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A Modern Henry V

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of theatre is to achieve a true communication with an audience. The potential to meet this goal lies in remembering that theatre should be truthful, relatable, and engaging to a contemporary audience, despite the age or setting of the play. By choosing a Shakespearean history play, and producing an all-female, contemporary edition of *Henry V*, I endeavored to create theatre to which a modern audience could connect. The following paper outlines the steps I took towards accomplishing that goal and my specific reasons for taking those steps. Analysis of the feedback from the final performances of the show on February 24, 25 and 26, 2012 in the Annex 117, in conjunction with my other research, allows me to assess my success in meeting my goal.
COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS, THEATRE AND DANCE

A MODERN HENRY V

by

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Why Henry V?

When choosing which of Shakespeare’s 38 plays I wanted to work with, I looked for a challenge, something the majority of my audience would unlikely recognize and automatically identify with. Some of Shakespeare’s plays are so well known that there is no question of their relevance. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, has been done so many times in so many ways, boiled to the essentials, that its themes and story are widely known. Most likely, no one would deny that there are elements in that play to which he or she can relate, characters to empathize with, and universal truths to learn. *Henry V* may not be as well known by a young contemporary audience, but it carries just as much potential to be engaging, modern and relevant as the most popular of Shakespeare’s plays. I wanted to show that even when a play is lesser known, if it is done properly, with an aim for truth, it will be just as relatable. If the actors are living honestly in the moment on stage, actually listening and responding to both the audience and the other actors, truth will be achieved. If the actors live selfishly or indulgently, concerned with only themselves, and not those with whom they are communicating, the show will not achieve truth, or even clarity. The audience will disengage, finding nothing relatable. Critically acclaimed by literary and theatrical scholars alike, but more obscure to the majority of my audience, *Henry V* seemed a perfect choice to test an audience’s reception to contemporary staging.

During my process, I found inspiration in the writings of David Mamet, Peter Brook, and Antonin Artaud, among others. After reading their works, I formulated a specific and direct idea of the kind of theatre I wanted to create—honest, relevant and engaging to the community in which it is presented. Peter Brook sums up my feelings towards theatre, and Shakespeare specifically, saying, “In the theatre, every form once born is mortal; every form must be reconceived, and its new conception will bear the marks of all the influences that surround it”
(Brook 16). I reconceived, reinvented, Shakespeare’s 412 year old text with those ideas in mind. The influences of society and culture acted as an inspiration, informing my choices and shaping the show.

One way to ensure that Henry V related to the community in which it was created was by heavily involving the actors in my creative process. While all final decisions regarding aesthetics, blocking, and so forth have been mine, the show was born out of more than just my own imagination. By establishing a very open communication with the cast and by giving my actors license to explore all creative impulses, I encouraged the actors to form deeper personal connections to the characters they were playing and to the project in general. I made it clear to my actors that I would take any ideas, suggestions, or inspirational thoughts they had very seriously. They embraced this opportunity and came into rehearsal prepared and excited as a result. In True and False, Mamet advises artists to “cultivate the habit of mutuality. Create with your peers, and you are building a true theatre” (Mamet 103). As an actor, I strongly believe in actor driven work, and in creating as an ensemble. As a text, Henry V lent itself very well to this sort of process. The combat scenes offered an excellent opportunity for group exploration, and as a result of doubling, most of the actors had relatively equal amounts of text and stage time. Furthermore, the structure and themes of the play, specifically the British idea of being a “band of brothers,” promoted unity. We as a group created work that was more personal and meaningful than any one of us could have created alone.

In my abridged version of Henry V, the play opens with the prologue, underscored by music. Then the bishops of Canterbury and Ely discuss the personal financial repercussions they will suffer as a result of a newly proposed law. They plan to distract King Henry from this law by pointing out the hereditary claim he may have to the French throne. This upsets the French,
and they send Henry a box of tennis balls as an insult. Henry decides to invade France. Three English traitors have been bribed by the French to conspire against Henry, but they are found out and punished. Exeter, Henry’s close advisor, goes to the French King and tells him of Henry’s claim to the dukedoms of France and of his plans to declare war.

Meanwhile, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol, three soldiers who frequent the tavern, meet and quarrel over Pistol’s wife, until Boy, a servant, enters, informing them of the illness of Sir John Falstaff. Pistol and Nym resolve their quarrel, and go to Falstaff’s death bed. After their leader’s death, the three soldiers and Boy head off to join Henry in the war.

Henry’s siege begins at Harfluer, where the English army finds success. This is the first section in my abridged version where I incorporate the stylized combat sequences to help to portray the violence and chaos of war. Pistol meets with Fluellen and Gower, two captains of English units, and they quarrel. Bardolph and Nym are killed for stealing from a church. The French Princess Katherine and her maid, Alice, then have a very light-hearted scene in which Katherine attempts to learn English. The French King and court bemoan their loss at Harfluer, and prepare to fight Henry at Agincourt. They are still cocky as to their advantage over the English. The night before this battle, Henry disguises himself and travels throughout the English camp, learning what his soldiers truly think of him. The next morning, the battle occurs, and the English win, with far fewer causalities than the French. This section also features the stylized combat sequences. Henry and Exeter mourn the loss of the Duke of York, and upon hearing a new French alarm, Henry gives the word to kill all French prisoners. Finally, Montjoy, the French Herald, enters to surrender to Henry. Pistol and Fluellen finally fight each other; Fluellen wins and slaps Pistol with a leek. A treaty is made between the British and the French, in which Henry marries Katherine, and becomes king of both France and England.
In studying Shakespeare’s original text, it quickly became clear to me which themes I found most engaging, and therefore wanted to concentrate on in my abridged version. *Henry V* explores a coming of age story, looking at how Henry gains respect as a leader and learns to function as a king. In *Henry IV*, parts 1 and 2, Prince Hal, who later becomes Henry V, is wild and unruly; upon becoming the king, however, Henry grows up and shoulders responsibility. *Henry V* also examines bravery versus cowardice, expressed through the contrasting behaviors of the soldiers. Finally, the play examines violence as a manner of revenge and as a method of teaching a lesson. The war itself, although strongly urged by the two bishops, is sparked by the taunting disrespect of the French. It is this wounded pride, combined with a thirst to prove themselves, that drives the English to battle. These three themes—what makes a strong leader, the differences between bravery and cowardice, and violence as a reaction, form the basis of my thematic explorations within the text.

