

PERFORMING **Q**UEERNESS:
EXPLORING **Q**UEER **T**HEATRE **T**HROUGH
*H*EA*D* *O*VER *H*EELS



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**Performing Queerness:
Exploring Queer Theatre through
*Head Over Heels***

By
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of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities, as defined in the Honor Code,
and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College as a whole.

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Love,
alex martin

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INTRODUCTION

Leaving Hickory, North Carolina on March 11, 2020, meant very little at the time. Sure, I was missing two rehearsals for my senior show but the high school production would not miss much from me not painting a set piece or finding spare props around the room. Leaving one small town in the south, I was ready to look at new and exciting places. Knowing that I would not go to college in North Carolina, I looked across the United States, landing on a small private college in Meadville, Pennsylvania. My family drove up the east coast and two days later, I was about to tour Allegheny College.

March 13, 2020, was the day that changed everyone's life but it changed mine in an additional way. I sat in the admissions office and heard the news of the students leaving early for break. The tour was of a bare college with students rushing around, grabbing boxes from their rooms and driving off. Walking into the Vukovich Center for Communication Arts for the first time was a magical experience, but meeting with the then costume shop manager, Miriam Patterson, was the selling point. During this meeting a tall man walked near and started talking to us, discussing the Playshop Theatre and how students fit in here. At this point, the two informed me that not only could I perform but I could also work in one of the shops. For the past two years in high school, I had been doubling as the wardrobe and makeup manager so I was interested in working within the costume shop. Furthermore, the tall man offered to walk us into the theatre space and on the walk over he introduced himself as Michael Mehler.

Once the tour was finished and I walked around the bookstore, I purchased a sweatshirt with a little gator on it. I laughed as it was strange that a school in northern Pennsylvania would have a gator mascot. In the car ride my parents and I discussed the school and made a quick pros and cons list. Before leaving Meadville we stopped to get

gas at Sheetz. I walked inside to get a quick snack and found a chocolate egg with a surprise toy inside based on the show, *Peppa Pig*. I told myself if I got the chocolate egg and there was a mini-figurine of Peppa, I would go to Allegheny College. I got in the car and opened it up, and to my surprise, there was a Peppa mini-figurine.

Later that day, I heard the news of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few months later, I was moving into college with a mask on my face and could only have one family member outside the car. Some classes were completely online and others were hybrid, however, with two theatre courses, the only building I was able to be in was the Vuk. I found a safe space here that felt like home. While the first year was difficult to get through because of the pandemic, theatre pursued and continued to provide audiences with joy and an escape from the sadness of the world around us.

The next academic year I performed in four separate productions on top of designing a show as well. Getting back into theatre was an amazing feeling and performing provided me with the joy that was needed at that point in time. Being able to move from production to production provided me with the knowledge that I could pursue a career in theatre and be joyful. Between the chaos of working on several productions in January and February, I tested positive for COVID-19. During quarantine, I only had time to think about life and myself. One thing that was constantly pushed to the back of my thoughts was my gender as it was taboo to talk about growing up. Being alone in quarantine allowed me to face my thoughts and truly come to terms with my identity and it was scary. Thankfully, I had friends who supported and listened to me discuss my thoughts and feelings until I figured out what I was learning about myself.

The following school year I was not cast in a production, so this time allowed me to further think about my identity and discover the transness within my gender queerness. To accept this, I had to figure out self-love and acceptance on a deeper level than I had experienced before. This new self-love helped me to fully realize what I want from life and I knew that I ultimately wanted to perform for my senior project.

Across the junior and senior seminars required for the theatre major, I explored different ideas for my senior project. While thinking through these ideas, I kept returning to the concept of a project regarding queer theory and theatre several times. As a theatre major and a women's, gender, and sexuality studies (WGSS) minor, I felt like this would be a great way to connect my academic studies. With this project, I could connect my joy for queer studies with performance and find a form of theatre to pursue. Through this research I found a form of theatre that explores identity, discusses taboo topics, challenges societal beliefs, and provides a place for a community of marginalized individuals to tell their own stories.

CHAPTER ONE: **E**XPLORATION

QUEER THEORY

Before there can be a discussion of queer theory, the first need is to have a universal understanding of queerness and what the word queer means. As some words experience a change in definition, “Queer” is one of those words. Originally the word meant, “differing in some way from what is usual or normal”, with synonyms like odd, eccentric, and strange.¹ The contemporary definition now covers the definition, “of, relating to, or being a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender”.² A simple way to look at the word is by thinking of queer identity as something that is outside the societal understanding of what is cishnormative and heteronormative. Cishnormativity is the cultural assumption that everyone identifies as their gender given at birth, or that everyone is cisgender. Cishnormativity also pushes the idea of the gender binary or more simply that there are two genders, male and female. This assumption is closely related to heteronormativity which is the cultural assumption that heterosexuality is the preferred sexuality, also pushing the idea of the gender binary and opposite genders.

The word queer is used as a term to cover a wide grouping of things instead of localizing it to a specific identity. In this sense, some consider queer as an umbrella term. The umbrella term covers both queer sexualities and queer genders. With this, the understanding that this is commonly not seen positively is important. The word queer has and is still used as a slur, or a way to attack members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus (LGBTQ+) community. Although it is commonly used as an umbrella term for many things, notice should be taken that this word can cause harm even if used positively for some people. In this case, it is most often older individuals who still see the word “queer” as having negative connotations due to generational differences. However, it is not all older individuals and some younger individuals might also protest against this term depending on the context of the word being used.

Now that the basic understanding of the word and idea of queer has been established, the process of understanding queerness in the form of queer studies and

¹ Merriam-Webster, “Definition of QUEER,” Merriam-webster.com, 2019.

² Merriam-Webster.

queer theory can begin. Queer studies is the academic field that examines the human nature of gender and sexuality with the culture. Here at Allegheny, this would be found within the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department. Queer Theory looks at the cultural understandings of gender and sexuality and then breaks them down. While there are several theorists, the main ones from my studies include Judith Butler and bell hooks. Both of these theorists look at gender and sexuality in the queer studies lens as cultural norms, specifically how a society believes people within specific genders and sexualities should behave. This can also be described by looking at gender and sexuality as social constructs and ideologies created by the culture.

A specific section of queer studies is the theory from Judith Butler that gender is performative. As she writes in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler looks at gender as performative: "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means."³ Butler means that gender is taught to us and created at an early age through societal norms instead of gender being innate to us at birth. Even before birth, most individuals are pushed into the binary of male and female or more simply, masculine and feminine, through gender reveal parties. After birth, these individuals grow up learning that everything is gendered. There are specific colors linked to masculinity, blue and green, and femininity is pink and purple. Other examples of gendered objects include clothes, toys, movies, music, food, jobs, and even fields of study. This theory also touches on the Western social construct of gender and looks into how other cultures around the world view gender. Butler's main tactic to discuss gender and sexuality is "...to refuse to accept identities at face value. She chooses instead to subvert them by asking such 'upstream' questions as how they were created, what political ends they serve, what erasures have made them possible, and how they are able to present themselves as real, natural, and universal."⁴

³Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁴ Riki Anne Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory : An Instant Primer*, First (Los Angeles, California: ALYSON PUBLICATIONS, 2004).

The suggestion that gender is performative has led many to misinterpret it as “all gender is just a performance”.⁵ This is not only something that Butler did not say but she also heavily disagrees with. While the two terms are similar, Butler emphasizes the distinction between the two as “performance presupposes a preexisting subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject”⁶ However, this does not mean that it can not be true within our current society, for example, drag is something that blurs the distinction between gender as performative and gender as performance.

