In this particular case, I was going to need support and advice from the Theatre Department, as I did not have any experience with the production roles. Of course, I had ideas and suggestions, but the implementation stage was what worried me the most. Lighting was what I feared as the most challenging aspect of the technical needs. I was currently learning the basics in THE241, Intro to Theatrical Design, but I still felt as though I needed full support in this area.

As a conclusion, I would like to use the SWOT analysis to examine this production and direction initiative. I have used this analysis many times in my life to understand the scopes of different enterprises I was venturing in, and I have always found it very useful.

My strengths are centered on my production concept and vision, my energy, my leadership and organizational skills, my ability to communicate and to relate to others, and my enthusiasm.

My weaknesses revolve around some technical aspects I have not entirely grasped yet, as I have mentioned before, and on my tendency to do much more than what I can handle. Even though I am good at delegating, I usually end up doing what others are supposed to do.

The opportunities of this project were represented by all the things I could learn, particularly from working with a group of people three times younger than I am.

Finally, the threats that came to my mind were divided into two groups. On one hand was finding the necessary commitment to start a project almost before the fall semester started. Many things could have happened before and after we started. On the other hand, my other threat, which was actually a fear, was not being able to meet my own expectations about this project.

To round off the approach and vision of this project, I will simply say that this is all part of a wonderful learning experience, and that I feel so grateful to the Washington College community, mainly my professors and classmates, for letting me feel and embark on this lovely adventure.

Chapter Four: Process and Implementation

Introduction

It was Saturday, August 16, and I felt I was ready to start with the rehearsal sessions, even though I still needed to wait another week. In fact, we had held the first design meeting and the first rehearsal session in the previous week by Zoom, which I am going to describe in more detail shortly.

This had been an intense summer. Not only was it loaded with theatre and theatre-related activities, but it was also filled with anxiety and expectation. If I am honest with myself, at some point, I would've liked it to be October 5, one day after the second performance, when everything was over. I had nightmares where everything went wrong, but I had also had sweet dreams where I was smiling at what I had accomplished. I suppose all these feelings are completely normal. Nevertheless, and if I am truly honest with myself now, I would say that I had enjoyed everything I had been doing so far from the moment I scheduled the auditions with Abbey to the first read-through that had taken place that previous week.

The following pages contain my vision of the project up to today, with the auditions, the selection of the designers, and the preparation of the material for the designers and for the rehearsals, which I will call the pre-rehearsal stage. The second part, the in-person rehearsal, will comprise the period between the first in-person rehearsal on August 25 until the first performance.

The Pre-Rehearsal Stage

The first step was to build up the design team. I had already confirmed the stage manager and the dramaturg, and the rest of the team was almost defined during the Design Mixer. A couple of emails and messages were needed after that meeting, and the whole design team was ready by the end of the spring semester. Juliana, my stage manager, played a very active and important role in finding the type of profiles I was looking for: people with experience in set, lights, and sound. For costumes, props, hair and makeup, and for the assistant stage manager, not that much experience was required. In general, in this type of situation, if students do not know me, they will rarely approach me, or they will act as if they feel embarrassed when I approach them due to the age gap, as I explained in Chapter One. Therefore, I simply overlooked the general situation while Juliana played her magic and tried to convince designers and aspiring designers to work with us. I think the fact that our play was the first one and so early on in the college theatre calendar played to our advantage, as students understood they would be relieved after October 4, and they would still have time to participate in other productions.

My decision to look for more experienced profiles for set, lights, and sound was justified by the fact that these are the areas where I have the least experience, and therefore I needed people I could fully rely on. Even though I do not have a lot of experience with costumes, props, and hair and makeup, they were areas I could more easily explore and research without the need of serious background knowledge. Regarding the assistant stage manager, I wanted my stage manager to find the person she would feel at ease with.