**Methodology**

If we hope for theatrical events to have a lasting impact on the audience experiencing them, we must commit to making truthful and relevant theatre. I believe a play should seek truth by proposing loaded questions and promoting the forging of connections between the action on stage and daily life. If the actors can find truth in the situations of the play, simply listening and responding while honestly being present, the play will reach the audience as more than just an irrelevant story, but as an identifiable experience.

I directed, produced, designed and dramaturgically researched this abridged version of *Henry V* with the preceding goals in mind. Embarking upon the project with an initial objective to abridge the text, my dramaturgical research took prevalence. In working with the text, I referenced multiple editions of *Henry V*, including the Folgers and the Riverside, for both
punctuation and abridging reasons. I meticulously studied the language, so as to understand the exact meaning of each scene, speech, and word. The Alexander Schmidt lexicons were an excellent resource, as was Eric Partridge’s *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*, and the C.T. Onions *A Shakespeare Glossary*. These resources gave me exact definitions of every word and insight into the deeper meanings of Shakespeare’s text.

The basis of my practical research came from comparing and contrasting the two separate productions I did of this piece and from the feedback I received following both productions. I did a mid-process sharing December 9 and 10, 2011 to gather feedback regarding the weaknesses and strengths of the show. My final showings on February 24, 25, and 26, 2012 incorporated this original feedback. Furthermore, I gathered additional information from the audience at this second round of showings in order to assess how well I met my goal of creating relatable theatre.

The rehearsals, beginning in late September, offered feedback and insight into my process, since we as an ensemble of cast and director established a very open communication. All of my rehearsals took an exploratory approach to the work, concentrating on the actor. I worked with actors in smaller groups on individual scenes or moments to help cultivate their characters and actions through an intimate and organic process, for as Mamet proposes, “the correct unit of study is not the play; it is the scene” (Mamet 75). Similarly, the combat was created by Analisa Valez, but incorporated the choreography and input of both myself and the cast as a whole. Working in this way promoted group creativity and an ensemble environment.

The cast list changed slightly since original casting, partially because two of my actors left campus to study in London and had to be replaced. To view a copy of the original cast list and of the final cast list, see Appendices A and B. As a result of changes in both the action and
In this thesis, I explore the different tactics I used to create relevant and relatable theatre. I discuss my concept, give a detailed account of the steps I took towards modernization, and examine the feedback and data collected.

**Concept**

Since I wanted to create theatre which would be relevant and engaging to a modern audience, my director’s concept for *Henry V* involved contemporary settings and references. Set in 1415 during the Hundred Years War, and specifically, the Battle of Agincourt, *Henry V* follows the young king’s journey to victory over France. My version of *Henry V* takes place in modern times in an abstracted world. My directing approach relied on the inclusion of contemporary influences, and an artistic interpretation of violence. If I had modernized the war in *Henry V*, and taken a realistic approach to recreating contemporary war practices on stage, the actors would have worn standard-issue army uniforms and carried guns. To me, this would have made the play more about modern military practices than about the human themes and lessons. While this could have easily been both engaging and entertaining, I wanted the show to focus on the themes of the play and be relatable to a young, collegiate audience.

I chose a few specific contemporary cultural signifiers and used them to create the alternate world in which this play exists. The most obvious of these was the all-female cast. I made this choice both because it was an opportunity to fill a casting void at Florida State University and a chance to explore a traditional Shakespearean play from a female perspective. This directly reflected the community which created this show, as more than 2/3 of the School of Theatre undergraduate population are women. As a result, only females appeared onstage in my
abridged *Henry V*, despite the overwhelming number of male characters in the play. These women were sexualized and powerful, they could even be considered “edgy.” That is to say, the women on stage were daring, provocative and innovative, unafraid of making difficult or risky choices.

With my direction and creative process, I feel I took a realistic approach to the characters and text. Despite the heightened language of Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, I wanted the characters to sound and behave as real people do. In order to explore the deeper themes of the show, specifically leadership, bravery versus cowardice, and violence as a reaction, it was vital that the characters onstage seemed wholly human; this helped those themes to be as real and relatable as possible. I wanted the actors to play characters with a sense of psychological truth, despite the elevated language and stakes. Taking this realistic approach to acting encouraged the actors to form meaningful personal connections with their own characters and with the other actors. Throughout the process, the actors continued to make discoveries that helped their characters seem real. The deeper and more complex of a connection the actors drew to their own characters, the simpler it was for them to act and react truthfully in the heightened world of the play.

**Modernization**

The most drastic changes I made to Shakespeare’s original text were in the interest of showing the themes in a more contemporary light. If the goal was to make *Henry V* relatable to a modern audience, then it followed that the play itself should be modernized. Since theatre provides an active communication between audience and actor, it is important to know how effectively the story and themes are being relayed. As David Mamet explains in his book *True and False*, “The audience will teach you how to act and the audience will teach you how to write and to direct” (Mamet 19). Nothing is as valuable as the unsolicited and true reaction an
audience member has to a piece of art. Audience members do not laugh or cry or even stay engaged because they are forced to; they simply react to what the actors offer. The audience’s reaction fuels the piece, and in doing so, the audience transforms from a group of alienated spectators to individual players in the action; they are involved. Establishing this connection is especially important in Shakespeare, where the actors develop direct and personal interactions with various individuals in the audience, since it gives the audience freedom to openly express emotions and reactions. The audience cannot exist separately from the action on the stage.

Through an incorporation of the audience’s reactions to my workshop showings, the relevant and accessible nature of the final performance of *Henry V* was increased. David Mamet explains it best, saying “without respect for the audience, there is no respect for the theatre; there is only self-absorption” (Mamet 59). *Henry V* was not a detached performance, with distinct divisions between actor and audience but rather a communication, in which audience and actor were equally capable of impacting each other.