Although Judith Butler was necessary for the foundation of queer theory studies, Butler’s work on queer theories has a narrow outlook on everything. Consequently, this fails to observe the connection to other socially constructed identities that operate similarly to gender. bell hooks look into this connection, and how gender relates to other identities like race, class, and ability. This connection is called “Intersectionality”, with roots in Black feminist activism, most importantly being originally used by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. hooks uses this approach of thinking to look at the intersections of how identities are constructed and work with each other. With this in mind, not all queer individuals will share lived experiences, because other factors such as race, class, religion, (dis)ability, and age also contribute to one's lived experiences.

⁵ Wilchins.

⁶ Peter Osborne, Lynne Segal, and Judith Butler, “Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler,” 1994.

QUEER THEATRE

Queer theatre is a contemporary focus of queerness within theatre, primarily looking at plays and musicals, but also consists of several other forms of performance such as drag shows, cabarets, dances, burlesque performances, and even the ballroom scene. This form of theatre introduces theatrical works that dissect LGBTQ+ identities and lived experiences. Emerging as a recognizable genre of theatre during the gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, it allowed queer people to tell their own stories and challenge the culturally dominant narratives surrounding queerness. At the heart of queer theatre is an intentional destabilization of the expectations that stem from the cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions by staging these queer characters and relationships.⁷

Theatre has faced continual censorship through the Western gaze. One instance of this censorship for theatre performances was under the Licensing Act of 1737. With this act, theatremakers had to obtain permission from the Lord Chamberlain's Office to have their performances approved for public viewing. The license that had to be completed for any performances to be approved included regulations prohibiting profanity, improper language, indecent dressing, dancing, or gestures.⁸ The third regulation was stated as follows, "No offensive personalities or representations of living persons to be permitted on the Stage, nor anything calculated to produce riot or breach of the peace."⁹ With this limitation, censorship was particularly focused on queerness. While this banned any external or open queer theatre, some shows had elements of queerness internally. Some believe that even William Shakespeare included queerness in some of his productions, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and some of his sonnets.¹⁰ Queerness was also found through the crossdressing of some performers, as women were banned from performing so younger men would cross-dress and play the feminine roles.

⁷ Russell Dreher, "What Is Queer Theater?," AMBER LIVE | Drag Queen Comedy, October 19, 2023.

⁸ "Theatre Censorship," stagebeauty.net.

⁹ stagebeauty.net.

¹⁰ Arzoo Singh, "Homosexuality in the Plays by William Shakespeare" (2017).

With this, queerness was pushed down because of the rising popularity of morality through Christianity, causing a hostile environment for sexual deviance. The censorship on theatre, specifically queer identities, was replaced with the Theaters Act in 1843, which extended the controversial censorship. This censorship was revoked in 1968, creating a hostility that was carried through the centuries and across countries. This Christian view of morality was brought to North America through colonization and the laws were executed within the states as well as Europe. This caused the colonies, and later the United States of America, to hold similar values to Europe.

The United States followed a similar pathline of banning and even making it illegal to be queer, so this caused queer culture and activities to become secretive. By the 18th century, homosexuality and the act of queer sex were acknowledged as the legal term “sodomy”, which simply refers to anal or oral sexual activity.¹¹ This law was acquired from church law designed to prevent any non-procreative sex or any sex outside of marriage. Individuals who committed these acts were punished by a lengthy term of imprisonment and shamed. As time progressed, the medical science community began controlling sexuality by saying “where the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.”¹² This caused people who engaged in non-procreative sex to be seen as something dangerous and possibly even contagious causing fear within society for queer people. As queer liberation started to be more accepted, some states lifted this law allowing queer individuals to live their lives. However this did not mean that queerness was quickly accepted, many individuals had to resort to secretive spaces to express their identities.

With this secretive space, queer culture flourished underground allowing for safe spaces found in the nightlife areas of ballrooms, bars, and cabarets. These spaces were visited by the queer community and by the artists within the community. On the outside of these spaces, queer stories were starting to be discussed but in small ways. In the 1920s, two controversial plays were approved and performed thus starting queer theatre. These plays were *The Captive*¹³, written by Édouard Bourde and first performed

¹¹ Riki Anne Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory : An Instant Primer*, First (Los Angeles, California: ALYSON PUBLICATIONS, 2004).

¹² Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

¹³ Édouard Bourde, *The Captive* (Paris, France, 1926).

in 1926, and *The Drag*¹⁴, written by Mae West and first performed in 1927. As the 1930s came around, several popular performers and playwrights were queer, and the numbers grew and the decades passed.¹⁵

During this time, the popularity grew for underground queer spaces as well. At first, these spaces were created for and by Black queer individuals, but as time passed, these members brought in other queer individuals and groups to create a larger community. With the addition of more queer individuals, groups within this culture started to localize their interests in performing, allowing queer artists to express themselves through several art forms but most specifically dancing. What started at large parties held in ballrooms, became its own community and culture, the ballroom scene.

Historians trace ballroom culture back to the drag balls within major cities such as New York City, Chicago, and Baltimore as early as the 1890s. George Chauncey, an LGBTQ historian, won the Kluge Prize of Achievement in the Study of Humanity in 2022 for his book *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. In this, Chauncey argues that the drag balls were “the largest and most significant collective events of gay society... the balls confirmed their numbers by bringing thousands together. In a world that disparaged their culture, it was at the drag balls, more than any place else, that the gay world saw itself, celebrated itself, and affirmed itself.”¹⁶ These drag balls emulated and gave new meanings to the fashion of the debutante and masquerade balls within the popular and normalized culture.¹⁷ These balls were popular before the 1960s, but due to some of these balls being interracial, which made the racial divisions worse. Chauncey states that the development started from the separation of the community, “The costume competition became a highly charged affair, with all sides watching to see whether a black or white queen would be crowned.”¹⁸ The judges for these balls were commonly white, causing Black participants

¹⁴ Mae West, *The Drag*, 1927.

¹⁵ Holly Adomah Thompson and Sean Brooks, “Here and Queer: A Brief History Lesson in Queer Theatre,” www.stratfordeast.com, February 2, 2021.

¹⁶ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

¹⁷ Joseph Plaster, “Ballroom History,” Peabody Ballroom Experience, October 6, 2023.

¹⁸ Chauncey.

to be overlooked and excluded from winning. The anti-black bias within the interracial drag balls is what led to the creation of a new ball culture.

The newer and more contemporary ball culture was created by the Black and Latino members of the drag balls. This new culture, called ballroom, has two primary features: houses and the performance of competing.¹⁹ An influential drag queen of this movement was Crystal LaBeija, who is speculated to have created the first house within the new ball culture. A house is a group of people who compete together under the same name. The members of a house commonly lived together as a chosen family, forming connections lost by families that were estranged. These families were led by house “mothers” or “fathers” who were usually older and well-established within the drag ball culture and often provided guidance, both within and outside of the balls, and support for their “children”.²⁰

Groups of these houses would come together and host their own drag balls, where individuals would walk, compete, and model for different categories. Categories were created to not only be a perfect example of gender constructions but also make fun of them at the same time. Within these categories, participants were also expected to perform through dances and lip-syncs, allowing the judges to see not only how the participants dressed but performed through the categories. The first of these balls was hosted by the house of LaBeija, the house founded by Crystal LaBeija.

Within the ballroom culture and balls, a new form of dancing arose, voguing. Vogue, not to be confused with the song “Vogue”²¹ released by Madonna in 1990, is a form of stylized freeform dance born from house music and the balls in the 1980s. Vogueing is mostly a camp-style dance that presents gender as a performance that is exaggerated and artificial. However, vogue is also used to describe several things, from beating the face with makeup, to styling hair, showing off extravagant clothes, and throwing shade. It not only transforms the body through movement and looks, but it also transforms the emotional ways to express oneself.²² Vogueing is generally divided into three styles, these are Old Way, New Way, and Vogue Fem. The first two styles are not

¹⁹ Plaster.