The auditions were scheduled with very short notice, and they took place the day after the Design Mixer during the last week of classes. As rehearsals needed to start the same first week as

classes began, securing a committed cast was the next goal. Only four students showed up for the three roles I needed to cover. Even though it was a very low number compared to what I was expecting, I found the actor for each of those roles. I cannot say that I got the profiles I had in mind, but I was sure I had found three actors who were willing to learn and take challenges. I took my time to talk to each of them individually. I told them about my vision of the play and of the rehearsal process. We discussed each of the characters in the play thoroughly, and I mentioned how much I wanted them to consider this as a learning experience. Each of the actors faced completely different challenges, and we conversed about that openly, from adopting strong male characteristics to using some Spanish terms and acquiring some features typical of a Hispanic heritage speaker, someone who grew up hearing one language at home but learning and using the dominant language outside in the public world. Regardless of their needs, and of their lack of knowledge and experience, they showed the most important attribute I was looking for: They all manifested their enthusiasm to be part of this production process. Besides, I had already worked with two of them before, and their level of responsibility and commitment was unquestionable. I should admit that auditions did not run the way I had imagined. I thought I would have several people interested in the play, or in working with me, and that I would have difficulty making decisions on who to cast for each role. Conversely, very few students showed up, and I could have a more individual and personalized approach, which I was positive would be beneficial for the entire rehearsal process.

Once the cast and the design team were confirmed, I started working with Juliana on the planning and organization of the communication system with all the stakeholders involved. She created the shared drive, sent emails with information, set up a Cloud Tectonics GroupMe, and handed out the books to each of them. After that, we were ready to start our summer break.

During that period, I met with Juliana twice before our first design meeting and rehearsal on July 8 and July 30th. The purpose of these meetings was to coordinate different aspects of the rehearsal and production processes, and to define roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

I must say that I have been very lucky to count on someone like Juliana, who has always been involved with different areas and activities of the theatre business at Washington College, as the department suffered a couple of losses during this period. One of them, in particular, was a key stakeholder in the management aspect of the college's theatre productions.

During the month of July, I took advantage of some free time at work to prepare the rehearsals/production binder. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Part 2.3, pages 32-43, the play was divided into 16 French scenes. The first thing I did was to create a chart to help me design the rehearsal sessions, where each of the French scenes show who and how many actors are present in each scene. Additionally, it includes the number of pages each scene covers, as well as the number of estimated minutes each of them takes. I created percentages out of this information, which helped me plan the number of French scenes for each rehearsal session. For example, French Scene 3, which seems to be the longest in terms of pages (26%), but not in minutes (18%), would require two rehearsal sessions. French Scene 7, with 19% of pages but 24% in minutes, would need three rehearsal sessions. In addition, there were other rehearsal sessions where three or four scenes would be rehearsed. Even though Aníbal is in 12 scenes, Celestina in 11, and Nelson in six, I wanted to start rehearsing the scenes where the three characters are on stage together, as I wanted to start off by creating a solid relationship between them and by generating the necessary trustworthiness with all of them together. Nelson is only in 50% of the scenes, and I wanted this actor to feel like they were part of the team, and not someone needed to

play a few scenes. Team building is a key process to embrace the necessary connections the characters in this story need to manifest once on stage.

After that, I created a chart with the dates and the rehearsal sessions, showing five weeks of rehearsal sessions until load-in, including three sessions for soft off-book, and three for hard off-book, and then week six for tech. I knew I would be one week short compared to other productions, but the way the rehearsals had been scheduled because of the actors' availability would allow me to add more time if necessary. The initial plan was to meet four times a week, for a total of six hours a week.

Once the order of the French scenes and the rehearsal sessions was scheduled, and in order to be prepared for my first design meeting, I created another chart that showed each scene with what I considered the need for each design area. For example, now I knew that for the first French scene, I would need two microphones, the sound of rain and lightning, the sound of a car approaching, soaking wet makeup, a suede jacket, and so on.

As part of the planning process, I had also created a similar table, but this time with the music and the topic for each French scene. I thought of using music as part of the warm-up of each rehearsal session, and the selection includes: three Puerto Rican singers, three Cuban, two Argentinian, and the bolero that is used during the Prologue and the Epilogue. Also, each rehearsal session had a topic. For instance, for French Scene 6, which covers two rehearsal sessions, the topics for the first one were: different types of love, how to show love, and what happens when you are in love. For the second session, the topics were: Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Love in the Time of Cholera, can women raise babies by themselves, pregnancy, and belly pain.