The age and historical significance of Shakespeare’s masterpieces can sometimes inhibit our ability to work with them, posing the false idea that his text is somehow lofty, and must be performed in a specific way in order to be truly Shakespearean. The idea that Elizabethan theatre must be performed in a particular manner, adhering to strict specific historical guidelines, can sometimes be limiting or prevent growth. Shakespeare did not present his plays in the time periods in which they were set, but rather in the time in which they were written and being performed, with modern influences. Peter Brook delves into the idea of including modern influence in theatre in *The Empty Space*, explaining why it can be damaging to work from a place of assumed tradition. “Life is moving, influences are playing on actor and audience and other plays, other arts, the cinema, television, current events, join in the constant rewriting of
If I hope to achieve truth in theatre, and specifically in my abridged production of Henry V, the work must be a direct reflection of the times in which we are living. There is more than one way to do this; when committed actors living truthfully in the moment do good work, daily truth will be incorporated naturally, since honestly living in the moment fuels the actors. However, if we let theatre be stagnant, dismissing the necessity of a deep personal connection between actor and text, truth will not be achieved.

While there is no doubt that much can be learned and enjoyed from plays presented with an attempt to preserve the original practices of Elizabethan drama, I wanted my abridged Henry V to incorporate personally relevant and recognizable factors, giving both actors and audience familiar means by which to connect. By refusing the influence of the current period, we deny the audience an additional means of identifying with the action. We must, therefore, take risks in all of our creative endeavors; try things that are new, different, and frightening. Artaud explains in The Theatre of Cruelty, “Our sensibility has reached the point where we surely need Theatre that wakes up heart and nerves,” (Artaud). I wanted my Henry V to do just that.

In 2003, the National Theatre in London presented a modernized Henry V in the Laurence Olivier theatre. The show was set in Iraq, during the current war. Costumes were true to standard issue uniforms. When the French were executed, they were shot by a firing squad onstage. This was a multimedia production, utilizing video, which functioned as a sort of news station. Director Nicholas Hytner said in an interview, “Current events are perhaps illuminated by the play, but they also illuminate the play. I hope that what we're doing, by doing this play in this way at this time, is to make certain aspects of it very alive which wouldn't necessarily have been visible and audible,” (Rosenthal). By combining this story of Henry V with a major political
issue, a wholly recognizable current event, the play became instantly relatable to the moment in which it was performed. Audiences understood.

In a similar manner, I wanted my *Henry V* to reflect the community in which it was being created, beyond my unique casting choice. This caused me to step back and define the community. As a result of the university setting, I knew the majority of the audience would be within my age range. This prompted me to consider what some of the defining factors of my generation are at this moment in time. All I had to do was look around me. We are addicted to our smartphones and other mobile devices; we are dependent upon them for communication, entertainment, and information, among other things. We expect this information to be instantaneous and convenient. We are constantly surrounded by music, from personal mp3 players, to our car radios, to the music played at clubs or parties. Music is culturally important to our generation; it defines a person’s tastes and interests and helps people connect. Increasingly this music has an electronic influence, incorporating what is known as dubstep music into other genres, such as pop and hip hop. Music, information, and communication are things to which this generation continually demands access.

At first glance, the story line of *Henry V* may not seem particularly relatable to the majority of a modern university-based audience. True, some of the smaller plot lines, such as the quarrel between Pistol and Nym over Mistress Quickly, align easily with modern experiences. This is a situation many have experienced themselves, or witnessed others experiencing. However, the main action of the plot concerns a war between Britain and France which happened almost 600 years ago, and the play itself was written over 400 years ago. I expected the majority of my audience to be unfamiliar with war practices in either time period, or even with war practices today. However, war is something that impacts our daily lives. We see it on the news
and in the papers, and we experience it as part of our educational curriculums and informal discussions, prompting many debates. War influences the politics, economics, and societies of our world. When presented on the stage, it can have a powerful effect, rather than that of a dull history lesson. We must not think of the war between Britain and France as only a historical war, or as an old theatrical representation of it, but as a representation of deep-seated conflict, and the resulting violence as felt by us in today’s world.

*Henry V* is so much more than just a play about war. It offers deep insights into what it means to be a leader. It emphasizes faith and strength over numbers or sheer force. It shows that someone’s nation or manner of speaking is not what defines them, but that it is instead their character. Henry’s journey from the wildness of his youth to the strength and responsibility of his reign as king parallels the journey many collegiate students take. Henry grows up and proves himself, with some advising, but mostly on his own. This is undeniably relatable. The play contains moments of despair and loss, moments of joy and laughter, and moments of victory, when good triumphs over evil, right wins out over wrong. The themes and characters provide the play with its ability to be relevant and relatable. Therefore, in my staging of it, the realistic human qualities of these characters had to be clear. Doing so aided the audience in understanding the characters’ struggles, decisions, worries, and needs. Perhaps the situation was foreign, even when contemporized, but the emotion was familiar, and in that lay the potential for a true connection and the audience’s resulting empathy.

The script proved conducive to the addition of modernized props, costumes, music, and action. The greeting between Fluellen and Gower provides a good example: they perform a complicated handshake, involving fist bumps and high fives. This recognizable action immediately associated these characters with current popular culture, and as such, added an
identifiable element which contemporized the piece. Props and costumes did the same in a simple and straightforward visual manner.

The addition of cell phones to the action served a variety of purposes. First and foremost, the cell phone, an unmistakably technologically advanced device, placed the action firmly within a modern time period. The cell phone specifically relates to my generation, the way we communicate and the way we function. Secondly, it allowed information to be received immediately via text message. This was appealing to me. It fit in well with the obsession the current generation has with immediacy, since text messaging provides a non-disruptive manner in which to quickly convey information. The lines in the script that would normally have been delivered by messengers entering into the scenes could now be received by characters already onstage via text message. The messengers function in the play to deliver direct information into a scene, which changes the course of that scene. Text messages, also a direct source of information, now filled that role. This helped the pacing of the piece, as it eliminated entrances and exits.

I chose to give Boy an iPod because I wanted him to be cut off from the rest of the world. Unhappy in his position, ornery in character, and at a difficult age, it made sense that Boy would want the escape headphones can bring. In the fall, Boy had a small toy car to play with. I liked the idea of this character having a personal item, but I wanted it to be something even more personal and modern, and something that could accentuate his isolation.

The addition of the highly decorated flasks, the switchblades, and the hobby horse aided in modernization as well. The flasks immediately established the alcoholic habits of Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym. Each flask matched specifically to the character to whom it belonged, and helped to establish the drunken and dishonest natures of these three scoundrels. The switchblades
functioned in a similar manner, conveying the rough and impulsive natures of Pistol and Bardolph. The hobby horse established the ridiculousness of the Dauphin, and served as a running joke amongst his counterparts. All of these props were recognizable objects in the show, although not strictly of the modern period, and their inclusion in the play was both informative and humorous.

