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## Technology in theatre: breaking the fourth wall

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Technology in Theatre: Breaking the Fourth Wall

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Departmental Honors Thesis  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Department of Performing Arts: Theatre Division

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## Introduction

For my thesis, I decided to create an interactive performance art piece which is connected to the paper. In the performance piece, there would be three different roles all played by the same person. They are the Presenter, Sami, and Ophelia. The first character we see is the Presenter. She is strictly academic. She is my link to talking directly to the audience, bringing light to how women have been negatively affected by media representation. She will be able to talk to the audience, directly giving them information that I have researched about the problematic representations of women in theatre, film, and television. The second character we see is the link between the two polar opposites of academia (Presenter) versus emotion (Ophelia from *Hamlet*). This character is me, Sami, just as she is in moments when she is completely alone. She changes her clothes, and interacts in the space as I would do in my own home, before becoming Ophelia. I will use Ophelia as an example of the treatment of women in media. She is presented as the more emotional side, taking whatever is said by the Presenter and expressing it, showing physically how she is affected. The audience can choose between different options projected on a screen. Their choices will directly affect what they see and how the story progresses. The paper shows my process of writing this script, all the research and thought that I have put in over these past two semesters.

Theatre is an adaptive art form. It has been around for hundreds of years, the first surviving play, *The Persians*, was performed in 472 BC, written by Aeschylus. Theatre has survived throughout countless changes. New lighting technologies have grown in popularity, with Tharon Musser paving the way for memory lighting boards to be used, since her 1975 design for *A Chorus Line*. In this era of new technology, theatre had to keep up in order to maintain relevance and be an enjoyable pastime. In this age of technology, theatre is still

growing to incorporate new types of technology. LEDs, Projections, and ever changing and updated sound, lighting, and drafting systems are becoming more commonplace in performances and design. In this new age of technology, there could even be a place for phones in the production.

For many years, we have talked about silencing cell phones and putting them away during productions, having ushers and others watch and police the audience into putting them away. A 2015 article in the *New York Times* mentions how dependent people are on their cell phones. They can't concentrate when they see the notification light. People feel a need to be in constant communication. Actors have been calling people out during performances, such as the famous 2015 incident with Patti LuPone. An audience member had their phone out during the Wednesday show of *Shows for Days* at Manhattan's Lincoln Center. During the performance, Patti LuPone grabbed it from the audience member, telling them if they used their phones, performers would take them away. Kids are seen as too reliant on their smartphones, and this has a negative effect on theatre (Richardson).

There could, however, be a way that the audience could use their phones to impact the story of the play, or at least have them think they are. Choose your own endings are notoriously complex, and with Netflix shows on the rise such as *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, there is the possibility of people thinking they are choosing the ending but actually leading them to the true ending through limiting their power of choice. This could be used to show a type of "fate" situation which has been used in many Greek plays, such as *Oedipus Rex*. By trying to avoid Oedipus' fate, it ends up being fulfilled. He had no idea who his mother and father were, which led him to murder his father and sleep with his mother. He was not aware he was sealing his fate since his parents tried to avoid it. This has been used as a mechanism to kill off women in plays,

for the man's destiny to happen. Hamlet was told by the ghost of his father that he needed to avenge his death, and Hamlet struggled with this information. After Ophelia dies, Hamlet loses whatever grip he had on his sanity and did, in fact, avenge his father's death. Many casualties occurred for this to happen, but the one that led him to finally fulfill his fate was Ophelia's death.

Another idea is that people actually do have the choice to change their fate. They are presented options and they have different outcomes, but neither is considered "wrong". The choices are not weighed as one being better than the other. For my production, they are offered from the Presenter's perspective, and all of them are neutral. Throughout the play, the Presenter character presents information and asks questions for the audience to respond to. Everything is presented neutrally after discussing hardships women face, neither being weighed as the correct response. People truly have to make every choice, they are not tricked into finding the perfect ending. They have to find it themselves.

Women in all sorts of media have been used as plot devices for years. Plays, books, movies, television shows; all these different types of media portray female characters as only furthering the man's story. The woman goes insane then eventually dies to further the man's quest. She is used as a sex object, or something that is there to just move things along but she is never the focus. My focus is to create a piece of performance art that tells the story from the woman's perspective; showing things from her point of view to demonstrate the emotional and mental difficulties she faces. The audience will decide where the story eventually goes. By bringing them into the world, they will have to consider their choices and how it affects the fate of others. Between the harsh academic nature the Presenter displays, and the emotional and inner happenings of Ophelia, lies the transitional period of the character Sami, who is between the spectrums.

In my script, at the end there is a choice for Ophelia (originally from *Hamlet*) to die or to live, giving the audience a chance to change the fate Shakespeare wrote for Ophelia of insanity and death. I could always choose to fix the results, while writing I could make the choice to have Ophelia live. That would, however, compromise the audience's choice-making power and I would feel like it would also compromise my own integrity, though the writing process would be easier. This could be considered a play on what "fate" is; however, fate has been used negatively in examples mentioned previously. By giving the option of a choice, we can break up some of the older, more negative traditions that we have.

The hardest part of the process was the writing of a multiple path script. Scripts that jump around depending on audience interaction have not been a convention, so I had nowhere to look for guidance while writing it. I could write it so paths would break apart, then converge back to a point where everything is the same again. This would help keep everything on track to get the messages across. Finding the placement of the questions would also be a challenge, you don't want it to be repetitive and boring, so finding new ways to present questions is a constant task. There are many different options for collecting this sort of interactive data. Kahoot, Poll Everywhere, and the clicker systems are the main interaction methods I looked into.

### **Process**

Before writing the script, there were many facts that needed to be researched. One was methods for audience interaction. I needed to find some way for the audience to interact with the performance. I looked at the following different methods for the audience to interact: lighting shifts connected to a keyboard that triggered different scenes, music paired with certain stand

alone scenes that allow the audience to choose the music, and ballots or votes of a sort to see what the audience would pick using some sort of polling method.