Summing up, not only would the binder I had created help me organize the whole rehearsal period, and each rehearsal session, but it also comprised my vision of the process.

Therefore, actors would practice and learn their lines, we would block every scene, and they would also discover, experience, absorb, acquire, and assimilate the concepts behind the story: love in all of its forms, the metaphysical concept of time, Hispanic heritage, and the Latino culture within the United States. Each of the first twelve rehearsal sessions started with a form which details the music and the topics for warm-up, each of the design aspects of the play (sound, lights, etc.), a space for blocking, and another one for comments. After that, I had included photocopied material that would be used for the topic, the description of the contents of the French scene, and copies of the actual text for that scene.

The first design meeting and the read-through took place in the second week of August via Zoom. We wanted to bother designers and actors as little as possible during the summer break. Even though the one-month presentation would take place right after classes start, and my level of anxiety had been in crescendo for the last couple of weeks, I was trying to make everyone aware of the importance of meeting deadlines without using too much pressure and resorted to nice reminders in the form of emails and messages instead. I wanted to show them that I was in command, and everything had been prepared and sorted out, even if I was not totally sure if I would have enough time to accomplish this project.

The design meeting went well. Not everyone was present, and we followed up with emails and text messages. Some of them showed they have carefully thought about interesting and exciting design concepts, and others were just starting to work out their ideas. A lot of questions arose after this meeting: Will I have a glass wall that is dripping wet at the bus stop during the Prologue and the Epilogue? If we do not have a door frame, how am I going to show that the main entrance door is open or closed? What can we use instead of water bottles that pile up outside the main door? Should we find a different type of weapon just to not use a gun?

Where will the bed be located? Will I need two beds, one for the house, and one for the end? These questions definitely showed that the process had already started.

The virtual read-through was also successful. I started explaining my planning system, and they read the whole play, which took longer than expected, and this was probably due to the extensive stage directions. The read-through brought about the challenges that I was almost sure I would encounter. There were some difficulties to pronounce some basic Spanish terms and names. I explained to them that Spanish is a syllabic language and therefore all the syllables are uttered with the same length, regardless of their word stress, but I was sure this would need more practice. After that, I kept thinking whether I should record the last paragraph Aníbal says at the end of the play, but I guessed this was a question for after a few rehearsal sessions. While they were reading, I started wondering whether the actors are mature enough to understand what is going on between Celestina and Aníbal, and also whether this is something that I should be concerned about or not. I guessed I could not have the answers right then, and it would mostly depend on their capabilities to imagine what their characters go through, and my guidelines.

I was two days away from the first in-person rehearsal, and lots of anxiety had taken all over my mind and my body. I sometimes thought this was going to be easier than expected, and then I felt this task was something I was not prepared for, and it was doomed to failure. I was looking forward to writing the second part of this chapter, because it meant everything was over, and I simply wanted to enjoy what was about to come, and not only the right choices and realizations, but also the challenges and misplays.

The In-Person Rehearsal Stage

As I mentioned above, this stage comprises my experience during the six weeks from the moment we started with the first in-person rehearsal until the first performance. The first rehearsal session coincided with the first day of classes of the fall semester. From the very first session, I was concerned with the way we had scheduled them. We had four sessions a week, two of 90 minutes, one of 60, and one of two hours. They were scheduled considering the actors and the stage manager's availability. I wanted fewer but longer sessions, as that was the way I had always experienced rehearsals. However, I was immediately surprised by how effective each session was. I can recognize that half of the credit should be given to my organization, and the level of planning. The other half of the credit should go to the stage manager and the actors. They were always on time and ready to work, nobody ever missed a session, and despite a couple of days when the general energy was low, they worked efficiently and consistently. Also, I was surprised at how fast they learned their lines. I had envisioned it as one of the biggest challenges, particularly for the long monologues. However, they worked hard and were ready to go off-book by the day it was scheduled. The second challenge was creating the ideal atmosphere to develop close Latino relationships, and the necessary level of trust for the intimate moments. I knew an intimacy and fight coordinator was going to be hired, but that took longer than expected, and that happened at the last minute. Contrary to my expectations, that was very

helpful. When they started working with the coordinator, trust was not an issue whatsoever with the three actors, and the process developed easily and spontaneously.