The addition of music and stylized combat to the battle scenes functioned as a major modernizing element. The type of music I chose to include, dubstep, is a type of electronic dance music with heavy drum and bass influence. Physically requiring the use of modern technology to produce, this music sounds mechanized. Dubstep first emerged around the turn of the century as an electronic underground nightclub movement in London, although it has only gained widespread popularity in the last few years. Recently, dubstep influence has also worked its way into pop music. Dance breaks in the songs of artists like Britney Spears and Rihanna are undeniably dubstep-inspired. The electronic nature of this music, and its relatively recent emergence into mass media and pop culture made it well suited to my concept. However, the heavy drum and bass, the intense rhythmic shifts, and the frantic nature of this music also made it very appropriate to underscore the violence.

In taking a highly abstract approach to the violent war scenes, we eliminated the need for complicated combat (considering our skill set and overall lack of training, this seemed a good choice). I wanted these abstracted scenes to capture the feel of violence and conflict instead of attempting to portray realistic war. Instead of staging a pale imitation of something none of us had actually experienced, I chose to use to music, dance, and unarmed combat to convey how a battle may feel, basing it on our own experiences with confrontation, violence and dissent. In these combat segments we choreographed moments of weakness and victory, and sections where
time seemed to speed up or slow down. We included hostility, fear, bravery, and violence. The music set the tone and pace, and the action portrayed the violent experiences and told a story. Our dubstep fights were clearly not congruent with realistic battle. However, the objectives and themes are just as present in our form of fighting as in traditional warfare.

The costumes were also undeniably modern and played a large part in helping set the piece. In Shakespeare’s day, the costumes were one of the most valuable assets of any acting company; clothing cost a great deal of money. As a result of the scarcity of set use in Elizabethan times, the costumes added an important, sometimes even vital element, bringing spectacle and clarity to the plays. In a similar way, I chose to utilize the characters’ clothing to create the world of the play and to build a contemporary look. Several things inspired the style of clothing the women wore. I wanted the costumes to be a play on the all-black outfit frequently worn for experimental, low budget productions, with only a few accessories of color. However, I also wanted the costumes to take inspiration and influences from medieval war, femme fatale, and punk styles. I hoped this combination of feminine and tough styles, along with the historic influence, would make the costumes fashionable and somewhat ironic. To see my original conceptual designs for these costumes, and a selection of production photos showcasing the costumes actually worn, see Appendices G and H. To simplify, I wanted the costumes to be comprised primarily of things the women already owned. I asked each actor to look at her wardrobe and to pick things that she felt her character would wear, keeping in mind the style and color scheme. From leather jackets to lace stockings, the women wore provocative, tough, and fashionable costumes in a black and metallic color scheme. The colors in the costumes were chosen partially as indicators of nationality and status, but also as a way of grouping the characters.
Many of the costumes were highly reminiscent of the period in which King Henry V actually lived and reigned. For example, the dress worn by Gower resembled chain mail in color and texture, but covered only one shoulder and fit tightly. Stylistically, there was nothing about the dress that suggested it was of medieval origins, yet the smaller details of the garment provided a good nod towards the original period of the play. This blend between current and medieval gave the costume the modern feel it needed, but also incorporated the context of Henry V. All of the women wore some form of chain-mail or hardware inspired accessory, which added to the strength and rough nature of their costumes, but also linked them to the original setting of the play without sacrificing a contemporary look. These accessories ranged from necklaces and bracelets to gloves and belts. The hardware added a rough element to each of the costumes, which supported the more violent sections of the play well.

The women were dressed provocatively and sexually in order to immediately establish an undeniably female visual image. The costumes, which were tight fitting and revealing, provided a supposedly male perspective of what appeals sexually. Much of the clothing, although greatly stylized, evoked what might be seen at a bar or club. Strapless tops, corsets, short skirts, high heels, and tight dresses were just a few of the items worn throughout the piece. Typically, such alluring articles imply that women are dressing in an effort to attract members of the opposite sex. Dressing in this manner causes women to objectify themselves. However, women can embrace this look, allowing their strength and power to resonate beyond the stereotypical affiliations of provocative clothing, which transforms them from solely objects to both objects and subjects. In my abridged Henry V, the women did not struggle to hide their femininity or to somehow equate their sexuality with that of a man’s. They embraced the fact that they are women, outwardly and immediately, which then gave them permission to dismiss traditional
male and female roles within the text. In this play, there were no men to attract or control. We took the modern sexualized, feminine look, and imposed the power, strength, and masculinity of Shakespeare’s characters. We looked at our own femininity with a male perspective, since the world is still, for the most part, dominated by a male perspective. The women in this show played parts that were written for men by a man. The fact that they are women did not inhibit their ability to behave as the characters behave in *Henry V*. This allowed the themes of the show to apply to women, and gave us the opportunity to explore gender issues relating to women in politics, women in violence, and established stereotypes regarding women. We could embrace those stereotypes, only to break them down. The provocative and insensible nature of the clothing perhaps indicated that these women were foolish, shallow, loose, or unintelligent. For the most part, the characters in my abridged edition of *Henry V* do not fit into this stereotype; they are strong, clever, and complex. While the costumes fit very clearly into my concept and aided in my attempts at modernization, they also served to ask vital questions regarding the issues of gender and sexuality in my all-female interpretation. I intended to shatter the ideas regarding what is feminine and what is masculine within the text.

In this abridged production of *Henry V*, sexualized women openly maintain power; this makes an essential statement regarding gender and leadership. Societally speaking, and specifically within contemporary American politics, the acceptance of sexualized women as leaders is rare. Most female politicians strive to downplay their gender, not highlight it. They are criticized for their lack of femininity. While they may have gained the respect of their peers, it is at the cost of their image. However, if a female politician strives to highlight her femininity, the media criticizes her for the cost of her wardrobe and the time and effort she puts into her appearance. Either way, society finds fault with how women present their femininity in
conjunction with political power and status. Women should not have to alter their gender image in order to gain credibility and receive the respect of their peers.