After many meetings with Aisha McGriff at the Walker Center, the method I chose to use ended up being Poll Everywhere. The audience would be able to watch a Powerpoint being shown by the Presenter character, and text on their phones answers to questions on the screen in order to choose how to move the story forward. There is also the possibility of improvisation through using open ended questions. Poll Everywhere is the most accessible form of polling that I researched. It does not integrate cleanly into Powerpoint, but it would be the easiest to access for the audience, so sacrifices must be made. The only problem with it is the slight lag time between the Powerpoint slide popping up and the audience's ability to vote. It also offers different ways to present questions to the audience. People can make a word cloud or click on pictures that represents a certain mood to them. Kahoot was another option that was researched, but it is more quizlike and has a timer. The joining process could also be more complex, giving the audience difficulty and distracting them. The clicker system was one I was interested in. Clickers are only really used during a class, which could be interesting considering the performance is based around a presentation. Clickers are pricey though, and would not be a viable financial option for me, and I would have less liberty with the polls as well, not being able to present the information and questions in ways that are more creative. Everything would have to be more straightforward, with text answers.

Logistically, there were also things to think about. How people log in could not be too complex, and there should be a fallback, of sorts, for a technology failure. I reserved the UC Auditorium for the performance. Getting into the room early and making sure all the tech I needed there was key. The performance could not continue without participation unless I just



chose the progression of the story myself. That would eliminate audience participation, which was the whole point of the performance in the first place. All these things needed to be taken into account in order to be successful. Having at least one rehearsal in the space was necessary to make sure things were working. Having people in the audience was also important. There is no theatre without an audience. People need to participate for the show to work. Figuring out a way to get people there would be part of the process. I would have to find the best ways to reach a wide variety of people, ensuring that they come to my performance and help contribute.

Playing with the polling method made it easy for people to join and vote during the performance. By announcing instructions on how to access Poll Everywhere in the opening of the performance piece, and presenting it in a written format in the program as well, it was easy for the audience members to join. All they had to do was go to a website link ([PollEv.com/samanthaburn712](http://PollEv.com/samanthaburn712)) and put in some sort of nickname to identify themselves. From here, all they had to do was wait for me to put the slide asking the question up, and they were easily able to vote with as few issues as possible.

After finding the viable polling method which was proven to work, writing the script and forming a Powerpoint was the next process. The research and process of script writing is mentioned later in the paper, but as a part of my process it is still relevant. Finding the cleanest ways to incorporate the Poll Everywhere within the Powerpoint proved a challenge. It does not integrate as cleanly into a presentation as one would hope. Changing the Powerpoint slides as the Sami character and not the Presenter needed to be considered. Using a portable clicker to switch slides while Sami or Ophelia would be the key used to solve the problem. Working the clicker in unique ways to make Ophelia hold it was also something to consider. She is not part of the Presenter's world at all, so it would seem like a more foreign object for her. Sami using the

clicker as a microphone while transitioning helps her bring it into Ophelia's world without it seeming forced or awkward.

Advertising my performance was also something that needed to be considered. The first step was to send out emails to the theatre and honors departments. Emailing is not the only way to advertise, nor is it the most interesting way. I have been taking marketing classes through my study at UTC, and people's eyes are more drawn to images than just text. Taking photos with a friend, Bailey Braden, at Rainbow Lake proved to churn out some interesting photos that I could post to varying social media to spread the word to people who were outside of my departments at UTC. On websites such as Instagram, people who I have had only brief interactions with would be able to see my post, drawing in a wider range of people who live in Chattanooga. Not only would my followers see it, but people who follow similar people would have the performance piece recommended to them and would be able to see it. Facebook was another place that I posted the images. On that website, people are able to share posts to get them to reach a wider audience. Using technology not only in my performances, but also through my advertising tactics is yet another play on technology in theatre. I have attached two of the multiple images that I used to try reaching out to people.



## Research

Shakespeare set *Hamlet* in Denmark, although many of the names in the play are not actually Danish names. The name Ophelia is translated from the original Greek in the poem “Arcadia” written in 1504 by Jacopo Sannazaro. The name ὠφέλεια (ōphéleia) technically means “help” (Sannazaro). Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was written in 1599. Because Ophelia means “help” it is an interesting choice for the character, because everything she is going through internally is a cry for help. Ophelia is crying for help even if she never directly asks that. Since Ophelia was going to be my primary character, my research started by reading *Hamlet*. Familiarity with the character was needed in order to continue writing my script. Seeing how she progresses through the play and the events that were happening around her were key to understanding the headspace that she was in. In order to write a script centering on Ophelia, I needed to know exactly who she was. Also understanding how she affected the ending of *Hamlet*, as she was the nail in the coffin to Hamlet’s madness.

I thought about incorporating other women affected by the actions of men. Women like Medusa and other older characters whose stories are in public domain, because then I would be able to use not only the character, but their original words from the script. Adding them as a choice to hear from, since they were cursed or cast aside by men or the actions of them. Medusa in particular was cursed by the goddess Athena for her love and relations she had with Poseidon. She was transformed into a monster for actions that were not completely her fault. The masculine god, Poseidon, comes out unscathed while she is hideously deformed. I ended up not using her in the script, but as a passing mention by the Presenter while covering the basic grounds for what is about to happen. I also mentioned the popular television show *Supernatural* and its treatment of women. Women are introduced to exist before dying or leaving, not relevant to the complete

story whatsoever. They are placed there as plot points or eye candy. The only service they provide in the series is to move the main characters Dean and Sam's stories along. That could be through their death, or some other negative events such as kidnapping. The Presenter character is my link in the script to reveal more details and information since she is the academic character who is separated from emotions entirely. She will be able to present details to the audience and inform as someone who is strictly academic. She is able to reveal more of my research facts without it seeming strange or non-contextual, presenting hard data that might resonate more with people.

Formatting the script was another thing I needed to look at. I had never written a script before, only short stories where the formatting does not matter as much. I consulted the Dramatists Guild for the playwriting format that I ended up using, a way to present the script and stage directions in a clear, and concise way that could be memorized and also read by others. I have attached the script in Appendix A so it can be read alongside of my process and analysis. There is a definite way that scripts are usually formatted, so laying everything out in a clear way was something I needed to research. I have read multiple plays and drew on experience from what I have observed, but research was definitely needed.

