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"Discovery in the Movement": The Body as Storyteller When Words are not Enough or are Absent

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“Discovery in the Movement”:  
The Body as Storyteller When Words are not Enough or are Absent

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

N’Jameh M.V. Camara

Committee in charge:

Gregory Wallace, Chair  
Ursula Meyer  
Charles Oates  
Manuel Rotenberg

2016

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The thesis of N'Jameh M.V. Camara 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

2016

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this Thesis Abstract to my parents, Amadou K.S. Camara and Angelica Varona- Camara and my siblings who love me regardless of my woes, Al'Haji and Rose Camara. In this, I am including all of my family members who have sat with me through conversations of encouragement, showing such support for my craft. I thank my friends who have bridged long distance relationships with me when I set out on this journey. Near or far, you accepted the state I was in and grew with me rather than growing from me. Thank you Jeff Schaetzke and Michael Travia for humbling me, showing me what theater is about. Thank you to professor Ann Shanahan of Loyola University Chicago for making sure I got into grad school every step of the way. Thank you to Susan Felder who first introduced me to the power of movement and kinesthetic response. Thank you to my professors at UC San Diego who challenged me to get in touch with my more authentic self, forcing me to not only think about acting, but writing, producing and singing. Especially when they are all in one. Lastly, I dedicate this Master's Thesis to my grandfather, Dr. Guillermo D. Varona, who let go a little bit before I wrote this. With this body of mine, I have no, happy "place." Wherever my family is, there will I be the happy.

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## LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. *Mask Piece Photo from Movement Class with Professor Charlie Oates*

File 2. *Second Skin Directed by Delicia Turner Sonnenberg*

File 3. *La Bete Photos Directed by Marco Baricelli*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the University of California- San Diego's department of Theater and Dance for space to create and learn. I would also like to acknowledge the La Jolla Playhouse Artistic Staff and Company Management for their partnership with UCSD in creating the best facilities for an MFA actor to perform in. I would like to thank Ms. Marybeth Ward for helping me almost every step of the way during my grad school career as both an advisor and a mentor.



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“Discovery in the Movement”:  
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by

N’Jameh M.V. Camara

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Gregory Wallace, Chair

My second year held the famous ten-minute mask piece taught by Professor Charlie Oates. During this process, I was taught to be specific with body gestures, transitioning from one person to another. In *Second Skin*, I tried implementing the idea of yielding to the floor, a mantra I learned from Professor Liam Clancy. The mantra helped to simplify my movement by thinking of creating a relationship to the ground, deepening my breath and thinking water in my hips, earth in my knees.

In my last play *La Bete*, directed by Professor Marco Bariccelli, I concentrated my movement on light, angular and whimsical characterizations, as if air were in my joints. Dorine was designed to wear a tutu with a corset, giving her a sense of boundlessness in, what is historically understood to be, a strict occupation. I was given tennis shoes, creating an image of youthfulness and living in a true sense of play. I tried to compliment the costume by doing cartwheels, spins, a still body with moving hands, or an isolated torso with a moving lower body. My hair was split into two side balls splattered with confetti and I used them to accentuate my head tilts. I paid more attention to how my costume influenced my choreography.

From the mask piece to *Second Skin* and then to *La Bete*, I came to see four major changes in my idea of movement: efficiency, clarity, yielding and imagining the earth elements to be a part of my process.