As a text, *Henry V* contains only four female characters, none of whom are particularly noteworthy or impressive. This is ironic, since the claim to the French throne which supposedly justifies Henry’s invasion traces genetically through the female line. The play’s few female characters span a limited range. Mistress Quickly, the whore of the bunch, dies offstage before the play has even reached its end. Princess Katherine functions as little more than property, objectified and sold to England in order to preserve the peace. Although Henry professes he loves her, and although Katherine eventually agrees to his suit, it cannot be denied that the situation is, especially by today’s standards, incredibly anti-feminist. Alice, Katherine’s maid, is textually a somewhat nondescript character. Queen Isabel appears only for a few short speeches in the final scene of the final act, blessing her daughter’s essentially forced marriage to Henry. None of these women provide a strong or positive image of women. However, by putting women in the parts written for men, the women are given the power back in my abridged production. Not only does this make a statement regarding what women can and cannot do within the theatre, that is, to play a male role, it is also a strong statement on the text. Henry, a woman, leads an army of women into battle, to fight another army of women. There is no reason a woman could not do this. Seeing women in power, utilizing violence and threats to get what they want, is incredibly engaging. Women have the potential for power and violence, just as men do.

The male characters all differ a great deal from each other. They are of different nationalities, rank, and economic backgrounds. Some are noble and loyal, while others are conceited or immoral. The characters possess different levels of intelligence and wit. In short, the different characters encompass a wide variety of traits that are not just masculine, but human.
Over this range of characters, it is only natural to see a range of sexualities. While some characters might identify more with masculine traits and behaviors, others find themselves exceedingly feminine. The actors playing each of these parts worked with me and made decisions regarding the degree of femininity or masculinity which they feel suited their character. This made each character more specific, realistic, and authentic.

If we let it, *Henry V* can be a comment on modern politics, modern roles of rank and gender, and modern society as a whole. The members of an audience can see themselves reflected in it. By modernizing the piece through the use of both external factors, such as costumes and props, and internal factors, such as the acting and direction, *Henry V* has been transformed from a lengthy history play to an exciting and engaging look at women in various roles of strength and power. It is important to assess whether or not these changes and additions to the show effectively accomplished the task of modernizing the text and of making it relatable to a contemporary audience.

**Research**

Since it was my goal to create theatre that is modern, relevant, and engaging to the audience existing within my community, I wanted an opportunity to test how well I was doing with a live audience. By sharing two mid-process showings of the piece, which took place December 9 and 10 in the Annex 117 Theatre, I provided myself with the chance to stand back and assess where we as at cast were at in our process and where we needed to go. The experimental showings of *Henry V* were a phenomenal learning tool that provided me with concrete feedback. They gave me the unique opportunity to see an entire audience’s reaction to the work we had done so far. I received a great deal of feedback from the audience, both positive and negative, that helped me to shape the version of *Henry V* presented in conjunction with my
thesis defense. Immediately, I was able to assess how similar the audience in attendance was to the type of audience I was expecting. I was not disappointed. My audience was a mixture of theatre students, both graduate and undergraduate, as well as English students, friends, and family. The audience was largely collegiate, and was indicative of FSU’s diverse student body. As a result, I feel confident about the quality of the feedback, and about my choice to target this particular demographic.

This audience feedback was gathered in multiple ways, both qualitatively and quantitatively. First and foremost, I was able to watch the individual reactions of audience members as the performance occurred. During our performances, I also paid a great deal of attention to the audience’s experience as a whole. Naturally, their responses were very indicative of the success of the piece. Scene 3.4 between the French princess and her maid, for example, received a very jubilant reaction, with a great deal of laughter and joy. Henry’s soliloquy put the audience in a more somber mood. The dubstep surprised and excited the audience. These were some of the successful moments. However, in other sections of the show, the audience was confused or disengaged. By tweaking the structure of the dialogue, heightening the stakes, and deepening characterization, I hopefully turned these lulls into scenes of excitement and interesting action. I was able to see which moments made the audience laugh, and which moments were only humorous to a few people. There were some jokes that did not land, and some plot points that were not clear. Watching the audience’s reaction helped me to fortify where those moments in the text were. I was more confident with my choices and the textual structure after experiencing it with a live audience.

Secondly, I put out a questionnaire at the end of the show, as a way of gathering formal and simple feedback. I asked all the audience members to spend a few minutes after the show
filling out this form, and a great number of them did. Out of almost 200 total audience members over the two nights of performance, I received 97 forms. While many audience members simply filled out the form, circling one of the listed options, numerous others took the time to write additional comments, some of which can be viewed in Appendix E. For a sample of the original questionnaire see Appendix C. This survey allowed me to compile data regarding the audience’s opinions and experiences in a formal matter concerning the different goals I had for the show. I surveyed the audience on five topics. I wanted to know how engaging they found the piece, how relatable they felt it was and how well they understood the stories and themes. Furthermore I asked about the amount of Shakespeare experience they had, and also whether or not they enjoyed the show. All of the questions could be answered with one of five options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. By assigning each of these answers a numerical value between one and five (strongly agree being the highest) I was able to calculate the average audience answer for each question. I was first interested to know how much Shakespeare experience the audience had collectively. The answers to this question ranged a great deal, although the average score was 3.54. The majority of the audience was at least familiar with Shakespeare to some degree; only 19 of the 97 surveys marked disagree or strongly disagree in reference to having prior Shakespearean knowledge. The answers to the rest of the questions are displayed in the table below.
Overall, I was pleased with the results of this survey. It gave me a good representation of my success in each area and helped me pinpoint where I needed to make changes and improvements. I was happy to see that the majority of the audience found the production enjoyable. This gave me confidence that the show was at a good point in the process and that we were already on the right track. I was slightly disappointed, although not particularly surprised, to see that the show was lacking in its ability to be relatable to the modern audience. However, this score could have been much lower, which signified to me that my production and process were headed in the correct direction.