Feminism and the treatment of women is a key aspect of my thesis. I have always had general knowledge that women are used as plot devices since I was young. Consuming media at a young age taught me from my childhood that men were usually the protagonists. Even if a woman was the main character of a book or play, there was always a man there. By having a man there, he made her better in some way as if she was not sufficient enough as herself. Love triangles are in nearly every new young adult book, where the female protagonist is saving the world yet her life is completely centered around the men vying for her attention. This was

perpetuated to me not only through plays, but through almost all aspects of my life. A woman as eye candy on a billboard, a movie where being beautiful is her only purpose. Anything that I watched or read made me feel like I was not enough by myself, whether that was books, movies, or commercials. This is a deeper seated issue, with multiple articles talking about how women are poorly represented. *In Women and Media: A Critical Introduction*, Byerly and Ross talk about how women are “silent” and “marginal” in media. This is how the male gaze works for writers and directors (p. 19). This issue also has roots in racism, Gallagher mentions in her book, *The Routledge Companion to Media & Gender* that even when women are portrayed, they are put in a heterosexual white perspective. She goes on to say that “Women of color do not experience sexism in addition to racism, but sexism in the context of racism”. The issue goes to show not only how women are affected, but that women of color ultimately face even more hardships.

The idea of fate is another thing I played around with in my script. Predestination, oracles, and prophecies have been used throughout scripts where no matter how hard you try to fight it, your fate ends up happening. While trying to fight Oedipus’ fate, it actually comes true. Fighting against fate is usually something that is unavoidable; it is inescapable. It was an idea that I played with when writing the script. Ophelia could be destined to die, so even if the audience chose to keep her alive, she would still die. Fate is an interesting topic, whether we chose our own destinies or what will become of us ultimately is already set in stone. It has been an issue humanity has thought about for ages; if anything we do matters or not. Otto Weininger, an Austrian philosopher said “Fate determines many things, no matter how hard we struggle”. To contradict that point, I could always have Ophelia survive no matter what. By writing her as alive and not ultimately dying, I could present her as contradicting her own fate. Through my own



struggle trying to present her as a survivor, I will be able to change her fate, however temporarily. People have always made her choices for her by how she was written. Ultimately the playwright makes every choice for this fictional character. Ophelia as a concept will never die, so she could ultimately stay alive. By having me determine the ending, however, that would be playing with fate itself as me as a playwright. I would be making a choice for the audience which was predetermined.

I wanted Ophelia to be the purest form of emotion and expression in the play. Sami is an in-between and the Presenter is purely academic, so I wanted her to be the opposite side of the scale so Sami could work as a slider between the two. This is much like how we operate in our daily lives. In order to show her thought process, I wanted to dabble in the Expressionist movement of theatre, much like Sophie Treadwell did when writing *Machinal*. The repetition of words and internal dialogue that shows the world through her own thoughts has always been a fascinating convention, and it would be the most accurate way to convey her on the other side of the spectrum. The only words that are ever directed completely at the audience are the ones from the original *Hamlet* script. Other than that, Ophelia is talking to the people but they are the people in her mind, as if the audience members are versions of herself. They are who you talk to when you are completely alone.

The direct communication of Presenter as more of an Epic theatre style which contrasted well with the pure internal dialogue of Expressionism. Studying both styles helped me be more true to both styles rather than winging it off of memory, so I looked into them to see what aspects I could use when writing my script.

Epic theatre breaks down the play and reveals to the audience what is about to happen, or what things mean. This is exactly what I wanted the Presenter to do. State facts and explain what

all is going to happen, letting the audience know that they are not separated from the performance. This is a performance, and they will be drug into it through the interactions. Having a commentator say what will happen before it actually does, or explain the outcome of the choices is very Brechtian. Bertolt Brecht's book, *The Modern Theatre Is the Epic Theatre*, has many different examples of what Epic theatre is. Epic Theatre was made to be more political and about social reforms. This makes it a perfect style for the Presenter, who is talking about political issues with the treatment of women. It also helps the audience as they try to make choices. Having both options pitched to the audience gets them thinking before it is actually time to make the choice. Having the idea of what is about to happen might also make the audience less hesitant, since their questions would be answered. That might solve a fear I had of people not interacting, having it more open and explained would not only increase my chances of having people respond, but would also heavily contrast with the character of Ophelia. The black and white differences between the styles of Ophelia and Presenter would also make the moments of transition seem more important.

As mentioned earlier, I wanted Ophelia to be in an Expressionistic style. This way we would be able to hear how she feels, her thoughts. It is all internal so the audience will be able to see what she is thinking instead of what she is just saying. It is rare for people to say what they actually mean. I want to look behind the words she says in the script, and find how Ophelia feels on the inside. Analyzing her original lines, reading into the meaning behind her insane ramblings to present to the audience how she feels. This further separates her from the Presenter, and connects her more so to Sami, which was the original intention.



## Writing the Script

I had never written a script of any sort before. There were many questions I had about what went into the process. I have written creative pieces before so I thought about it like that while using my knowledge of plays to make a creative performance piece. More goes into writing a script than a short story; however, the formatting takes time to figure out. Where stage directions are located on the page, what is in all capital letters, what is italicized and what is not. Everything in a script has a distinct meaning.

Writing the script took quite a bit of thought. I wanted to utilize the expressionist style found in plays such as *Machinal* (Treadwell), which I would utilize for Ophelia. I wanted the Presenter and Ophelia to show two sides of how a student lives; completely academic versus a more true and emotional self. In order to accomplish that, the Presenter would be in a style such as Epic theatre (Brecht). This way she can communicate directly with the audience. The center stage and the transition character would be Sami just as she is, showing different parts of her day as the story moves forward. As Ophelia begins to collapse, Sami shows a steady decline in her day. The further in the day Sami gets, the more physical and emotional wear and tear will happen, getting her closer to her time to be completely alone. It is all a commentary on myself and how I operate through the day. The separation of academia versus self and the suppression of emotions so others are not inconvenienced is what I wanted to come across in my performance. It is something that not only I struggle with, but something many people of all generations do.

For further separation and isolation of the Presenter character, stylizing her in more of an Epic Theatre approach is what I was leaning toward. Not only is she separated from emotions, she is talking and reaching out directly to the audience, explaining what is going to happen. The isolation of this character is important for the performance to work. The isolation and separation

of emotions in academia is relevant to me as a person, so the goal is to show that on stage. The Presenter is more didactic in nature, explaining and teaching the audience. She is separated as a sort of commentator on what is happening in the play. Sami has the ability to transition from this purely academic person into the expressionistic Ophelia, but both sides of the spectrum are stuck in their own respective styles and roles. Only Sami is able to move between them. The only overlap between Ophelia and the Presenter is at the very end, where the Presenter signs off with the same last line that Ophelia used. There is a glimpse of the beginnings of a connection, but that is as far as it ever goes. Recognition that they are on the same scale, that they are the same person just from different perspectives.