²⁰ Les Fabian Brathwaite, “Ballroom Culture,” VAN VOGUE JAM.

²¹ Madonna, “Madonna - Vogue (Official Video),” www.youtube.com, October 26, 2009.

²² Les Fabian Brathwaite, “Ballroom Culture,” VAN VOGUE JAM.

that unlike, while there are a few small differences the biggest difference is the number of people who participated. The Old Way is dated to be pre-1990, and this style consisted of precise linear movements. Post-1990's saw an increase in the number of individuals participating in the competitions, so the New Way was born, and this consisted of very similar dance moves but also contortion of the arms and legs. In 1995, the fem queens of the ballroom culture wanted to create a new way of storytelling, and this created Vogue Fem. This dance style exaggerates traditional feminine dancing styles such as ballet, jazz, and modern. This new style ranges from dramatic, which emphasizes stunts and tricks, to soft, which emphasizes a graceful and simple flow from each movement. Vogue Fem was created so that instead of battling others, individuals focused more on storytelling and outshining their last performances.²³

In the 1980s and 90s, queer individuals and work persisted to move towards receiving recognition within the public view. During this time, the AIDS epidemic was ever so prevalent in the lives of queer individuals and their loved ones. In 1992, AIDS became the number one cause of death in men ages twenty-five to forty-four, and in 1994 the disease became the leading cause for all Americans from the ages of twenty-five to forty-four.²⁴ By the end of the 1990s, AIDS was no longer the leading cause of death for all Americans but it was still a prevalent entity within American culture. The AIDS outbreak devastated people's lives across the world and this caused deep uprooting which affected queer life and culture around the country and people were searching for a way to connect again.

For those who worked in the theatre community, AIDS brought personal and professional devastation with friends, family, lovers, and co-workers dying in horrific numbers. Larry Kramer, a playwright and gay rights advocate, founded the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power or ACT UP and started to bring awareness to the situation in March 1987. Time Magazine called ACT UP "the most effective health activist [group] in history."²⁵ Equity Fights AIDS, Broadway Cares, and other organizations started to rise to fame for their work of bringing awareness to AIDS and the devastation caused.

²³ Les Fabian Brathwaite, "Ballroom Culture," VAN VOGUE JAM.

²⁴ "A Timeline of HIV and AIDS," HIV.gov, January 18, 2024.

²⁵ Maia Szalavitz, "How to Survive a Plague: Q&a with Act-Up's Peter Staley on Effective Activism," *Time*, September 27, 2012.

During this time, artmakers wanted to memorialize and commemorate their loved ones, so they became the voice of awareness and rebelled against the stigma within the culture surrounding queer life. During this time, mainstream media started to publicize queer stories on television. Similarly, the theatre world started to showcase queer stories on stage. Some relevant shows from this time are Harvey Fierstein's acclaimed *Torch Song Trilogy*, Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, William Finn and James Lapine's *Falsettos*, Jonathan Larson's *Rent*, and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*.²⁶

By the turn of the turn of the century, theatre was still leading the movement of queer representation. Some shows during this time were Martin Sherman and Nick Enright's *The Boy from Oz*, Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*, and Allan Scott and Stephan Elliott's *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. While these shows were revolutionary, theatre makers were not pushing boundaries like before, and this was recognized. In the 2010's theatre makers started to make shows that would further push the boundaries of theatre and bring more diversity to the stage. Instead of focusing on stories from the viewpoint of a gay man, the new shows brought queer stories from women, people of color, and gender identities. Some of these shows include Robert O'Hara's *Bootycandy*, Lisa Kron's *Fun Home*, Julianne Wick Davis, and Dan Collins' *Southern Comfort*, and more recently James Magruder and Jeff Whitty's *Head Over Heels*.²⁷

²⁶ Raven Brunner, "Pride Timeline: Barrier-Breaking Queer Theatre," Playbill, June 17, 2022.

²⁷ Jim Colleran, "Pride Timeline: 50+ Years of LGBTQ+ Plays and Musicals - Breaking Character," breakingcharacter.com, July 20, 2022.

HEAD OVER HEELS

Head Over Heels is a jukebox musical with the music and lyrics from The Go-Go's. *Head Over Heels* is based on and is a contemporary retelling of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*²⁸, also known as *The Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sidney. The original book was conceived and written by Jeff Whitty. Whitty left the show after a conflict with the director, Michael Mayer. After his departure from the production, the show was picked up and adapted by James Magruder.

Sir Philip Sidney wrote *The Arcadia* during the late 16th century. Sidney originally started the project in the late 1570s but later expanded on *The Arcadia*. Some scholars refer to these separate works as *Old Arcadia* and *New Arcadia*. Sidney wrote *Old Arcadia* as a wedding gift to his sister, Mary Sidney when she married Henry Herbert. This marriage made Mary Herbert the Countess of Pembroke. In the 1580's, Sidney took the frame of the original story and revised the story, which made *The Arcadia* grow into a substantially larger story. Sidney passed in 1586 before the work was completed.

The Arcadia follows Duke Basilius on his adventure to maintain peace and prosperity for Arcadia. He is joined by his wife, Gynecia, and their two daughters, Pamela and Philoclea. Basilius is accompanied by his servant, Dametas, and his family which consists of his wife, Miso, and their daughter, Mopsa. Basilius is curious to see what the future holds for his family and country, so he travels to an oracle to receive a prediction. The oracle tells Basilius that Pamela will be stolen from him, Philoclea will enter into an unsuitable love affair, and Gynecia will cheat on him. After hearing this, Basilius takes his and Dametus' families to the countryside. On their travels, the families are spotted by a Prince, Pyrocles, and his friend, Musiorus. The two decide to disguise themselves to get closer to the Royal family, specifically the two daughters. As time passes, Pyrocles dressed as Cleophila starts to fall in love with Philoclea. Pamela keeps turning away Dorus, Musiorus in disguise until he reveals that he is not a shepherd, but rather a prince. After some time, Basilius accidentally drinks poison and is believed to have died. Philinax, a friend of the Duke, starts an investigation of the death and holds a trial in which Gynecia, Pryocles, and Musiorus are sentenced to

²⁸ Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (the Old Arcadia)* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1999).

death. However, the Duke wakes up from a coma before the executions are carried out, leaving a happy ending to all.²⁹

Head Over Heels follows this plot, with many characters using the same or closely related names. However, within this production Basilius visits the oracle, Pythio, who includes a fourth prophecy, that Basilius “will meet and make way for a better King.”³⁰ Once these prophecies are delivered, the King lies and tells his family that to have a happy ending for all, he must kill a golden stag so the family sets on a journey to Bohemia. Musidorus decides to follow the family in hopes that he will be able to love the youngest daughter, Philoclea. On his journey, Musidorus meets an owl who helps him get into disguise as an Amazonian warrior. As the story progresses, the King does not die, and love is surrounding everyone. Philoclea and Musidorus express their love, while Mopsa comes to terms with being in love with Pamela, and Pamela comes to terms with being in love with Mopsa. At the end of the production, Pythio reveals themselves to the group and Dametas recognizes them as Miro, his wife that he banished after they expressed their gender queerness. The group welcomes back Pythio with acceptance and love.³¹

This modern retelling of *The Arcadia* is a story not only of love but true love in every form. *Head Over Heels* explores self-love through queerness, this is particularly seen with Pythio who comes to love and express their true, non-binary self. It is also explored through the character Musidorus, as he comes to enjoy being in drag, and at the end of the production, he exclaims that he would like to keep Cleophila, his disguise through drag, around and within him as that is now a part of his true identity. Queerness is also explored through the characters Pamela and Mopsa, who end the production in love with each other. The show demonstrates the struggles and victories of coming to terms with one’s queerness. This queerness is also pushed through the music choice of songs from the Go-Go’s.