Another opportunity for feedback came in the form of student essays. As the students in Professor James O’Rourke’s Shakespeare class were given the opportunity to write a review of this performance for their final paper, I had a great deal of access to their thoughts and opinions regarding the show. The essays were incredibly useful, as many of them provided a different perspective. The essays were written by general university students, some of whom are English majors, but many of whom study other disciplines. They were not theatre students. Their
feedback provided a valuable alternate view that helped me modify the show. Many of them took a literary approach to their evaluation of the play, but there was also a great deal of honest response to the action on stage. The students commented on my abridged version of the text, and for the most part, the students felt I had done a good job preserving the original intentions of the play. Several of the papers referred specifically to actors and characters, which helped me see which characters the audience related to most. Also, the papers focused a great deal on how well the students understood my interpretation; they discussed things they felt were lost in our experimental production, but also things that were gained. A sampling of essay quotes supporting these conclusions comprises Appendix F.

Finally, my last source for feedback came from personal discussions with both my cast and with audience members. These audience members ranged from my friends and peers to my professors and committee members. I was able to find which specific moments were people’s favorites, and which ones they felt were lacking. I was able to question these people about their reactions to the statements and themes in the play. These conversations were incredibly valuable to me, not only as a source for feedback, but also as an opportunity to bounce ideas and thoughts off other respected artists and creative minds. These conversations were informative and inspiring, and have been one of my favorite things about the process.

The conversations with my cast were ongoing, since a very open dialogue had been established at the onset of rehearsals. Following the December showings, my entire cast sat down and we discussed our reactions to the work we had done, as well as the reactions we had gotten from others. Throughout the process, my cast let me know which specific areas of the script, blocking, and actions were fueling them, and which were inhibiting them. This allowed me to immediately attack and transform problem areas. I also worked a great deal one on one with
Lauren Hlubny, the actor playing Henry. She was vital in the process of cutting her lines. Lauren would let me know which specific lines in the text spoke to her, and which ones confused her or seemed distant. We discussed all of her lines, and then made decisions together about where and how to edit her speeches. This helped transform very old text into something new and personal for the actor. As a result of my acting training, I place a very high value on these cast reactions. It is incredibly important for the actors to be able to live honestly and truthfully within the imaginary circumstances of the play. By having such an open dialogue regarding the process, script, blocking, action, and character development, I created a safe and comfortable environment for my actors, which gave them the confidence to grow and take risks. I also gained valuable input based on their own experiences within the piece which helped me to shape the production.

After the pre-production and with the resulting feedback, I returned to work on my script, process and concept. Since I collected both qualitative information, through discussion and written critiques, and quantitative information, through the survey, the resulting feedback proved both comprehensive and useful. It was, on the whole, very clear to me what changes needed to occur. Regarding the structure, I decided to shorten the play further and add in additional music and combat sequences. Specifically, I wanted to condense the first two acts, concentrating on the more expositional scenes. I underscored the prologue, so as to immediately inform the audience as to the type of show they were about to witness. I also added underscoring to Henry’s famous speech in 3.1, “Once more unto the breach dear friends…” This raised the stakes of that moment and gave Henry a sense of power and importance. The two other scenes that are underscored with music occur within the combat sequences. The first of these scenes, 3.2, shows moments of British weakness and cowardice, in the form of Pistol, Nym and Bardolph. The second scene,
4.5, features French weakness and cowardice, with the Dauphin, Rambures, and the Constable of France. It is fitting that confidence and security are lost in the throws of battle, while war is raging only feet away. For that reason, I chose to let music continue under these scenes.

Going into the December performances, there were several specific sections I knew I wanted to assess, as these were the sections I was considering altering or eliminating. For example, I was worried that the traitor's speeches at the end of 2.2 would interrupt the flow of the scene and lower the stakes. After seeing the scene with an audience in these December showings, I knew exactly how I wanted to cut the scene in order to keep the stakes high and the action moving. In this case, the December showings helped solidify the decisions I made. However, with a scene like 3.4, which I worried was too long, the December showings proved the scene’s capability to captivate and amuse. Some of the sections of the dialogue that I was apprehensive about were removed from the show, but others, like those from 3.4, were successful in this preshow, and therefore stayed for the final production. I was able to see at which points the audience was overloaded with information or verse, where making cuts would add powerful emphasis and contextual clarity. All of this knowledge was incredibly valuable as I entered the process of creating my final cut of the show.

The text went through at least five major cuts since the initial one I made at the very start of my project. I wanted the show to be 90 minutes, so I began with a script that was 85 pages, cut from 112. I knew this was not my final script, but I felt it was a strong starting point, and would be a good place to introduce the actors. The more I worked on the show, and saw the specific actors in each of the roles, the clearer it became where new cuts were needed. Our December performance ran longer than intended, but there were several sections of the text I felt I needed to see in performance before I made final decisions regarding their removal. By the time we had
finished our two shows in December, I was confident regarding my ideas about a finalized script. I knew what I wanted to do and where I wanted to take the show. The final script is 62 pages in length, with three sequences of combat that exist outside the written structure of the scenes.

I wanted the show to be fluid and seamless, with quick transitions and very little downtime. The pace changes with the mood of the scene, but alternately picks up and slows down. The first two acts increasingly build until 3.1, the famous inspirational speech “Once more unto the breach, dear friends…” delivered by Henry to his troops before the Siege at Harfluer. After this battle and the following victory, the show experiences a slight calm, interspersed with hilarity. Anticipation soon begins to build, however, as the French and English both find themselves preparing for the battle the following morning. Act 4 brings another, longer and more intense section of battling, which functions as the climax of the show. This battle finishes in the devastating loss of one of Henry’s closest friends, but also an English victory. The text then gives us another section of hilarity, with a fight between Pistol and Fluellen that is the culmination of their ongoing argument. The falling action takes place in scene 5.2, where all of the terms of the peace treaty are agreed upon and finalized, including Henry’s marriage to Katherine, the French Princess. To summarize, I wanted the show to build, culminating in the first battle. The following section is lighter and calmer, giving the audience a chance to recover. A sense of anticipation and anxiety builds into the second battle, which is the culmination of the action and the height of conflict. The show ends with light hilarity, followed by a cordial and neat solution to the issues at hand.