Once I had the characters and their roles figured out, I wanted to figure out how the story would go. I sat down for a couple hours and in a stream of consciousness wrote out my entire script. Not the dialogue, just the flow of it and what I thought it should accomplish. In this stream, I also added in multiple areas for the audience to make choices. Using my knowledge of the polling options that Poll Everywhere has, I added in some different types of questions. The audience does not just answer from words, they also choose images that represent a song for the transition periods that Sami will experience. Through the music they can choose how her day ends up progressing.

Placing questions was one of the harder parts about writing. There needed to be a good amount of questions to keep up the participation, but not too many to be a distraction. I debated making some of the questions open ended, maybe including a word display, where people type what they would do when alone; making a cloud of sorts of the words everyone answers. I felt this might be asking too much from my audience, and that it would be too distracting from the performance. If people were more used to the idea of participating in plays using their phones, I

would put it up during the final transition where Sami feels completely alone. That way after Ophelia's fate is decided, everyone in the audience can confess what they do or how they feel when completely alone. Everyone's internal emotions will be displayed on the screen, anonymous to the other audience members. A confessional for themselves without others knowing who they are. The audience needs to be able to interact, but I don't want them to be distracted by the sheer amount of interactive points. After figuring out the amount of questions to ask, the next question to ask myself is how deep I wanted to make the outcome of the choices. Each one could lead down an entirely different story line, with around ten different possible endings. There is also the idea of keeping things simple, just having the dialogue always be the same and the only thing they change is how quickly you see the characters decline or begin to show more emotion. Story points that were passed will not have the option to go back and hear them again. Once you make a choice, that is set in stone and there are consequences for your actions. I ended up making it in between, where Ophelia says completely different lines of dialogue based on whatever is chosen. She is affected, not only the transitions. We come back to the Presenter who always says the same thing, except at the very end. She connects the whole performance together, bringing everything back to an anchor point, even though there are many different ways the story could go. The Presenter represents the clean flow of the story, something to come back to while Sami and Ophelia branch out depending on the audience's choices.

To add to the isolation of the Presenter, I decided to never have her commentate on how we can speak to Ophelia. The Presenter never refers to the fact that we can listen to Ophelia. She uses Ophelia as the base of her presentation as a subject she keeps coming back to. She mentions the choices and how they affect the outcome of the play, but never directly mentions how we are listening to Ophelia's point of view as well. She is strictly in the Presenter mode, and performs

only this task throughout the play. At the end, I originally had her talking about how Ophelia could live or die, and how we as an audience could change her fate if we wished. I ended up cutting that, having her only interaction with Ophelia be the last lines that they both share. If death is chosen, the Presenter will say some of the same lines that Ophelia does, which will be her only true connection to Ophelia. The only real connection comes through death. The line is part of Ophelia's last sane line, which she will say if she dies: "Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night". The last sane line of Ophelia will be her last one if death is the choice, and the last line the Presenter ever has as well. This is the last point of the play, and the one they truly share. They will share a similar moment if life is chosen, Ophelia thanks the audience, and the Presenter will do the same. She thanks them for participating, and says thank you twice more. Something in her eyes shows gratitude before she exits.

After filling out an entire outline for the short play, the next step was formatting it in a way that more-so resembled a script. Actual dialogue and stage direction needed to be implemented. Everything was suggested in the stream of consciousness, but in order to perform it and memorize it, it needs dialogue and to be set in a way that is actually doable. I sat down and wrote it all in one go as well to make it seem more cohesive. After getting feedback, I continued to make edits to the script until I reached the final version which is attached as Appendix A.

### **Projections**

I think that people will be hesitant to respond at first. Theatre is not usually interactive, and I know I would feel uncomfortable being called out or talked to during a performance. I used the Presenter character to explain everything at the beginning so people would be less hesitant to interact, getting rid of some of their doubts about interacting with a theatre piece. Labeling it as

more of a performance art piece might help show people that this is not traditional theatre. People will be hesitant at first, but after the explanation I think people would be more willing to vote and help me move the story along. The polling method is easy to interact with as well, once they have logged in and put in a username, all they have to do is click to make a choice.

How they will respond to the performance itself is something else entirely. It is not typical of what theatre usually is, so it is hard to predict how people would react. I would like them to be able to see my concept through the performance. I want the audience to understand the personal nature of it and that it is not only a glimpse into how students and professionals separate their emotions for their own sake, but that it is also a commentary on me and how I work. The piece is deeply personal and something I have never done before. Expressing emotions has always been difficult, so showing how deeply I operate in front of people is daunting and terrifying. I feel like they might take it more on a surface level, as if the Presenter is just commentating and informing, while the transition might be seen as something which is not as intentional, and they might think that the dancing is too much.

Solo performance shows also sometimes get a bad rap, so that was something I was worried about performing and how people would react to that as well. They have been looked upon as not as real as other performances, that they are weaker. There is no character interaction and no connection between people on the stage. There is just one person doing things. I am afraid that they might be bored by it, or think that it is cheesy in some sort of way. They will see me playing all these characters, and not know that they are all just extensions of me in some form or fashion. I used all my own things, everything that I brought with me and that is presented on the stage is truly me as well. From all my own furniture to using my own laptop, everyone is me. I am afraid they will just see it as one person pretending to be multiple people.

If technology malfunctions in a way so that nobody can vote, I will go through the whole presentation choosing my first option, then I will ask them if they want to see the other ending, and count the hands. It is not nearly as interactive but it is the best solution to a technology failure. I voted myself to make sure that it worked. I tested the sound systems and ran through all the transitions and technology, working through the performance myself to make sure everything was in working order.

Overall I think the reaction will be neutral, people might not love everything that happens but it should still be interesting, and the general concept will be recognized by most people. They will know that this is completely centered around the general idea of feminism in media, through the facts expressed using Ophelia as a primary example. It might not be clear to them that this is commentary on a person going through their own day. Everyone operates somewhere between strict academia and pure emotion. We all chose how to present ourselves to those around us, and that is something I would like the audience to take away from my piece.