In the biography section on the Go-Go’s website, the writing discusses how the Go-Go’s came to be the popular music group they are known to be. Discussing their

²⁹ Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (the Old Arcadia)* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1999).

³⁰ Jeff Whitty and James Magruder, *Head over Heels* (Broadway Licensing, 2018) (Page 17).

³¹ Whitty.

pop-rock music, they look into how they were one of the first all-women bands, and did not have any guys in the background production of the group. With the group's music heavily influencing punk rock culture, people within the queer community connect to the music. After the group's popularity rose, some of the artists within the group expressed their queerness outwardly.³²

Head Over Heels first premiered in Ashland, Oregon, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in June 2015, and ran until October of the same year. After this, the creative team looked at the run and reimagined some parts of the show. In April 2018, the show then moved to San Francisco, where the show ran for twenty-seven days in the Curran Theatre. This run was the official pre-Broadway showings. On June 23, 2018, *Head Over Heels* began previews at the Hudson Theatre. Officially opening on July 26, 2018, the show had one hundred and sixty-four performances before closing on January 6, 2019. This Broadway run made headlines, when Peppermint, a drag queen and runner-up on season nine of *Rupaul's Drag Race*, became the first transgender woman to originate a principal role on Broadway.

Audience members and critics alike were excited for *Head Over Heels* to premiere due to the production being revolutionary for Broadway in terms of bringing awareness to queerness, specifically the transgender and non-binary community, but as soon as the reviews came out it was clear that the show was not for everyone. *The New York Times* published a review of the production on July 26, 2018. The leading critic of the newspaper, Ben Brantley wrote about his experience with the show and described the production as "...timid and awkward as the new kid on the first day of school."³³ Brantley continues the review by providing a brief synopsis of the show and discusses the music and technical aspects of the show. At the end of the article, Brantley provides some quick advice to the show with "... its audience might leave the theater less hungry if this oddly earnest show could really kick up its heels and let the message take care of itself."³⁴

³² "Bio – the Go-Go's," The Go-Go's.

³³ Ben Brantley, "Review: Ye Olde Go-Go's Songs Hit the Renaissance in 'Head Over Heels,'" *The New York Times*, July 26, 2018.

³⁴ Brantley.

Backlash quickly surrounded the review. Brantley's review contained a joke to the damage of Pythio's identity, stating that "Dametas (Tom Alan Robbins), the King's viceroy and father of Mopsa, finds himself strangely drawn to her – I mean them."³⁵ Many readers took to Twitter, the mobile app now known as X, to bring awareness to this comment and to call Ben Brantley out. The following day, July 27, 2018, Brantley released an apology to Twitter explaining that he was trying to reflect the light tone of the show and that he was only talking about the character, not the performer.³⁶ He wrote, "I feel horrible about having offended transgender and nonbinary communities. I was trying to reflect the light tone of the show, as well as a plot point in which one character learns to acknowledge another not as a "she" but as "they" — this was meant to be a reference to the character of the Oracle, not Peppermint, the person who plays the role."³⁷ Some readers understood the connection of the comment within the review to the show where some characters misgender Pythio. On the same day as the public apology, *The New York Times* also re-released the review with edits due to the significant feedback.

Several other reviews discussed their opinions of the productions. Some called *Head Over Heels* a flop, wacky, silly, and a disaster. Matt Windman, a writer for *AMNewYork*, opens his review with "Contrary to the affirmatively cheery chant of its opening number, 'Head Over Heels,' a new jukebox musical on Broadway in which the hit songs of the all-female 1980s pop-punk band The Go-Go's are inserted into a ridiculous Elizabethan-era pastiche, has not 'got the beat.' That probably got lost long ago in the development of this oddball property."³⁸ While it seemed that most people did not enjoy the production, there were a few people who loved the show. Kelly Connolly, who wrote the review for *Entertainment Weekly*, complimented the show and gave the production a rating of "A-". However, the negative reviews prevailed, and the show closed after six months.

³⁵ Brantley.

³⁶ NYTimes Communications (@NYTimesPR). Twitter Post. July 27, 2018, 11:22 AM.

³⁷ Alan Henry, "Ben Brantley Apologizes over New York Times Review for HEAD OVER HEELS," *BroadwayWorld.com*, July 27, 2018.

³⁸ Matt Windman, "'Head over Heels' Review: Go-Go's Jukebox Musical Has Not 'Got the Beat' | *AmNewYork*," *www.amny.com*, July 27, 2018.

One thing in particular that people praised the production and following productions for was casting gender-queer people for the role of Pythio. Within the notes from the adaptor, the book states “As for Pythio, the roles should be cast with sensitivity and attention paid to the full spectrum of gender identification.”³⁹ This is very important, as throughout history many cisgender performers have taken on roles of gender-queer characters. Similarly, heterosexual performers have taken the roles of queer characters. This has been experienced through both theatre and film. When this happens, queer individuals have to experience the pain of this through casting processes or even simply through watching it.

Even though queer individuals have always been found in the arts, they have not always been cast for roles in productions. Some bring up the argument that since it is acting, anyone should be able to be cast in these roles, but that simply is not true and is hurtful to the community. While heterosexual and cisgender performers *can* perform as queer and gender-queer, that does not mean that it *should* be acceptable. This is not to argue that the theatre world should ban this, but that casting needs to be looked at more carefully and with more consideration because the industry is not equal, causing queer performers to have to work a lot harder to be hired.

Whenever this argument is discussed, sometimes it revolves around openly queer performers taking “straight” roles. However, cisgender and heterosexual individuals are not a part of a marginalized community due to their gender and sexuality, so if a queer performer takes on a “straight” role, it can not be harmful to the community. However, when cisgender and heterosexual performers use overtly and stereotypical queer traits that queer individuals get judged for to portray a character, this is when it is harmful to the community.⁴⁰ Within theatre it is common practice for men to play male roles and for women to play female roles, of course, sometimes performers use drag to take on roles of the other genders, but most commonly performers stick to their own gender. So when cisgender performers are cast in the role of a gender-queer character, such as a man getting cast in a male-to-female transgender role, many viewers take this as a dig into the gender-queer community. To them, it feels that the production team

³⁹ Jeff Whitty and James Magruder, *Head over Heels* (Broadway Licensing, 2018).

⁴⁰ Kate Overall, “Playing It Straight: Why LGBT People Should Play LGBT Characters,” lesbemums.com, February 6, 2021.

sees the transgender female as still being a man, and this is harmful and hurtful to the community.

Another factor is that throughout history, queer and gender-queer individuals have mostly been ignored by theatre, while there were plays that discussed queerness, the majority of productions failed to have the representation needed. Once queer individuals and stories started to be expressed on stage, many felt that it was inadequate compared to the counterpart of cisgender and heterosexual stories. Commonly then, and even now, when queer characters were included it was either done in a satirical way for laughs or to show the cultural understanding of queer immorality. However, the stories surrounding queerness are starting to become more positive, and an acceptable representation is needed.⁴¹

It is also important to note that queer performers in the past have been overlooked in casting due to queer individuals expressing their true identities in a way that some have disagreed with. While acceptance of the queer community has grown through the years, cisgender and heterosexual performers are still being cast in queer roles. For a space that promotes diversity, it is sad that not everyone practices this diversity.

Queer theatre is important because it allows queer individuals to tell queer stories on the community's terms. This awareness of queer stories allows young queer individuals to grow up with representation and have queer role models on stage. These stories also can help out parents or families who are struggling to understand or accept their kids' queerness.⁴² This is why it is important to cast queer and gender-queer individuals in these roles, and this is exactly why *Head Over Heels* was praised for their casting choices on the stage.

⁴¹ Mark Evans-Leigh, "Playing Gay. Should There Be a Rule?," *Now That's Just Gay*, January 15, 2021.

