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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

When I Was King

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Max Singer

Committee in charge:

Richard Robichaux, Chair
Eva Barnes
Stephen Buescher

2019

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The Thesis of Max is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2019

DEDICATION

To my family and friends near and far, here and gone. I am so lucky to be part of a community that values the work of artists. Thank you for inspiring me and always giving me your unconditional support.

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File 2. *Life is a Dream Production Photo*

File 3. *Life is a Dream Production Photo*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kim Rubenstein for being an incredible support to me over the past few years. I will forever value your empathy, wisdom, and friendship.

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Eva Barnes for your mentorship. Your pedagogy not only has empowered me as an actor and teacher, but as a citizen of the world.

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"The Fine Nine" for being my family through this crazy journey. I'm so proud to be part of a class of such talented wonderful humans. You all have my heart forever and ever.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

When I Was King

by

Max Singer

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2019

Professor Richard Robichaux, Chair

My performance of Basilio in Life is a Dream by Pedro Calderón de la Barca was a culmination of my training here at UCSD. This role demanded a depth of heart, vocal tenacity, dynamic physicality, and facility with heightened text—all skills I've developed over the past three years.

The comprehensive vocal training has armed me with a voice expressible in a myriad of colors, textures, and sizes. The speech work has freed me from my habits and colloquialisms so that I can intentionally cater my vocal choices to the specific character I'm playing. The classical training has not only given me a technical command of Shakespeare and heightened text, but keystones like sustained and living thought have refined my approach to all text regardless of

period or style. And our diverse movement training revealed valuable information about my physical habits, gave me different techniques to break them, and challenged me to stretch my physical imagination.

All of these combined empowered me to rise to the true size and transformational needs of Basilio rather than pulling him down to a pedestrian level. I found a unique vocal and physical quality that embodied his status, age, and mental state, I navigated his large heightened speeches with deftness and specificity, and I employed these techniques to deepen my investment in the given circumstances and emotional landscape of the play. This was the true revelation of my training at UCSD: Rather than being distracted by the more cerebral and practical techniques, they integrated seamlessly into my performance without interfering with my sense of authenticity.