In some places last fall, the pacing and flow of the show were successful, and the audience was on board with where the performance was headed. However, in other places, we got behind or in front of the audience, either losing them in the plot of the story, or depriving
them of the full action. For example, I made the decision not to use any dubstep music or combat for the battle that occurs following 3.1. I chose to do this because the struggle at Harfleur is a siege of the city, not a field battle, like Agincourt. However, upon seeing the show with the audience, I realized I had made the wrong choice. Although the stakes and importance of Henry’s 3.1 speech were both present and powerful, the intensity of the following action was lost. I cut this section of the show differently and added in a segment of combat, giving the show the initial climax it needed. Furthermore, some scenes lasted too long, which caused the audience’s attention to wander and depleted the content of the scenes. The more expositional sections of the first and second acts were guilty of this. I reedited these scenes for length, story, and emphasis by highlighting different lines, removing unnecessary or repetitive dialogue, and creating a more concise representation of the action. Abridging this script was a massively involved process. I began it alone, with multiple versions of texts, the lexicons, and a pencil. As rehearsals started, and voices and personalities were added to each of the lines, the cuts continued to move and change. After the December performances, the script underwent the most dramatic shift it had seen since the initial cut. Going into the February performances, I felt confident about the script. The cuts gave the play the modern flow I was hoping for, in which light moments and heavy moments were intermingled. The action moved quickly and concisely, but we did not lose the importance of the story or the beautiful nature of Shakespeare’s text. Certain themes and ideas were emphasized with the cuts. I also added more music into the show. This was most obviously done through the additional combat sequence, which happens after 3.1. Music also appears in my choice to underscore some of the important speeches, and to use a dubstep version of a war alarm for the sound cues. A few of the scenes which happen in the midst of the fighting are also underscored with music, to help emphasize their precarious and
urgent nature. Since the war combat was already set to dubstep, adding more music helped to create a through line and to support my concept for modernization. It also contributed positively to the attitude and mood of the show, and helped to create the smooth flow the piece requires.

In order to improve *Henry V*, I needed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the show, both from my own perspective and from that of an audience. I had many preformed ideas about the changes I wanted to make in the show prior to the December performances. After the various types of feedback I was able to collect following these performances, I was reassured that some of these choices were right, proven that others would have been wrong, and discovered entirely new changes that I would not have discovered otherwise. This experimental preproduction was a vital learning point in my process, and it informed my final product in a way I could not have predicted.

**Feedback/Reaction**

During the final performances in February, I informally gathered feedback by watching the show four separate times with an audience. Although each audience reacted differently to each performance, there were some moments that were universally engaging and enjoyable. The fight scene between Pistol and Fluellen that happens near the end of the show is an excellent example of a scene which captivated all four audiences. The moment where Fluellen slaps Pistol across the face with the leek received a gleeful reaction each night; Fluellen smacking Pistol’s head on the stage received a gasp. The final performances successfully drew the audience into the world of the play, allowing the audience members to react openly and instinctually to the action and characters. This allowed the light moments to be enjoyable exchanges, but also gave the serious moments weight and significance. During the workshop showings, these moments
were not as specific or clear, causing the audience to disengage. For example, the deaths of both Westmoreland and the French prisoner, Orleans, merited a few laughs during the workshop showings. During the February performances, however, the audience was deeply invested in these moments, even gasping as Orleans’s neck is broken. The immediate reactions of the audience, both during the action of the play and following the performances, were my first indication of success.

In addition to my observations of the audience, I gathered formal feedback via a survey distributed at the end of the performance, just as I did with the December showings. The newer questionnaire was identical to the original, with the exception of one addition—a simple yes or no question asking if the workshop showing had been attended. A sample of this survey can be viewed in Appendix D. Roughly 280 people attended the final showings of *Henry V*; 131 of them filled out surveys, providing me with a great deal of both qualitative and quantitative evidence as to my success or failure. As with last semester, the individual audience member’s previous experiences with Shakespeare spanned a wide range. The surveys also gave me insight as to an audience member’s experience with the piece. Approximately 25% of these surveys were filled out by people who had seen the show previously; their comments gave me a good insight into how much the production improved. The balance of the surveys, however, gave a good representation of how my show was received by people who were ignorant of it, proving that it was still relatable and engaging to an unfamiliar audience. In reading the comments and tallying the survey responses, it became clear to me I was successful in improving the show through an incorporation of the feedback gathered last semester. As a whole, the written reactions to the February showings were positive. Many of the people who saw both the workshop production and the final performances commented on the positive impact of the changes made, and on the
vast improvements in the show. A representative sampling of these comments can be viewed in Appendix E, along with the comments from the December showings. Through comparing and contrasting these two sets of comments, it becomes apparent that the majority of the commentators felt the show was a success, describing it as “clear,” “captivating,” and “engaging.” The comments praise many of the choices that were direct reactions to the remarks from the previous showings. The final productions of Henry V met my goal of creating relatable, engaging theatre much more than my workshop showings did; my experimental process was successful. The numerical representations of the answers to the questionnaires solidified this conclusion.

![Comparison of Survey Results](image)

Improvement occurred across the board, with every single category from the February surveys scoring closer to “strongly agree” than the December ones. This is especially true of how relatable the audience found the show, with an increase of 16%. When combined with my perception of audience reactions, the written comments, and the verbal feedback I received from various audience members after each performance, this qualitative information strongly suggests
that I successfully met my goal of creating relevant theatre by allowing that theatre to be a
reaction to the community which created it.

**Conclusion**

I feel confident in stating that my experiment has been a success. I do not pretend that my
show is perfect, or that a show can even be perfect. However, I am proud of the work I have
done and the results of that work. My cast grew immensely throughout the process, striving as a
whole to live truthfully within these imagined and abstracted circumstances. The actors were so
involved in the story and characters, living truthfully in the world of the play, that they were
continuing to make discoveries through the final moments of the last performances. Every time
the actors did the show with an audience, the energy and support of the crowd fueled the honest
listening and responding that is so engaging. Furthermore, the audience was invested in the
action, allowing the play to impact them. They were able to identify with the themes that make
the piece relevant today, to relate to fully developed characters, and understand a 412 year old
text detailing nearly 600 year old British history.
Appendix A: Cast List- Fall Showings

Henry- Lauren Hlubny
Exeter/Bates - Destiny Thompson
Katherine/Boy- Mackenzie McBride
Alice/French Soldier/Quickly- Morgan Baker
Pistol- Katie Young
Bardolph/Court/Messenger(3.7)- Danielle Golan
Nym/Williams- Brittany Vega
Bishop of Canterbury/Fluellen- Hadiya Smith
Bishop of Ely/Gower/Messenger(4.2)- Jessica Bloch
Westmoreland/Erpingham/Macmorris- Analisa Valez
King Of France/Montjoy- Kandace Freycinet
Dauphin/Scroop- Marissa Goodstone
Constable/Cambridge- Emily Lawrence
Orleans/Grey - Valerie Gallucci
Isabel/Governor of Harfluer – Miranda Wonder
Rambures/Burgundy/French Ambassador (1.2)- Laura Older
Chorus- Mary Risk
Appendix B: Cast List- Spring Showings