⁴² Adam Odsess-Rubin, "What We All Gain When We Cast Queer Actors in Queer Roles," *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, May 10, 2022.

CHAPTER TWO: **R**EHEARSAL

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

As a transfeminine person and performer, I have dealt a lot with gender dysphoria and euphoria. Dysphoria describes the sensation of discomfort and unhappiness whereas euphoria describes the feelings of ease and excitement. Growing up I was also known as the effeminate kid and people labeled me as queer, so I have always dealt with some sort of dysphoria. Growing up in North Carolina was not easy as I found myself feeling different from my peers due to my gender and sexuality. I had to hide from the bullying and through that I found a safe community through the arts.

Through dance and art classes I found the joy of performing and that ultimately led me to the theatre world. Within theatre, I could not only express my truest self but could also play around with different identities. This led to me performing and wanting to dress up as feminine as possible for myself and allowing myself to do so caused a euphoric sensation. Theatre provided me with a free way to explore different identities and express myself, but I remember never getting cast in a feminine role due to the directors believing that since I was assigned male at birth (AMAB), I would never pass as a woman. This only led to more dysphoric feelings surrounding my gender and sexuality, but further were forced into me as I had a director once say to me “You could never play a manly man role or love interest. You could also never play a female role because you would not pass. So I guess you can only get the weird oddball roles.” This has stuck with me since I was presented with this opinion but I decided to keep on pursuing theatre since I love the sensation of performing and the bonds that it creates.

Since enrolling at Allegheny College, I have challenged these beliefs and my dysphoria. When the Playshop Theatre produced *She Kills Monsters* the director, kt shorb, cast me as Kaliope. This role proved to me that I could be cast in a feminine-presenting role and that the beliefs were just pushed onto me by uneducated or biased individuals. Another role that proved these beliefs wrong was Dr. Frank-N-Furter in the Student Experimental Theatre (SET) production of a shadow cast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. With these two productions, I believed that I could be cast in any role as long as I worked for it. While I may have to challenge others' beliefs when it comes to diverse casting choices with transgender performers, I also

know that I can now advocate for myself and find directors who are willing to work with transgender performers. With this knowledge, I also know that to even be given the same amount of opportunities that cisgender and heterosexual performers receive, I will have to work diligently. That is why within this school year I have worked intensely on advocating for myself and learning what I can do.

I had been in discussion with Professor Mark Cosdon throughout the spring semester of my junior year while working in THTR*600, Theatre Comprehensive Seminar, about looking at the genre of contemporary American musicals. With this idea, I researched and found a list of queer musicals, while looking through the list I saw *Head Over Heels* and briefly looked at a synopsis of the show. With the list, I also looked at some of the other musicals but focused on the more contemporary ones. While on a conference trip, I received the theatre department's announcement for the 2023/2024 season. Seeing *Head Over Heels* on the list was shocking, I knew it was a bigger production than we had put on during my time here so I was not expecting to see it on the list. I looked online and found a pdf scan of the script and listened to the music, during this I connected with the role of Mopsa. After the conference, I had a meeting with Professor Cosdon to discuss what his thoughts were for the musical and my senior project.

In this meeting, Professor Cosdon talked through his thoughts about the production and the role of Pythio. Before this discussion, I thought the role of Pythio would be fun but the role was for a bass or baritone performer, and knowing my voice range that would not be suitable for me. I also had concerns about the stage time for the role as looking through the script I noticed Pythio is not on stage often. While at Allegheny, when a senior had a performance comprehensive project they were either the leading role or at least had a good portion of the show on stage, so I was worried that the role of Pythio would not be enough for me to do a senior project on. Over the spring semester, I looked through the show and thought of different ways to make a project.

One thought that came to mind was doing a production with SET. I was looking into doing a production of *The Crucible* and setting it in a modern-day southern town. With this production, I would have focused on how the modern-day anti-queer

specifically anti-transgender laws are similar to how they were policing women. This would have been a big process and ultimately would have led to me having to devise a production of my own due to rights. Since this would have been difficult to do through a student-led organization, I was advised to not do that, but it is something I would like to look into for the future. Since I was advised to not follow through with that plan, I chose to look more into *Head Over Heels*. By the time summer approached, I was still unsure of what the final project would look like. I knew that my voice type did not fit the role of Pythio and was a better fit for the role of Mopsa, but I also knew that Professor Cosdon was set on having me cast as Pythio. However, since it was summer break, I decided to take a break from thinking about the production for a brief moment to focus on my work.

During the first week of the school year, I had a meeting with Professor Cosdon to discuss the senior project in more detail. During this meeting, I brought up a few concerns that I had with the current layout of the project. My first concern was that from what I knew, Pythio was a role for a bass and I knew I could not sing that low and sustain it for a few months. The second concern was that from my reading of the script, Pythio was not that big of a character and I did not think that it would not be enough to write a full project about and that it would not challenge me like other roles. With this comment, Professor Cosdon followed up on my comment to discuss my stage time at Allegheny and that it was bold for me to assume that Pythio would not challenge me. From his comments, it seemed to me that he did not know of my dance experience and did not know if I could sing or not. I explained to him that I did have experience with both and that while I may not have the same amount of experience as others, I felt like I could take on a role with more songs and stage time. Towards the end of this discussion, Professor Cosdon made a comment that it was my choice to not take the role of Pythio, but that I would have to audition for the show and there would be people with correct voice ranges for the other roles I was interested in.

I left this meeting upset and felt like my concerns were not fully understood. I wrote down what we discussed in this meeting and how it made me feel. The three main points that I wrote about were feeling like I was being boxed into a role because of my identity, feeling like my time at Allegheny with theatre was being uncredited for, and that Professor Cosdon had made microaggressions towards me and had been transphobic. I

knew that none of these were the intent of Professor Cosdon, but I ultimately was impacted in that way.

For the point of feeling boxed in, I felt that if I did not accept the nonbinary role I would have not been cast at all. This was attached to the comment that people with correct voice ranges would be prioritized for casting and that I would have had to choose a different project idea. This left me confused and upset as I was trying to explain that I did not think that Pythio was in the correct voice range for me either.

During the discussion about my stage time at Allegheny, I started to feel like my work was not being credited. While I had only been in two Playshop productions, *Bikeman* and *She Kills Monsters*, I had also been in two SET productions, a shadow cast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and a couple of pieces during a staged reading, and one community theatre show, *It's Not All About Sex (Or Is It?)*. Four of these productions, including the two Playshop shows, were all during my sophomore year. I felt like this alone proved I could perform with confidence, but during my sophomore year, I had also designed costumes for a Playshop production, *Proof*. On top of this, I had also auditioned for the other productions that I was not designing for but did not get cast. I discussed that I felt like I had proved my abilities to work on a production and the comment about my stage time upset me since I had been auditioning and had worked on several productions by this point.

As for the final point, Professor Cosdon had made a few comments during the conversation that led to me thinking that if I was cisgender, I would have a better chance of being cast in roles that I prefer to audition for. During the discussion, Professor Cosdon made a comment about a fellow student and told me that I would have had a better chance of getting cast in productions if I had been as prepared as her. He followed this by saying that she had a great stage presence and was serious about performing. This interaction is what led me to think that I was being compared to a cisgender woman and that I would have better chances if I was too. While this was not the intent, I was impacted in this way and became upset about this which ultimately led to me feeling like this comment was transphobic. With this meeting, I felt defeated. I knew that I would prefer to perform in a Playshop production for my project and decided to wait and see what would happen as the semester progressed.

PRELIMINARY WORK

While my time in rehearsals was short, I had begun working on *Head Over Heels* at the beginning of the fall semester. Within the first month of the 2023/2024 school year, I started voice lessons with the music department. In MUSIC*255 Voice, I met with Professor Wei En Chan and during the first lesson, I discussed what my senior project was and why I was taking the voice lessons.