A typical rehearsal session started with music, some dancing or movements on stage, and an introduction to the topic of the day. I would use that initial moment to boost everyone's energy and to start creating the necessary atmosphere. For instance, I would purposedly encourage them to have group hugs, thus breaking up the barrier of physical contact. For some scenes, I would usually indicate what the situation was going to be about, and I would give them a general overview of my expectations. For others, I would simply observe what they did, and I would give them suggestions at the end.

Something similar occurred with blocking. In some cases, I would intentionally tell them what I wanted before they would play the scene, and we would discuss the outcomes at the end. In others, I would wait to see how they naturally reacted to a certain situation, and I would intervene to correct the blocking at the end.

Food played an important role as well. On the three Saturdays before load-in, we went for brunch before rehearsal. For some reason, eating all together magically turned the level of energy and connection of the group to its maximum possible level. After this, I decided to provide food for some of the days of tech week, and before each of the performances. One of the designers mentioned this during the post-mortem meeting. She said she felt taken care of, and that it helped the synergy within the group. I would have not mentioned that here if it were not for her comment. At that point, I realized the importance the designers and actors were giving to this.

The design meetings were run in a completely different way. At the beginning, I would totally rely on what they were saying or suggesting. I would listen to them, I would ask some questions, but it was very difficult for me to picture how that translated onto a real stage or an

actual performance, and how close that was to what I wanted. Eventually, I noticed all of that once the set was on the stage, and it was already too late to make some changes. We could make some adjustments to the lightning cues to meet what I expected, but it was too late for some changes in the set during tech week.

If there was something during this process that I was 100% certain about, it was the fact that I did not have a long time to accomplish my objectives, and therefore most of my energy was placed on creating the connection the actors needed to produce the magic I had in mind, the same magic I found when I read the book for the first time. Now, considering all of this in retrospect, I think I should have placed more attention to the design aspects of the play, and I should not have relied completely on what the designers said, and not because they did not do a good job, but possibly because that was not exactly what I was expecting. It was not that easy for me to express what I wanted, not only due to a language barrier, but also because of my lack of expertise. Besides, I think I was a bit intimidated by the presence of the technical director during the meetings, and the way the communication flowed between him and the designers. I felt as if there was a barrier between us, and I ended up nodding and accepting changes or suggestions simply because I was not sure of what was going on. Perhaps this was only my perception, and this was a consequence of my insecurity about certain design aspects.

The one-month presentation, which actually took place twenty days before load-in, was very helpful to start detecting some of the problems the design aspects were showing. All the questions the professors asked aimed at showing me the challenges or the doubtful parts of my design proposal. The presence of some of the designers could have helped me address some of the issues they were pointing at, but none of them could show up.

As I mentioned before, I had very clear goals regarding the production process, and I accomplished all of them. I wanted a simple, inexpensive production where the core aspect of the play was the story told by the actors on stage and the connection they needed to create, rather than the spectacle, per se. If I had had the budget and the time to deal with the spectacle, of course I would have wanted to add more lights, a different set, better sound effects, rain effects, a hanging bed, and many other things. Another goal I had was to create a pleasant and agreeable atmosphere among the designers, the actors, and the rest of the stakeholders. Sometimes age, culture, and language can be a barrier, particularly with my classmates, and I wanted the process to be as effortless and easy as possible for everyone involved.