Henry- Lauren Hlubny
Exeter/Bates - Destiny Thompson
Katherine/Boy- Kelley Garnier
Alice/French Soldier/Quickly- Morgan Baker
Pistol- Katie Young
Bardolph- Danielle Golan
Nym/Williams- Brittany Vega
Bishop of Canterbury/Fluellen- Hadiya Smith
Bishop of Ely/Gower- Jessica Bloch
Westmoreland/Erpingham - Marissa Koch
King Of France/Montjoy- Kandace Freycinet
Dauphin/Scroop- Marissa Goodstone
Constable/Cambridge- Gillian Gilbert
Orleans/Grey - Valerie Gallucci
Isabel/Governor of Harfluer – Miranda Wonder
Rambures/Burgundy/French Ambassador (1.2)- Laura Older
Chorus- Mary Risk
Appendix C: Audience Questionnaire- Fall Showings

*Henry V*

Audience Questionnaire

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I have a great deal of experience with Shakespeare (literary or theatrical).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I found this production engaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I found this production relevant and personally relatable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understood the story and themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I enjoyed this production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Any Additional Comments:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Audience Questionnaire - Spring Showings

Henry V

Audience Questionnaire

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I have a great deal of experience with Shakespeare (literary or theatrical).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I found this production engaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I found this production relevant and personally relatable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understood the story and themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I enjoyed this production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I saw the workshop showing in December.

YES

NO

Any Additional Comments:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix E: Sample Quotes from Questionnaires

Fall Feedback:
- More clarity of text. Less originality, more Shakespeare.
- As a workshop production it was great. The show NEEDS lights. It will provide so much for scene changes. Also the girls need to own their costumes and the stage combat needs to be cleaned up. It’s a great start.
- It’s a great start. I want to see the REAL people now, and go on the journey with them.
- The dubstep has an amazing opportunity to be brilliant! With some more work, it will be the highlight of the show.
- The dance was a very dramatic shift that if more tuned will be very powerful.
- Use of colors was great. Use of dance mixed with tight choreo was great, just needed work.
- I do not understand why this play is relevant now.
- The language in this production will probably fuel more discoveries and cohesion if utilized properly and individually.
- Not 100% what comment on representation of female power you were going for, but Henry should probably be pulling more from her chest voice in times of intense emotion than the back of her throat.
- Your play is, at moments, perfect. As you keep working, dig into those moments and keep building towards consistency. A really strong cast—don’t let them rely on the “type” tone—but really so, so good. Can’t wait to watch again!

Spring Feedback:
- Dubstep for battle music was a good idea thematically. Most actors did very well with their nonverbal communications (mannerisms).
- Great job. Clear, precise, and entertaining.
- The actresses had much more command of the language. The contemporary references were expressed more clearly, and nuances were discovered, both hilarious and melancholy.
- Loved it! Really audacious, really, smart. Wicked style, great job!
- So different from the last one! Whole new play! Captivating and engaging. Henry had so much depth. Pistol was an intriguing and well developed character. The fight scenes were well choreographed and incredibly well played! Awesome!
- The dance/fight scenes were my favorite. Even though they weren’t professional or high speed I was totally engaged by them.
- Awesome production! Just goes to show how flexible Shakespeare is and how one can make old theatre new again.
- The modern twists definitely enhanced the production! Very well done.
- Amazing! Great job with direction and finding the real emotions behind the words.
- This was a brilliant idea! The acting was flawless and engaging. An excellent modernization and adaptation of Shakespeare!
- I thoroughly enjoyed the show. You could really see how the characters and dance scenes developed and became stronger since the show in December. I was very impressed.
Appendix F: Sampling of Quotes from Student Essays

“I can honestly report that the production had both advantages and disadvantages. The modern aspect of the production was perfect. The contemporary music and dancing made the production exciting. Characters were more relatable with realistic personalities, but they were inconsistent.”
   -Mary Cecil

“Besides the incorporation of an all female cast in Risk’s Henry V, the play’s second most innovative and engaging alteration from Shakespeare’s Henry V is the incorporation of modern elements, such as the dubstep dance sequences and slow-motion fight scenes… The interesting part about sequences like this is that they actually illustrate parts of the plot of Shakespeare’s original Henry V, using actions instead of words to convey the sequence of events.”
   -Sean Noga

“Whenever Pistol engaged in a brawl, she would take off her jacket, leaving her dressed in nothing more than a bra and tight black pants… When the characters onstage are about to engage in petty fights amongst themselves over small matters, overwhelmingly to defend their honor and masculinity, the actresses took off their jackets to reveal more risqué attire, a blatant reminder of their womanhood.”
   -Ana Gotter

“I believe the team that created this production envisioned creating an entirely new perspective on Shakespeare. I have previous negative perceptions of Shakespeare and the difficulty to relate to modern language, but I found this approach to Shakespeare made it much more bearable and exciting to watch.”
   -Lauren Pekoe

“While reading the King’s soliloquy, he seemed angry with his commoners and insulted by their horrible logic and thoughts about what it means to be the king. In the play, the king appears more confused, doubtful, and almost upset with his people for feeling that their lives are more troublesome than the kings. He makes the audience feel sorry for him.”
   -Nicole Bell

“In some instances, Risk toed the line between ‘relevant theatre’ and some sort of caricature of feminism. Her addition of loosely interpreted modern dance numbers was one such instance… it did not add any sort of relevancy to the concept that Risk was pushing.”
   -Lauren Gillespie

“All in all, Shakespeare’s Henry V as directed by Mary Risk, kept the audience intrigued from the choice of cast, the choices in costumes, the climactic combat scenes and the superb acting abilities of all the women on stage… Her thesis was fascinating and thought provoking… My appreciation for Shakespeare’s works was heightened after watching a live performance. I can safely say I am a true fan.”
   -Carol Johnson
Appendix G: Costume Design
Appendix H: production photographs
Works Cited