Professor Chan sent out a survey for me to take so he could get to know me better and in this survey I also explained that I was unsure of what my range was. I explained that within high school theatre, I was pushed into the bass section but that I never felt comfortable there. The reason for this is because my high school director believed that male tenors were rare so he automatically placed everyone who was either male or AMAB in the bass section. For me, I can hit some lower notes but my comfortable range is higher. Also, I prefer to sing in my mode two causing my range to be wider and higher than the typical bass. The difference between mode two singing and mode one is simple. Mode one is the lower range a person has to offer, commonly found around their normal talking voice. Mode two singing is the higher range that a person can sing in. This refers to the head voice but can also relate to falsetto. The separation between the falsetto and head voice is the sound; falsetto is more breathy and head voice is more full. There is a third form of singing classified as mixed voice which is harder to master, as it blends chest and head voices to create a seamless blend of the voice. The reason that this third is the hardest to achieve is because the voice has a natural separation between the two ranges of chest and head voices, so to make a connection there needs to be an abundant amount of work and practice. Luckily for me, my mode one and mode two overlap with some notes so getting mixed voice has been a bit easier for me. I prefer to sing within the mode two range because as a transgender and nonbinary performer, this range helps provide me with gender euphoria.

During the first month of voice lessons, Professor Chan classified me as a countertenor, which is someone who has a tenor chest voice but prefers and commonly sings with their mode two range. For myself, my voice ranges from G2 to G5 with some

higher notes like a C6, which falls between the tenor to soprano ranges which could be specified as a mezzo-soprano.

With my first semester of voice lessons, I primarily focused on music from *Head Over Heels*. At the beginning of the semester, I discussed with Professor Chan the possibility of my senior project being *Head Over Heels* and being unsure of what character I would be. We decided to take a look at some music for Mopsa and also for Pythio. I expressed my concern about the voice range for Pythio, but Professor Chan demonstrated how we could fit my voice range into the role. Instead of having Pythio singing with the lower ranges, we could take the music up twelve steps or notes, which would make the songs an octave higher without having to transpose the music. This meant I could be cast as Pythio and not have to both strain my voice and cause gender dysphoria. With this new knowledge, I accepted the role of Pythio and was excited to move forward. During this semester I also took MUSIC*108 Applied Music: Class Voice, which helped me learn how to read sheet music better and to sing in front of an audience with greater confidence. My last time singing for an audience was my junior year of high school so I had lost my confidence singing in front of a group of peers. With these two courses, I prepared myself for what was to come after winter break.

When everyone arrived back on campus after the break, I had to mentally prepare for auditions. I knew that I was already cast as Pythio, but I still wanted to take the audition seriously as it was the last time to audition and practice my audition skills before graduation. During the week leading up to auditions, I utilized the available practice rooms within the music department halls to look over the music and get comfortable with it again. During this time I also sang in front of my friends and roommates to get comfortable singing in front of a group again.

PRODUCTION WORK

On the day of the auditions, I was physically ready but mentally I was unsure of how I would do. I tend to get into my head and overthink a situation and then make myself nervous. I walked into auditions not knowing what to expect as it was the first musical audition during my time within Allegheny's theatre department. I was relieved to find out that we were dancing first in the audition. I am very confident with my skills as I have taken dance lessons in the past and naturally am a flexible person. Once we learned a short dance combo, the next step was singing. I was the first person in my group to sing after dancing, so I was out of breath leading me to overthink about singing. I completed the short singing excerpt and headed out of auditions, and walking out I knew that I could do better and was bothered by how I did. This is not to say that I did badly, I just knew that with my practice from the last five months, I could have provided a much stronger audition.

On the morning of callbacks, I shared with Professor Chan my thoughts about the audition and he offered a short meeting to look over the music and help build the character a bit. I graciously accepted the offer and looked over the music. After that, I felt more confident about my callback and was prepared to come in and provide the audition panel with a stronger version of the song and the character. Later when I walked into the callback, I was prepared to sing the song and leave but was told that I would be dancing and reading a monologue for the panel. When I learned this I knew that I could provide a great dance performance but hoped that it would be after the singing however the dance section was first and then the singing section was next. Feeling anxious about the audition because the night before I started to think poorly and that caused me to once again provide an unsatisfactory singing audition. After leaving, I immediately felt bothered by the audition and sent an email to Professor Chan to discuss my thoughts about the performance. Professor Chan provided me with some notes but in general, told me that I gave a stronger audition and provided more character into the song.

Once the cast list was published, I started going through the whole script on a deeper level. During the first rehearsal, I met my other cast members and we had a

read-through of the production, which was very useful for me as I could finally start building relationships with other characters surrounding Pythio. Throughout the first two weeks, I struggled with fully understanding Pythio since they are a complex character. At some points within the production, Pythio can reasonably be angry or upset but I was unsure if they would show their emotions or present themselves as calm and collected. Due to the complex nature of Pythio's feelings, I explored different routes before I landed on what I feel is right.

Two things that helped with furthering the creation of Pythio and their characteristics were completing the choreography for "Vision of Nowness" and Pythio's character background. I have always enjoyed playing with a character's movement so having the choreography to one of Pythio's songs was useful for me in understanding how they would move through the world. Once I achieved this understanding of movement, I applied this knowledge to the other times they were on stage and this started to help me develop a backstory. I wrote this backstory based on how I imagined their life up until the point of the show. With the help of the character biography and the movement, I started to become more comfortable with the character. After the first few weeks of getting to know the character and blocking the staging, I focused on bringing more character development into the acting choices I was making.

Since Pythio is not in the majority of the show, I did not have the same rehearsal time and experience as the rest of the cast for the first half of the production schedule. While the other performers were in rehearsals commonly for three hours each day, I would come in for a shorter period or even have days off. For me, that meant that the majority of my time was spent getting to know the character and learning my music or lines. I would spend an hour each Monday in my voice lessons looking over the music with Professor Chan and feeling confident in what I was singing. I also would utilize the practice rooms to go over the music and run through my lines. Besides the music, I would go over my dances and movements in the living room of my dorm room. While doing this I would ask my roommates to watch and give feedback on the movement of the dances.

Towards the second half of the production schedule, the company started with stumble-throughs and full show run-throughs. I always enjoy this part of the process because I get to see what all the other cast members have worked on and they get to see my work. As I mentioned before, I tend to overthink and get into my head. With the first few stumble-throughs, I would start to think about my scenes which ultimately led to what other people would think about the scenes and how I was performing. I commonly wonder how other people feel about my performances, but through discussions with different professors and peers, I realized that others' opinions do not matter as much as my own. With this new thought process, I found myself letting go and having fun with the rehearsals. I would finish a song or a scene and walk off stage smiling because I felt confident and joyful with what I had just performed. Another fear that constantly held me back was the fear of being off-pitch while singing. I believe this is because I have not sung for a group of people in a serious tone like a musical in a few years. I want to make sure I am doing my best and a major part of being a good singer is staying on pitch, but I have worked on these songs since the beginning of the school year so I know what I am supposed to sing. Since letting go of my fears surrounding the performance, I strengthened the character and actions. Sometimes I would get into my head while singing a song or acting in a scene and I would start to mess up. However, when I would let go of my thoughts, the performance would shine and was something I was excited to move forward with. With the last few run-throughs, I was confident in what Pythio had become and was ready to move into technical rehearsals.

During the week and a half of technical rehearsals, I continued to develop Pythio further. After the crew view, I discussed with Professor Chan how I thought that it was my best run yet. I also had a few of the crew and band members approach me to tell me that I did a great performance and that they thought I was hilarious. This helped me feel more confident in my performance and was ready to move forward with the rest of the technical rehearsals.