## **Results**

I have attached two more Appendix sections now that the performance is over. Appendix B contains screenshots of some of the choices the audience made during the performance. Appendix C has photos from the performance, so those who did not see it but will be reading this paper can see how it was represented on the stage, and what choices were made. Now that the performance is over, I can talk less in theory about what will happen, and more about what actually happened.

Overall, the performance went well. People came, and using the programs I made they were able to log in to Poll Everywhere before the presentation even began. This helped

streamline the process so I did not have to talk as much before asking my first question. People were already familiar with what I was about to do, so everything was not such a big shock.

It took some time for the polls to load so that the audience would be able to answer, but after running through it with the Powerpoint I knew that. I would offer the option for them to vote for before I said the cue line, that way they would be able to vote whenever I asked them the question at hand. I also did not anticipate how long it would take for a final vote to come in. People started immediately voting, but the choice that had the higher percentage kept shifting. I did not want to start my scene then see that it was not what people actually voted for, which led to having a little more time than I previously anticipated.

Some people shifted their votes, choosing options but then shifting back, changing their first option to another one, making the polls even harder to read. If there was an option for people's votes to be final instead of them switching back and forth, it would be easier to perform and probably less confusing as a voter.

It would probably also have gone better if I had other people running tech for me. The performance was made to be a one woman show, with each of the characters representing a different part of me and how I operate. During my first transition for example, I used the clicker for the projector as a microphone but somehow clicked every button on accident so I was suddenly at the end of my presentation without meaning to be. I had to back-up my presentation while I was trying to say my lines for Ophelia. One of my songs also restarted as I was trying to fade it out. All of these issues would have easily been solved if I had other people running the tech for me. It might impact the meaning, but not as much as if I had used multiple actors. Me doing everything myself is how I have always been, but like Ophelia I need to open myself up more and ask for help in order to have the performance run smoother.

People not showing up was one of my biggest fears. The second was them not voting. These things were not problems, people voted and they voted promptly in a way that kept the performance running smoothly. Any hiccups were usually my own transitional problems with smoothness. Another issue of my own doing was memorization, some lines I was iffy on and messed up, but I knew the general theme of the script, and was able to live even more in the moment as Ophelia. Everything ended up running smoothly, the performance happened without any real issues.

Overall, the performance did not go badly. I know where the problems are now, so when I present it at Research Dialogues I will know the areas to focus more on to make it cleaner. It went about how I expected it. Everything that I predicted happened, except people were more ready to vote than I thought they would. I thought there would be hesitation for the people in the audience, but they did not hesitate at all. They went along with it, reacting and participating the entire time.

The overall meaning might not have been completely grasped by the audience, but some people could tell that throughout the performance all the characters were extensions of me. Mostly it was seen as something educational and presentational, but the meaning was not completely lost on everyone. The important details about how women are represented in media were grasped, and a few people knew every character was an extension of me.

I learned from this process, and continuing on in my life I will be able to revisit this piece, working and adapting it in a way that helps people understand all the characters are part of not only how I operate, but how most people operate in their lives. I can make all the characters seem more connected, and continue to experiment with polling to make it even more interactive. The audience has a voice, and I wish to be able to communicate that better. I can do this through



adapting the questions, and adding more. Technology in theatre through audience interaction may one day be a more common convention.

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## APPENDIX A

## DEATH OF A MAD WOMAN

Lights are up from audience entrance. Three station are on the stage, Center, there is a stool--OPHELIA'S zone. Far Stage Left, there is a podium--PRESENTER'S space. Note cards on the podium. A powerpoint is pulled up, "DEATH OF A MAD WOMAN" projected onto the screen. Between the two worlds, there is a mirror and desk, Clothes are draped on random surfaces and are on the ground. Makeup and a glass of water on the desk. This is SAMI'S space.

PRESENTER walks on stage.

## PRESENTER

Good afternoon, and welcome to my presentation of "Death of a Mad Woman"! This is an interactive performance piece. My presentation will be about Ophelia, who many of you know. If not, here's a recap: she's the love interest in *Hamlet*, who she ends up promised to. After the death of her father, she goes mad with what seems like grief. After spouting seemingly nonsense, she is announced dead, most likely a suicide. Throughout this presentation, you'll see things pop up on the screen. Choices you can vote on. On your phone, go to the website that's on the screen.

Website url pops up on screen.

From here, you'll be able to control the story through the choices you make. Keep an eye out, because these will pop up throughout the presentation, sometimes without warning. Let's try it out now. Does anyone have questions?

On the screen, audience votes. If NO:

PRESENTER (CONT'D)

Alright, if there are no questions, let's begin.

If YES:

Alright, what are your questions?

Answer them as best as possible.

Alright. Without further ado, let's begin.

Transformation sequence from PRESENTER to OPHELIA. SAMI controls music from her phone. "It's Not Living if It's Not With You" plays. SAMI dances, taking off the blazer and shirt, slipping a dress on over her leggings. Shoes come off, she maybe touches up her makeup and hair. The screen projects the word "LOVE" on it.

After she is done, song cuts off and she enters OPHELIA'S zone.

OPHELIA

Stay away, stay away. He can't choose who he wants to be with. Wants to be with. I want to be with you. Love. Love, love love what leads us to do what we do? I'm scared. Is he sincere? Is he real? Does he love me? I'm nervous. I'm scared. I'm scared. Love, love. I want to be near you. Hands brush, lips caress. Silence. Peace. Happy. Love, love love.

Question pops up on screen, changes from "LOVE" to, "How do I feel". The answers are "I'm in love" and "Doubt"

Ophelia is walking around  
while thinking, allowing her  
to see results.

If "I'M IN LOVE" is chosen:

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

I Love him. He seems like he loves me. I'm scared. I'm scared of rejection, I like it when he is around, I want to see him. They're right, he has to love me. He came to me. I can't be wrong. I can't be wrong. I can't be wrong. Love, love he loves me. Love. Wind seeping through an open window, sleepy mornings, hands brushing. Warmth spreading, love. Love.