Load-in Sunday was a long and tedious day, and a bit stressful, mainly because I was not completely happy with what I could see on the stage. Besides, that same day, I realized that if I had had part of the set, particularly the bed, the ladders, the platform, the doors, and the couch, the blocking process could have run much more smoothly. I did not like the way the fabric drapes hung from the catwalk or the headboard, or the color of the bed covers, and that same day I learned that the bed was full, the mattress was queen size, and the bed sheets were for a full-size bed. Furthermore, the black fabric to mask the furniture was not big enough, and we had to use the pastel cream fabric that was used for another production during the spring semester. During the dry rehearsal, I noticed that no spotlights were used for the actors' speeches downstage right during the Prologue and the Epilogue. We discussed that with the designer and the technical director during my report after Professors' Night, and that was immediately corrected.

Ten days before Professors' Night, Professors Daigle and Sommerfeld came to see one of the rehearsals on a Saturday afternoon. After that, I met with Professor Sommerfeld to discuss

some aspects of what she had seen. We both agreed that a different ending was necessary. Different possible endings were discussed, until I finally opted for Celestina walking up the stairs and finishing her monologue on the balcony. I knew it was very late to make several changes to the lights scheme, so my decision was to remove the Christmas lights on the balcony on the house right and to add them to the lights on the balcony on house left, thus showing this was a special place.

Then, Professors' Night took place the next day. They made several suggestions; we discussed possible changes to the set, such as using a black fabric to cover the bottom part of the bed frame so as to create the illusion that the bed was floating. During the following day, I scripted a report that I shared by email with the whole cast and design team. I outlined all the changes I wanted to implement, with specific instructions for each of the design aspects, reminders for the assistant stage manager and crew backstage, and with suggestions for the actors. We discussed all that during a production meeting, and things worked perfectly that night. I was so happy that night that I decided to make some changes for Cowboys' Night the next day. I brought some pastries, we all celebrated in the Green Room before rehearsal, and then we all met on the stage for some line-dancing with choreographed videos I had selected. Those ten minutes of dancing boosted the spirits of the whole group, and it was even mentioned by one of the designers during the post-mortem session.

The following night was dress rehearsal and Visitors' Night and I was really nervous. However, the actors gave their best, and the whole team worked wonderfully. That helped me set my personal tone for the nights of the performances. Talking about the actors' work and performance, I was completely right on page 5 above, and it was not all about finding the right profiles, but on getting the right people to accomplish the goals I had in mind.

This has been an incredible experience for me, and as mentioned above, I enjoyed every minute of it, even those difficult moments. I am going to talk more about this in Chapter Five. Nonetheless, I would like to mention here, for future experiences, that unless directors and producers have a lot of previous experience, they need to get to the actual creation of the play after they have taken design and stagecraft classes. I had experience in acting and directing, and I had some experience with costumes and props. I had also taken the design class the previous semester. However, for instance, eleven days after the last performance, we started working on sound in our stagecraft class. I could not help but think about my production all throughout the class. The professor explained the basics of QLab, the software used for sound cues for every production, and every single interface, or simple button, triggered something related to *Cloud Tectonics*. Since this morning, I have not stopped thinking about how many more things we could have done with the sound if I had had this knowledge prior to this semester. Something similar happened with the lights, but I reckon that it is a more complex world, and it is not just limited to hanging the right light feature in the right place. I knew I had limited time to graduate, and I needed my SCE to take place during the fall semester.

Cloud Tectonics has been one of the greatest challenges in my life, professionally and artistically speaking, and once again, I am not trying to step into what Chapter Five is all about. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that my previous life and work experience and skills helped me walk through the whole process by minimizing my challenges and maximizing my strengths without getting to the point of feeling completely stressed out and being able to enjoy 90% of the process. There are many lessons learned, particularly regarding the design aspects, and the way I approached them. However, the goals I had in mind were all accomplished. The

audience enjoyed the show and felt the magic, the actors enjoyed the process and did a fantastic job on stage, and the whole process was totally peaceful and amusing from beginning to end.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Assessment

As a conclusion, I would like to start reflecting on how I think I have grown through this directorial and production process. Does it sound a bit absurd to talk about growth when someone is over sixty years old? Usually, when people get to know me, they think I am much younger. They attribute their reasoning to the fact that I have a "youthful" sort of energy or attitude. I do not entirely disagree with that logic. However, when you feel that you still have a lot to learn, and therefore, that there is still a lot of room for growth, your life seems to extend longer. You are still the same age, but the end of the tunnel is much further away compared to other people of the same age range.