The first technical rehearsal involved sitzprobe. A sitzprobe is the rehearsal that focuses attention on combining the actors with the band, and this is often the first time the first rehearsal where the two groups rehearse together. Once the sitzprobe was over, the production team moved on to cue-to-cue rehearsals. This is the rehearsal

when both sound and lights are added into the production and provides the stage manager with time to run through their given cues. Each day of cue-to-cue rehearsals focused on a singular act, with Wednesday centering on act one. With this rehearsal, I got to try on my first two costumes and rehearse the quick changes for the first costume. The first attempt at the change did not perform as well as expected, but we had to continue the run to complete the section in time for the night. Thursday consisted of us running through act two with the cue-to-cue rehearsal. On Friday night, we had a technical run where we smoothed out some things. Two things we worked on at this rehearsal were the costume change for Pythio's first number and the fabric draping for the "Heaven is a Place on Earth" scene.

The following week the company started with dress rehearsals. This was an amusing time since everyone got to see their costumes for the first time. On Monday the cast and costume crew just focused on the costumes. However, on Tuesday and Wednesday, we started adding in hair and makeup. For my role, on top of having costume changes, I also have hair and makeup changes as well. On Tuesday's rehearsal, I met with Uriel Gomez, the costume designer for the production, to discuss the hair and makeup looks that I would be going through. This was a collaborative meeting as I provided some thoughts and Uriel worked with me to create the different pieces.

Instead of doing complete makeup changes, I decided to keep my base the same and change the eyeshadow and lipstick each time. My makeup base is set as the basics for every makeup look: foundation, concealer, contour, blush, and highlighter. In the first scene, Pythio has a red smokey eye and a red lip that then transforms into a black smokey eye and a dark lip for the next scene. For this transformation, I put black eyeshadow over the red eyeshadow and lipstick to make them both darker. The next makeup look had to start with me taking both of the areas off and starting with a clean base as I had to do a lighter smokey eye with silver glitter and a light pink lipstick shade. During intermission, I removed the makeup and put on a white eyeshadow look, and added some pink blush to my face to help add more color to the face. For the final look, I added blue eyeshadow on top of the white from the previous look and added blue

glitter. I added a red lipstick on right before going on stage to make the change more noticeable.

Makeup has always been an important and impactful part of not only my theatrical experience but also my everyday life. Within theatre, makeup helps build the character whether the performer is applying old-age makeup or cuts with blood. However, for me, I use makeup in a way to help with gender euphoria as I can use makeup to feminize my face. Using different shapes and colors can also create a character as they add intensity to the face. I have always enjoyed creating different makeup looks to express my artistic side, but theatrical makeup helps me develop the character more and helps me connect with the role better. Through application, I can figure out how the character lives their life and how they would interact with others.

The last dress rehearsal was rough for me and was not my best run as several things were not working in my favor. My skirt for the first entrance was not properly working, I forgot a line in my second scene, my makeup change between scenes was messy, and the final quick change was not smooth at all. However, I am a believer in the superstition that a rough last dress rehearsal foreshadows a great opening night.

In addition to rehearsals, I also worked in the costume shop to help build and create the costumes for myself. The majority of my time was spent building the costume for Pythio's first entrance within the cave. This costume has three parts that will be seen by the audience: the outer layer, the long train skirt, and the final dress. The outer coat layer and the skirt are made into the same piece where the outer layer is dropped and turns into the skirt. Once the skirt is out it is removed by snaps to reveal the final dress. This all happens before and during the song "Vision of Nowness" and towards the end of the song, the ensemble will reattach the skirt around my waist. I also helped construct the dress I wore in the finale.

During my first semester at Allegheny, I started working at the costume shop and instantly fell in love with constructing and designing costumes. Throughout my time here, I have designed costumes for two shows, designed hair and makeup for one show, and assisted in designing a few other shows. I took a break from the shop during the 2023 year, which broke up between the spring and fall semesters. During the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, I discussed with Uriel my desire to work in

the shop during the production to work on my costumes. When the spring semester started, I went to the shop to talk to Uriel and we discussed which costume I could construct. I was excited to work on my costume as it gave me more time to connect with Pythio. Connecting to Pythio through constructing the costumes was an impactful part for me during the rehearsal process, as it allowed me to think about how the costumes would let me move around or constrict movement during the scenes.

In addition to the show, I also participated in the Spring Dance Concert to promote the show. In this show, the ensemble and some lead performers came together to perform “We Got the Beat” with the music being the original song performed by the Go-Go’s. For this performance, there was also a technical week. Within this tech week, we went to Montgomery to rehearse and then directly after going to the Vukovich to continue rehearsals. Performances for this were Thursday, March 21, 2024, through Saturday, March 23, 2024.

CHAPTER THREE: **P**ERFORMANCE

After the last technical rehearsal on Wednesday, I was prepared for opening night. Over the past weeks, I promoted the show on my Instagram and had been discussing the show with my friends. Waking up on Thursday morning, the nerves were all over the place. Even though I believe the superstition, I was still nervous about it being the first performance as it sets up the tone for the rest of the performances and helps build the audience group. I knew people were excited to see the musical so I did not want to let them all down.

When I arrived at the theatre to start getting ready, I was excited to see everyone and do hair and makeup together. I started on my makeup and then got called for a mic check. Walking in, I was prepared for the normal experience of speaking a little and then singing a short section from the show. However, when I started the check my mic was not working so I was asked to step to the side and wait. At this point, I was not too worried as during the past week of rehearsals a few mics had been cutting in and out. When we tried again, I overheard that the mic was on but it was not sending a signal to the board so I started to get worried. The front of house mixer talked to the microphone wrangler about the situation in a deeper context and they took my mic pack to see if they could get it to work. After some time of struggling to get it to work and after two more tries with the mic on me, I started to get stressed. During this time I had missed vocal warmups due to trying to figure out the mic situation and from the stress I began to cry.

I have always been embarrassed to show my emotions, specifically ones like sadness, in front of others. When I sense the feeling of stress or sadness get to the point of tears I tend to find an area where I can be alone so I can work through the situation. However, I could not leave in this situation and that added more anxiety to the mix of emotions and caused me to release the tears. Seeing other people look at me while I was crying was embarrassing and I felt my throat start to tense up, causing me to think about having to sing in front of an audience without warming up which led to more anxiety. During the emotional flood for me, the mic situation was solved in a manner that was not the desired outcome but what would work for the performance.

With the help and support from both the sound crew and the stage managers, I started to feel relaxed but was still stressed about the solution. I am allergic to the tape

that was used for our mics so I requested a different style microphone so I could be comfortable with the performance and which would also work with all the different costume and hair changes. I rehearsed with a full headset microphone which had earpieces to cover both sides of the head compared to the earset microphone which covers only one ear and requires tape. For the first performance, I had to perform with an earset microphone and use bobby pins to place it on my head. Throughout the show, before and after each costume change I would have to reset the bobbypins into place to keep the mic from falling off which I was stressed about completing. As the rest of the warmup time continued, I cried on and off thinking about the stress and the fact that I had cried in front of people and shown my vulnerability. However I knew I had a performance to do and crying would not change that so before the show started I asked Professor Chan for some quick warmups and while the rest of the cast got into places for the top of the show, I warmed up and finished getting ready. When I finished with my makeup and putting on my costume, I walked backstage to get into place for my first scene. Before walking on Professor Chan led me through a quick breathing warmup to help prepare the voice more and then it was time to step onto the stage.

I walked onto the stage and looked around at the ensemble members who help cover me before the entrance and felt the love and support from the cast. Knowing that we had all spent roughly eleven weeks together creating this beautiful production, I was ready to show everyone what we had worked on. When I said my first line, all the stress and anxiety left my body and I was ready to enjoy my time on stage. Seeing the audience react to my first costume change gave me the confidence to continue and be the best version of myself within the production. With this first scene comes "Vision of Nowness". I was anxious about singing in front of an audience of that size for the first time after several years but I could not let the nerves get to me. As the music started, I remember thinking "You got it!" and when I sang my first note, half the stress was gone. With the lift, I looked out into the audience and could tell they were enjoying the song and that to me meant that I sounded good. I let go of the stress and started enjoying the song. When I sang the last note and snapped my fingers, I heard the audience cheer and I felt proud of myself for completing the first scene and song.