If "DOUBT" is chosen:

How do you tell someone you care about them. Is it love? I don't know. Love love love LOVE what a strange word, I'm scared. Is love romantic only? No. Love! I care about him but is this real? I'm young I'm scared. I feel something but what is it, what's Love what's romance what's LIFE! A tightness in my stomach, butterflies that never go away. Do I love him in the way he loves me or do we love each other at all? Stolen glances in crowded moments. What does everything mean, what is love? I don't know if I've ever truly felt love. I have to have, Right?

After whatever happens,  
transition back begins.  
Questions pops up: "DJ's  
Pick, pick a song" the  
options are "Talk" and "Oh  
No!". She dances, Lipsyncs,  
maybe checks her phone which  
she is using to control  
music. Fixes hair, undresses  
and gets ready to be  
presenter. The songs  
determine how pumped she is  
or maybe how her day is  
slowing down. The choice  
effects how SAMI operates in  
her day.

Slide changes to "PLOT  
DEVICES."

PRESENTER:

Throughout history, women have been used in literature and media to be a plot point. Maybe she is the romantic interest, or maybe she dies so that the story can continue. Ophelia is my primary example, but there are many other women who were affected by men. Medusa was cursed after having sexual relations with Poseidon in Athena's temple, while he wasn't punished at all. In television shows such as the long running and popular serial "Supernatural", it starts with the death of a woman to send these men on their journey. As the story keeps going, women come and go--just plot pit stops along the way for the leading men. In commercials and movies women are seen as a sort of "eye candy", their job is to be beautiful and bring happiness to the lives of those around them. Shows to perfume ads--since youth women are taught they are there for not their own wants and needs. They fulfill others.

Some women don't even have a choice in their fate--Ophelia for example didn't make all of her own choices. She thought about the idea of Hamlet being a potential romantic interest, and was turned away. Her father and brother were against it. After Hamlet enters her room strangely, suddenly everyone is on board with it. Choices are not her own. Even if the choices we make are ultimately our own, we feel pressured by others into making choices we regret. Saying "no" is seen as harsh and strict, so women often feel like they cannot say it for fear of perception, or violence against them. In April of 2014, a 16 year old girl was fatally stabbed for saying no to a prom invitation. Sexualization of women and the fact that they do not make their own choices are but two of the problematic ideas we have held for hundreds of years.

New question appears on the screen as SAMI's transition occurs. Audience has the options of "Objectification" or "Pressure". The questions read "What problem do you face the most?". If 'Talk' was the song that played last, then 'The Sound' plays. If 'Oh No!', 'Carried Away' is what plays. She gets dressed according to the mood of the song that is currently

playing. The poll stays up  
through OPHELIA'S  
performance.

If "OBJECTIFICATION" is  
chosen:

OPHELIA

Love, love love...gone. Loss. Sadness and shame, loss. Loss,  
love.

Sings, maybe?

"To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.  
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,  
And dupp'd the chamber-door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more."

A maid departed, not a maid anymore. A maid departed, not a maid  
anymore. No longer a maid no longer a maid no longer a maid no  
longer a maid no longer a maid no longer a maid. Maid. Maid.  
Maid.

"You promised me to wed.  
So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed" My bed my bed my bed not a  
maid no longer a maid you promised me you promised me you  
promised me

If "PRESSURE" is chosen:

"I think nothing, my lord."  
What choice have I made? I did not pursue Hamlet until my father  
said it may be wise. I don't make my own choices. Someone needs  
something and there I am. I am nothing alone, I am nothing alone  
I am here for you I will do anything to help you I am at your  
service. I think nothing. I do, I don't think. I'm here for you.  
Tell me what to do and I'll do it that's what I am useful for.  
I'll help you with anything ask me to do anything I'll drop it  
all for you. I'm there for you I'm here I'm here I think NOTHING

Choice pops up. It's "DJ's



Pick" again. The songs are 'Call Me Back' and 'Pink Lemonade'. As OPHELIA is declining, so is SAMI. How she interacts with the world differs between songs, she gets ready for the day and changes back into PRESENTER, the wear and tear of the day gets to her. This transitions into MENTAL DETERIORATION.

#### PRESENTER

Mental illnesses are often ignored in women. A woman may be paranoid or hallucinating, but people will pass it off as part of her cycle. She experiences issues, but people tell her that she's just experiencing these things because of the way women are. Mental illnesses are also undiagnosed in women--such as ADHD. The symptoms they show are not as stereotypically what you would think ADHD or ADD are, so their attention issues and problems focusing are again just passed off as something that they should just always deal with. To connect all of this to Ophelia, after her father's death she slips and her mental state steeply declines with everything that's been happening in her life. Everyone just says that she is grieving for her father in a strange way. They ignore the depression and other issues she has going on in her life. Her mental state declines, and she can either choose to express how she feels or suppress it. She has always had things happening in her life, but she chose to suppress it.

Question pops up. The options are "Suppress" and "Reveal". Or maybe "Be Open". The question says "How do you deal with emotion?" The choice affects how SAMI transitions.

If "Supress" is chosen, quiet water noises. SAMI is slow, her day has been long. She is so, so tired. She eventually is ready to be OPHELIA.

OPHELIA is still. Quiet for a long time. The quiet water is flowing in the background.

OPHELIA

"Belike this show imports the argument of the play. Will he tell us what this show meant?"

Stillness. Water is still running in the background.

"The king rises"

OPHELIA stands up.

During the transition, water still plays. SAMI is slow, gets dressed. Water ends as PRESENTER takes the stand.

If "Reveal" is chosen, water noises are still heard-- louder this time. SAMI rushes through her transition to OPHELIA, there is a fear and desperation. Her voice is going to be heard.

OPHELIA

I am so very alone. Nobody knows the true me! Scared. Alone. Sad. Desperate. I don't know what to do, I'm scared I feel so alone I know I'm not alone but I feel so very isolated. I think nothing! I am nothing! LOVE! What is it? A concept of some sort of devotion and caring and relative, relative relative my Relatives don't know me! Who am I who am I I am determined by what people need from me! I am so alone I want to go home I want to go home I want to go home please please please please please I want to go home I want somebody I don't want to be alone I'm scared I am my own person I don't need anybody I am myself I am myself what am I? WHO AM I! I don't need anyone why do I feel so sad and alone? What is love but some word we have twisted into something it's not I love everyone close to me what is love if not a word we know nothing about I have never been in love have

## OPHELIA (CONT'D)

I ever experienced Love I want to go home I don't want to be here I don't want to be here I am so tired.