I am so amazed at how much I have learned and grown during this process. In the following pages, I will be discussing my strengths and challenges and what I think I have acquired, and what I still need to learn regarding myself as a person, as a director, as a producer, as a leader, and as an actor.

I have always had a very participatory leadership style. In this production, this style was highly positive to build the trust and morale the actors needed to recreate a story that initially felt very challenging, and to co-create the sense of magic I hoped the spectators would feel. I love participatory leadership because it invites the members of a group to be an integral part of the decision-making process, thus generating commitment. This commitment, if properly stimulated,

provides the team members with a sense of ownership, thus increasing their collaboration and empowerment, as well as creating a transparent environment. This worked perfectly well with the actors and the stage management. However, this leadership style did not work in regard to other aspects of the production process. I tried creating an environment where their ideas and their involvement were needed, and when I noticed this was not working, it was too late to make changes. In my opinion, the reason why it worked in one case and not in the other, and where my learning lesson resides, is because I felt totally confident on the stage, but not during the design meetings. I am used to listening to people and guiding them towards the objectives I have in mind. In this case, I felt they were expecting something from me that I was not ready to deliver. Then, I started meeting or talking to a few of them individually, and that worked well, and I felt they were on board, but others were either hesitant to meet with me or could not find the time to do so. For instance, the person in charge of the set design suggested hanging fabric from the catwalks to create the specific effect they had in mind. I did not understand either the purpose of the fabric or what it would look like. I asked several questions in different ways, and I had the feeling that the set designer did not feel comfortable with my insistence. Besides, I did not feel in a position of authority, as all my questioning was purely instinctive. As a result, not only did I not like the way the fabric looked on stage, but several people asked me what its purpose was.

What would I do differently next time? First, I would start by admitting my lack of knowledge of the different design areas, and I would definitely look for help from the people who know about the topic. Secondly, I would employ a more situational leadership style in cases like this, adopting an approach based on the team's maturity, skills, and the specific situations. This allows for a more flexible and responsive environment, switching from giving directives to some of them and giving more support to others. Besides, I think that the presence of the

technical director did not allow me to display my participatory style to my whole extent, and it ended up being a more "laissez-faire" direction, where I provided minimal instruction, allowing the group members to make decisions and manage their own work. I thought the role of the technical director was to advise or suggest what could or could not be done and how, but he would not participate unless I had a specific question, and I felt threatened by the situation. Consequently, no questions were asked, and no guidance was provided.

Unintentionally, I have just noticed that I started talking about the challenges I experienced from the very beginning of this chapter, and I am glad I am doing this, because this written thesis has become a necessary therapy to reflect on the aspects I still need to work on.

If you are reading these pages, you may be wondering why I did not look for help when I needed it. Ten days before the performance, I was painting part of the set in the workshop when I came across a professor from our department. I was not feeling well. The day before, I had learned that my play would be the first one where guests needed to pay for their tickets, and that made me upset. As my play took place during Hispanic Heritage Month, I thought I would invite our ESL students at Chesapeake College and other members of the Hispanic community in Chestertown and the Eastern Shore. However, the thought of inviting people to pay to support my SCE did not make any sense at all. I told him how I was feeling and why, and he responded: "Your performance is the first one in running into this and other challenges too."

This is not an excuse, but even though everyone in the department did their best, I had to deal with unexpected challenges due to the several changes in the Theatre & Dance Department. I see how other performances are treated today. One of the most notorious aspects is the way their promotion is conducted, and I must admit I feel a bit jealous. Conversely, I feel prouder of myself, as I could come up with a good production amidst some sort of chaotic environment.

