

NON-SECULAR SELECTIONS

by

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by

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“Non-Secular Selections” came about because I felt there needed to be a distinct study of what playwrights have to say about religion and faith. At first glance, I believe most people assume there isn’t very much good to be said about the concept. Modern playwrights or “theatre people” in general have this very liberal connotation surrounding them, one that considers them quick to avoid, ignore, and denounce religious texts and beliefs. But in my study, I wanted to dive into this even further. As someone who adores the theatre, and has studied it for three years, intertwining my faith with my love for the stage never felt doable. I found it rare to find someone without a snide comment to leave about religion – let alone someone who shared my beliefs. Yet, this didn’t deter my heart from the people I studied alongside.

I believe people do or do not believe certain things for a very distinct reason – one that is heavy and layered, not frivolous or ignorant. Every opinion and thought is a testament to the life someone has led. Why is it assumed that theatrical minds don’t like the idea of God. Is it God? or the idea of God they have witnessed? I believe what I do because I believe in my heart and soul that it is right. and that doesn’t discredit the experiences of the person next to me. In fact, it enriches my own as I learn how to better treat, serve, and care for the individuals I see daily. This ability to witness and experience the world alongside others is a virtue that requires patience, kindness, attentiveness, and ample communication. As a communications major, I believe the ways we communicate from birth to death have every effect on our beliefs, actions, and morals. Our words have the most divisive consequences and can bring people together or really divide them. A large element in faith-based communities is the notion that you need people around you to survive – humans crave connections. Surprisingly, this idea is reflected among theatrical

spaces as well – and quite intensely at that. So why is there such a divide? This project and subsequent script used scenes from plays of religious themes to start the conversation about what playwrights tend to view religion as and therefore, write about. It explores hypocrisy, questioning, and hope – 3 pillars of thought that weave their way into churches... and the stage too.

I spent the semester studying a multitude of plays where religious themes are present – researching their playwrights, the society at conception of the work itself, as well as observing other themes that could tie it together with other works I observed. This led hypocrisy, questions/power, and hope to become the main segments of my script. I would splice different scenes from these plays together using these mutual themes, often using language and situations that flowed easily, sometimes comically, into each other. I would meet regularly with Professor Jen-Scott Mobley to discuss ways to establish flow and continuity, as well as making sure I was staying as unbiased as I could – as a Christian myself.

This project adds immense value to my career endeavors because it is so much more than a box to check or a course to complete – it was truly a passion project. It stretched my capacity for understanding while exploring people in the field I love with incredibly opposing views. It taught me how to lead and take directorial control over a project – something I have always felt I could excel at as a natural-born leader. It strengthened my confidence as a theatrical producer and performer, as well as my communicative skills with a cast of actors, an advisor, and an audience. It increased my capacity and eagerness to research and study the things that interest me. Though my reading has already taken place, the second part of my project, THEA 4040, expands on all these aspects as I direct and produce multiple scenes from prestigious plays.

The students who read and played the roles in my script are all from various different backgrounds/beliefs and volunteered their time to assist me in my endeavors.

I have attached my playbill and script for your viewing/reading. The playbill details each of the plays included in the final reading as well as a blurb of what the play is about. There are questions included that the attendees pondered before and after the reading took place.