Pause

I am so tired. I want to go home I want to go home

OPHELIA she walks to SAMI'S zone.

I WANT TO GO HOME!

Silence.

Water noises stop. SAMI begins her transition. These were the only dialogue lines ever spoken in SAMI'S space. The line between her and OPHELIA is thinner. She gets changed, becomes PRESENTER.

## PRESENTER

Over the course of *Hamlet*, Ophelia steadily begins to decline. The suppression of her emotions ultimately does more harm to her than it does good. The play is not over, but Ophelia's time here is short. She leaves after saying something just as cryptic sounding as her lines before. She sings about the loss of virginity, death, the afterlife--all after leaving with a simple good night. When Hamlet discovers she is dead, he goes mad with grief, leaping into the grave and professing how much he loved her. Words he never said to her. This is a final blow to Hamlet, he was on the brink but after this he truly went mad, which led to the ending of the play. Sweet Ophelia, not cared about in life, and only by her death could she be useful. She does, however, live in our memories and on pages, and will always be alive there.

Final transition into OPHELIA. Predetermined music is playing. 'Ribs' by Lorde, possibly? This is the second to last time we see her. She is slower. Still Lip Syncing

or singing to it, dancing but it's less like dancing and more like she's speaking to herself in the mirror. She gets dressed, looks in mirror as the choice appears. Silence.

"OPHELIA'S FATE" Is on the screen. Answers are "LIFE" or "DEATH".

If "LIFE" is chosen, SAMI enters OPHELIA's space.

OPHELIA sits. There is complete silence she is looking down. Silence. After a minute she looks up to the audience.

OPHELIA

Thank you. Thank you.

OPHELIA stands. Her eyes show her desperation and gratitude. Final transition to SAMI. She takes off the OPHELIA clothes, looks at herself in the mirror. Silence. Deep breath. Put on PRESENTER clothes.

PRESENTER has a moment of silence, picking up note cards, organizing them. This is a moment with hope.

PRESENTER

This concludes my presentation of "Death of a Mad Woman". Thank you for participating, and helping me in collecting the data I needed. Thank you, Thank you.

PRESENTER bows before turning off the powerpoint and leaving the stage. Lights go down for a second, to show its over.

END

Maybe an option for a second chance to restart the show before lights out?

If "DEATH" is chosen, SAMI enters OPHELIA's space.

OPHELIA

"I pray God. God be wi' ye  
Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies;  
good night, good night."

Final transition to SAMI.  
Water noises play loudly. She is drained. She is tired. She is done. She removes OPHELIA'S clothes. She looks at herself in the mirror. She hates it. She tries to splash a glass of water in her own face, hitting the mirror. Music turns down. Silence. She puts on PRESENTER clothes.

PRESENTER has a moment of silence, picking up note cards, organizing them. More Somber.

PRESENTER

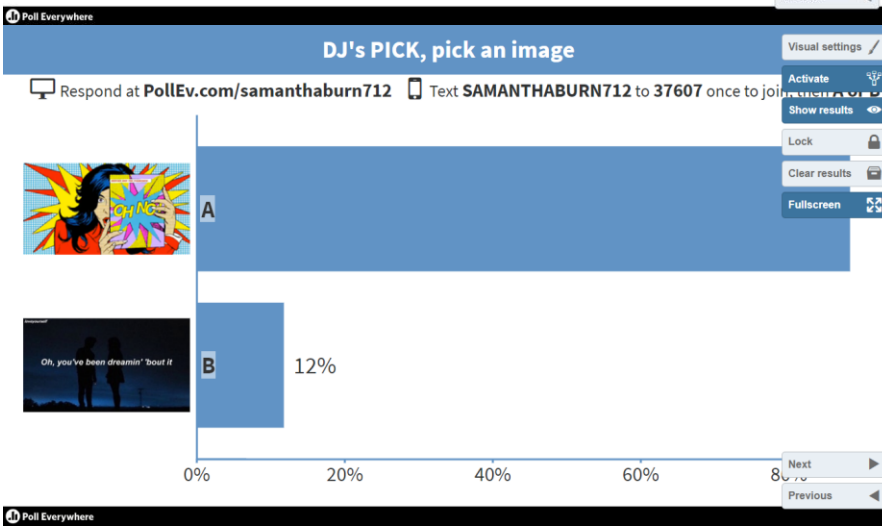
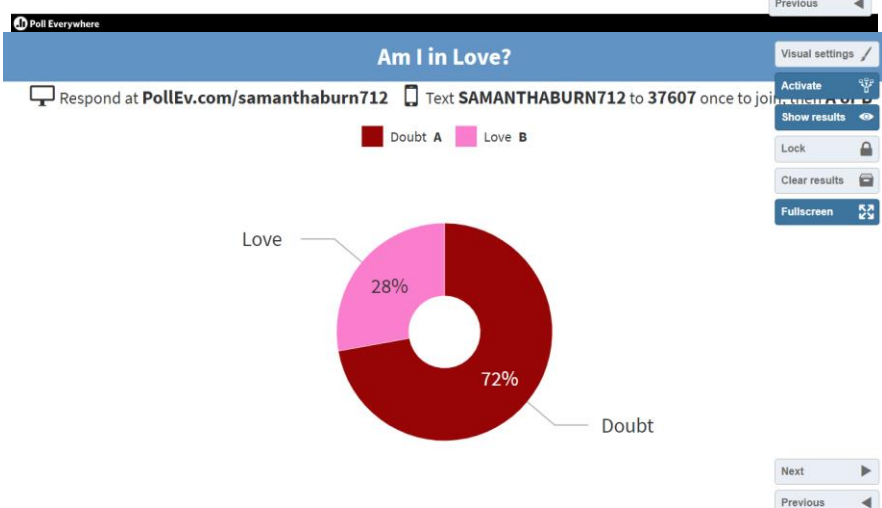
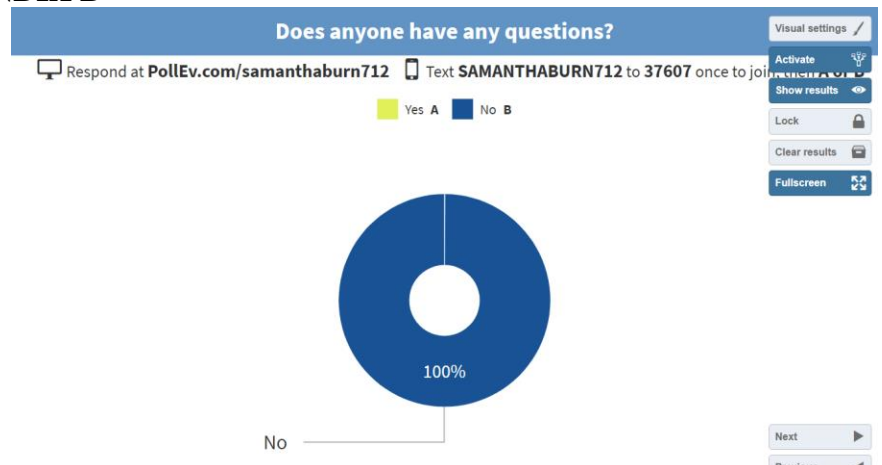
This concludes my presentation of "Death of a Mad Woman". Thank you for participating, and helping me in collecting the data I needed. Good night, good night.