I feel completely happy with my work as a director, and not only because the audience enjoyed the performance, but also because the result was what I wanted. I cried every time the play ended, and I felt that we could create the magic I was expecting, and those were my goals. I was explaining the direction process to a friend, and I used the metaphor of "handing the headphones" to the stage manager during the first performance, thus illustrating that there was nothing else to be done. She immediately asked me if that was a relief, and I responded that I felt sad. I had an empty canvas at the beginning of week one, and I started painting the picture I had dreamed of. The painting is done now, and I feel like wanting to continue working on it.

Despite the challenges I had to face, in my opinion, the play was an absolute personal success. There are several reasons why I feel this way. First of all, the production and direction process was carefully planned, and that helped minimize the unforeseen circumstances, such as the last-minute intervention of the intimacy and fight coordinator. Secondly, I can definitely attest that I have experienced how much the cast has matured, in a professional and personal way, and I feel very proud of the way I articulated all of my skills to accomplish this objective.

Finally, I know *Cloud Tectonics* is not the kind of play other students would choose, and I am happy I did, and it has been very rewarding to have so many young people approach me and tell me they felt touched by its message.

I watched the two performances from the first row of seats, and I did my best to enjoy them, yet a part of me wanted to have a notebook to start taking down notes on things I would change or do differently. There is no point in mentioning the list of specific aspects of the play, such as costumes, props, blocking, or detailed parts of the creative directing process, that I thought I would like to change. Nevertheless, I think it is important to mention some more general features of the directional approach and its progression.

One very important aspect that was neglected for lack of time was a more thorough training in diction, enunciation, articulation, and speed. Actors did not deliver their lines in order to be understood in all cases. I had also prepared some exercises to deal with some aspects of Latin American Spanish phonetics, focusing my attention on how some Spanish words should be pronounced, but we ran out of time. My original plan was to devote the last two run-throughs to slowing down, enunciating clearly, and modulating words mostly for the purpose of clarity. The script has very interesting dialogue and monologues, and every spectator should have the chance to hear the wording the playwright chose. Besides, one of the reasons why I decided to cast a non-Spanish speaking actor for the role of Aníbal was because I thought that it was easier to train a person in a language than to teach him how to act.

Another thing I noticed as a director, who was watching the performance he created, was that the blocking was not 100% attained. I could observe how actors sometimes relied more on their instinct than on the positions we worked on during rehearsal.

But the most important piece that I thought had not been worked hard enough on was the creation and development of each of the characters, and I do not blame the actors or myself for this. I think that the way these productions are implemented cannot have the necessary time to get actors immersed in the assimilation of a role that they do not completely know. I can assert this now, after I have also seen two other SCE productions, and I can compare the types of roles college students are used to. In the case of Cloud Tectonics, the story and the conflicts involved require the development of emotions that have not usually been acquired when someone is 20 years old.

This has been an incredible experience, and I enjoyed it from beginning to end. I feel so grateful for the support most of my professors have given me, particularly Professor

Sommerfeld, Professor Daigley, and Professor Thomas. Not only did they trust me all the way through, but they also knew when to be present, even though they had hectic agendas. On the contrary, I did not receive the same support from the production and technical aspects. A new production manager was hired halfway through the production process, and she tried her best to get to know what she was supposed to, and I appreciate all her efforts. However, Professor Jenkins, who is not only the technical director but also my professor for stagecraft, did not come to Professor's Night, did not see my performance, and was not present for my review or for my post-mortem. But, most importantly, he never said a word about any aspect of my production.

In Chapter Four, and in some parts of this chapter, when discussing the process and implementation, I have mentioned the technical and design difficulties I experienced. I blamed myself at all times because of my lack of expertise and because I did not know how to look for guidance or support. I was not planning to mention anything about this, but now that everything is over, and I can compare my production to others, I can clearly see that I was not given the same treatment that others received from the technical director.

All experiences usually have a dark side, and even though I tried to escape from my share of it, it is now time to face every single aspect of my directorial and production experience. However, if I were to go through this process again, with its ups and downs, I would choose exactly the same experience, as I received a lot of love and recognition from my professors and my peers, and I have learned so much that it has all been an invaluable and wonderful journey.

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