

# MUSICAL THEATRE WORKSHOP II

## Solo Analysis: The Container

When crafting a solo performance, the container begins with you, the actor. This analysis aims to incorporate your dive into script and character with our Tenets & Techniques for Acting the Song. I encourage you to review the Tenets & Techniques as you move through your analysis.

**BEGIN your document with the *Title of Show*, character name, and “Title of Song.”**

### PART ONE – THEME

- **Tenet #8 Risk Going Too Far; Tenet #10 Consider the Audience.** What is the basic, universal, human experience explored in the song?

### PART TWO – TEXT

- **Tenet #2 Turn a Phrase; Tenet #4 Sound the Sounds.** Create a document separate from your main analysis worksheet. In this document, type out the lyrics of the song in ABA sections, including all repeats.
- Change the document orientation from portrait to landscape. Move all of the text into a column, you will add a more columns of information next to it.
  - **Bold** the the operative text.
  - *Italicize* the sounds that you find particularly interesting.
  - Add a /slash/ to mark the beat changes.
  - Make any other notes you want in regards to the lyrical composition, keeping it brief and easy to read. You could also do this by hand and then scan the document at the end, if you prefer.
- **Tenet #3 Follow the Argument.** Add a second column next to your lyrics. In each section (ABA) of this column, explain the journey/arc of each section. See example handout: Journey.Arc, The Impossible Dream.
- Add a third column. To this column, add at least 1 action and 2 options for tactics that might be played in each beat.
- **Tenet #1 Take it Thought by Thought.** Add a fourth and final column. For each section of lyrics (ABA), paraphrase the text in your, the actor’s, voice. See example handout: Paraphrase, The Impossible Dream.

## PART THREE – CHARACTER

- **Tenet #5 Ask Why:** Character Analysis:
  - Make a list of **10 basic facts** about you and/or your world of the play. Brother/Mother? Rich/Poor? Age? Location? Time? etc. Facts are based on scripted given circumstances and are not implied or imagined.
  - Make a list of **all the things other characters say about you** in the play - direct quote from text or lyrics, with page number.
  - Make a list of **all the things you say about yourself** in the play - direct quote from text or lyrics, with page number.
  - Make a list of at least **5 actions you perform in the play that reveal your nature.** Actions are based on scripted given circumstances and are not implied or imagined.
- Who are you talking to in the song? What is your relationship to them? What do you want from them?
- What is the moment before the song begins?
- **Tenet #7 Presume Distance.** What is at stake? How high are the stakes? What happens if you lose what's at stake?

## PART FOUR – MUSIC

- **Tenet #6 Be in the Band.** What are at least 5 specific details in the instrumental part of the song that you find notable, and why? Can you make musical connections to the work you have done previously in this analysis?
- **Tenet #9 Let the Music Do the Work.** Write about the composer/lyricist of the piece, any biographical notes, or historical notes about the time and place the piece was written. Then answer: What does this research allow you to better understand about how to perform the song? This section of analysis should total at least 100 words.

## PART FIVE – CONNECTION

- **Fundamental Assumptions.** After completing this analysis, step away for at least a day and let it marinate! When you come back to it, look over your work as a whole. Then answer these final questions:
- What have you learned about the play, character, or song that you didn't know before?
- What is one thing written on the page of your analysis that could directly affect your performance in a visceral, embodied way? How?
- Reread your answer from PART ONE (*Tenet #8 Risk Going Too Far; Tenet #10 Consider the Audience. What is the basic, universal, human experience explored in the song?*) Then:
  - Write a brief paragraph reflecting on a time in your own life when you had the same basic, universal, human experience. You need only share the details you feel comfortable sharing, but the goal of this reflection is for you to explore personalization and your unique voice in the piece.

Compile your analysis with your Part 2 columns into one PDF. You're done!

The next step of building the container might be to put the song on its feet, exploring embodied choices, finding a shape of blocking, building a path of stimuli. This work might be done on your own, or you might move into the rehearsal room with a director.

# JOURNEY/ARC

## EXAMPLE FOR SOLO ANALYSIS PART TWO

The following explanation of the song's journey/arc is taken from an excerpt from: Tracey Moore and Allison Bergman, *Acting The Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre* (New York: Allworth Press, 2008), 91-92.

**Don Quixote, "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha***  
Music by Mitch Lee, Lyrics by Joe Darion, Book by Dale Wasserman

### LYRICS

To dream the impossible dream,  
To fight the unbeatable foe,  
To bear with unbearable sorrow,  
To run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong  
To love pure and chaste from afar,  
To try when your arms are too weary,  
To reach the unreachable star.

This is my quest,  
To follow that star —  
No matter how helpless, No matter how far.

To fight for the right  
Without question or pause,  
To be willing to march into hell  
For a heavenly cause.

And I know if I'll only be true  
To this glorious quest  
That my heart will be peaceful  
and calm when I'm laid to rest.

And the world will be better for this, that  
one man scorned and covered with scars  
still strove with his last ounce of courage.  
To reach the unreachable star.

### JOURNEY/ARC

A. Statement of ideas, he is expressing his personal beliefs and describing his journey.

Second A. More examples of what he believes.

B. A realization that he has a duty, and that it is not altogether pleasant or easy.

B (continued): He must carry out this duty to the end no matter the cost.

B (continued): And if he does, then he will feel his life and his death have meaning.

Final A. He concludes that his individual actions have the power to change the whole world. The quest is no longer a duty, but a mission with huge implications.

"Using just the lyrics, one possible story for this song could be that Don Quixote moves from a place of individuality to a place of community; he realizes that his strongly held personal beliefs serve a larger purpose; he realizes that his sacrifices and struggles are not in vain and that his life has a larger meaning beyond what happens today. In the face of these discoveries, he is able to continue with his difficult quest. This would be a good story arc for the song out of context, because it gives the song forward momentum." - Tracey Moore & Allison Bergman

# PARAPHRASE

## EXAMPLE FOR SOLO ANALYSIS PART TWO

This is NOT a translation of the existing text. It is a paraphrase that reveals your inner thoughts and subtext. It can be line by line or section by section. From the paraphrase, you even could boil it down further to just a **kernel** - one pithy phrase or even a word that invites an embodied impulse.

For this, you can choose an idiolect — either yours as the character, or yours as the actor — which one offers more embodied connection or deeper discovery?

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### PARAPHRASE

A. What am I even doing? How did I get here? Am I even worthy to try something so impossible?

Second A. Everything I've been taught, everything I've done, every place I've been, ... my life... has led me to this quest.

B. I have to do it! No one else can but me!  
Oh god, I'm terrified!

B (continued): But I have to find the courage deep down. I can't stop until it's over. I'll die trying.

B (continued): One day when I'm dead, Dulcinea and Sancho will sit at my grave, in the quiet morning sunlight, and they'll proudly remember that I did the right thing.

Final A. It's bigger than me now.  
Let's fucking go!!!!