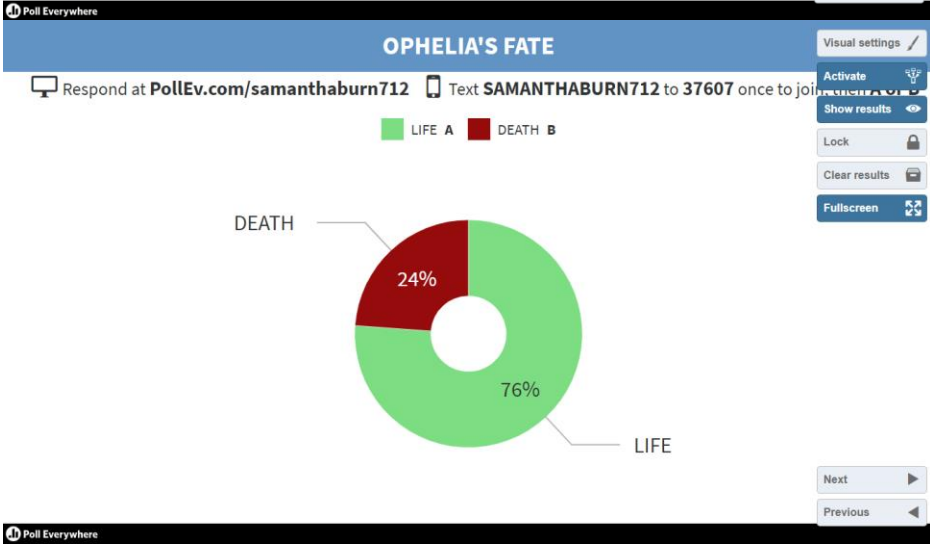
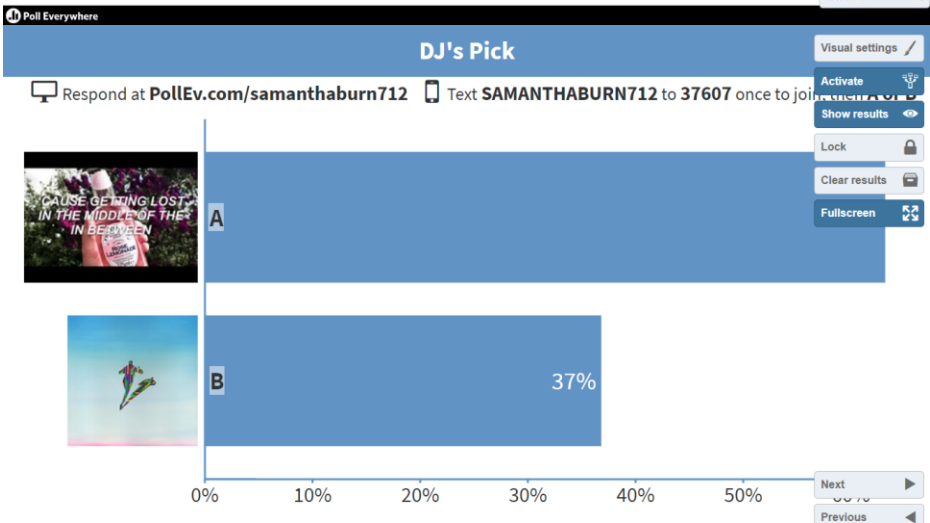
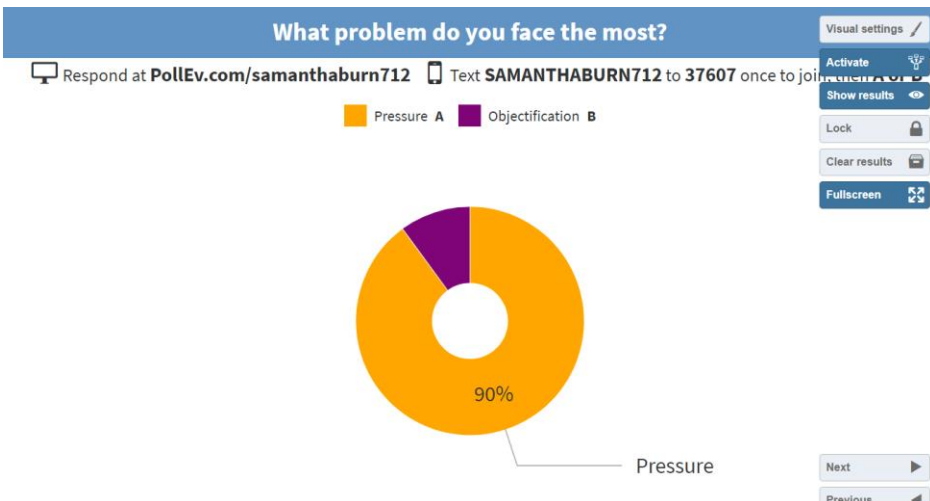
PRESENTER bows before turning  
off the powerpoint and  
leaving the stage. Lights go  
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END

Maybe an option for a second chance to restart the show before lights out?

# APPENDIX B







APPENDIX C