As the show progressed, I felt the audience enjoying the show and was happy to see everyone on stage having a good time. When it was time to walk out for the second to last scene, I took a second to breathe before walking on stage for that scene's big entrance. While moving through the scene and then continuing into the finale, I looked around at everyone within the cast and knew that we had created a piece of art.

When the show finished, we gathered backstage and cheered. This moment of community meant a lot for everyone as the first show was finished and we were all proud of what we accomplished, but more specifically I was proud of myself for singing in front of an audience for the first time in years, especially with the rough start to the day. I knew that I was ready and could complete three more shows no matter what was thrown at me because I already overcame the struggles of the first night.

Arriving back to the theatre on Friday was exciting, I had some friends driving from out of town to see me and was ready to show a new audience the musical. I was unsure of what the microphone situation would be like, but I knew that it would not be stressful because I had now completed the show with both styles of mics. When it was time for a mic check, I was informed that my original microphone was working again and that I could use it. I was delighted by this information and prepared for the show. Talking with other cast members, we discussed the audience's comments about the production, and my stress about how others would think was relieved. I believe that the second show is always the most fun as you do not have the stress of the first show so this is the first performance you get to enjoy.

While getting ready, the other performers were called for places and as soon as the music started I heard the audience cheer. Hearing this, I knew the audience was going to be amazing and was ready to perform. Getting into place for "Vision of Nowness" I could feel the energy from the audience and it was fueling me, I walked onto the stage and heard an uproar and knew it was time. I gave it my all and with that, the audience gave me theirs. The connection between Pythio and the audience is huge but when I delivered the lines "How is gender germane to the discussion?" and "Pythio is a nonbinary plural" the audience cheered. Knowing that the audience was alive and loving Pythio, I made sure to deliver every time I was on stage.

After the show was finished, I became aware of the next performance. Saturday's show was an important one for me as my family would be in the audience. My family does not exactly understand the importance of theatre for me, but they still support me. However, while they support me, they do not come to my productions, so them driving several hours to see *Head Over Heels* was important for me. I was unsure of how my family would take the show, but I was most worried about my father's reaction. On Saturday, I spent most of the early afternoon with my family but still could not shake the thought of my father's reaction. I contemplated whether or not I should tell him what the show was about but ultimately decided not to and just let him see the show without prior knowledge. When I made it to the theatre, I discussed my concern with some of the other cast members that I had grown close to and one shared a similar concern to me. Knowing that we were both going into this show with similar worries, we agreed to be there for each other.

The show went as planned and during my first scene in act two, I saw my father throw up a thumbs up to me. I know that my father is someone who is not great with words so this act was enough for me to understand his enjoyment. After the show, I met with my family and they all expressed their enjoyment and pride in me for the show and for following my dreams. I appreciated this discussion and wished them safe travels as they had to leave shortly after. Meeting back up with the cast member after our individual family discussion we both had happy news of our families' enjoyment. We hugged each other and went to our rooms to prepare for the last show.

I went back to my apartment and prepared for the last show. I set out my clothes, took a shower, ordered Domino's Pizza, and made paper plate awards. I went to bed excited for the last show but sad at the same time. Over the semester, I grew close with the cast and created some amazing memories and bonds. While I knew it was not the last time I would see the cast, it was the last time we would work together on this show. In the morning, I woke up and continued to feel this sadness but pushed it aside as I still had a performance to do.

I walked to the Vukovich one last time and prepared for the paper plate awards. I had chosen to present to the three cast members I had grown closest to during our time working together and I handed them their awards. At this time, I was awarded "The

Good Christian Woman Award” as some of the cast had an inside joke floating around where we would talk with southern dialects and discuss life. Once all the awards were passed out, a few of the cast and crew members had a quick cry but we quickly pushed through and started preparing for the show. Getting into hair and makeup this time was a struggle as when someone would walk into the room, we would all take a second and congratulate them. Finally, we pushed through and 2:30 p.m. was upon us. We all gathered and did one last warmup together before heading to places.

Heading into the performance I knew that my last few lines in the show were going to be difficult to get through. I had to start the show and knew that I had to keep it together. Going on for the last time during my first scene was exciting. The audience was alive and I felt prepared to deliver “Vision of Nowness” one last time. During the song, I took in the space and audience and smiled. It felt like I was almost finished with a marathon but I still had the last mile to go. Walking off stage, I thought back to the first performance and how much I had grown with the songs. Every night I felt the songs getting better through diction and confidence of the notes. I finished act one and started feeling the emotions arise but pushed them aside to finish the show. After creating the “distemp’rature” that was predicted by completing the four prophecies, it was time to get into the last set of costumes. Due to understanding how my costumes worked, I helped in assisting my quick changes. Getting one dress on and then hiding it by the bigger dress for the second to last scene was difficult so helping with taking off the previous costume was helpful for the crew. Once I was ready to go into place, I looked at the crew, blew them a kiss and thanked them for all of their work. After walking across the sky bridge, I had one last costume change. Once completed, I turned around and hugged the wardrobe charge, Maddy Segar, who I have been friends and coworkers with since our first semester. Looking at them, I was proud of how far we both had come and was ready to see the future for us both. Walking back on stage for the last time was hard, I looked at the cast and felt happiness. While walking to the center of the stage during my last monologue, I looked at Lorna Becker and started to cry. I choked while saying my last few lines and heard some of my fellow cast members start to cry and knew that it was time to snap us into a blackout.

Walking off stage for the last time was hard to say the least. I had spent the last four years working on different shows here and knew it was coming to an end. Thinking back to the previous seniors who had been influential to me during my time here and knowing that I was now in that position with some of my castmates was special. Looking around I saw many friends and I was happy with how our hard work had ended. I hugged my new and old friends and went to greet the audience members.

It is no secret that my favorite part of performing is getting to greet and talk with the audience after the show. The audience is always so kind and eager to discuss the show which I adore. Friends and families hugging each other and flowers being passed around is a joyful sight to see. Knowing that I had several groups every performance there to support and cheer me on is always appreciated and whether I know in the moment or days later, I always smile. Receiving texts from friends and emails from professors congratulating me on a beautiful performance and declaring their joy in seeing me grow over the years will always be the greatest feeling.

CHAPTER FOUR: **R**EFLECTION

Looking back at the past year, life has been a journey. A year of gaining and losing friends, an abundance of stress and happiness, several cry sessions, weekly voice lessons, job hunting, and theatre. Experiencing the highs and lows of college this past year would have been stressful without the knowledge of one last performance. Yet, here we are. I made it through this stress and you are reading this senior project. *Head Over Heels* took over my life during the last three months, but I am glad about how it turned out. If I ended up taking the route of the SET performance or completely changing my project idea, who knows how I would be today. I have grown as a person through working on this show and have learned about myself in ways I did not know were possible.

Being cast in only plays recently, I started to think that maybe I was not interested in pursuing musicals for my career. However, with *Head Over Heels* I have found a new love and appreciation for musicals. While I prefer plays and will most likely lean towards performing in them, I will also continue to audition for musicals and hopefully be cast in them as well. Knowing that queer theatre is growing, I want to continue pursuing performing in pieces surrounding queer stories. Some shows that I would love to perform in are *Angels in America*, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, *The Prom*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, and again, a queer version of *The Crucible*.

On top of this, I will continue to make my own pieces of work, directing, teaching, and costuming. My time at Allegheny has taught me that theatre is not just a one-way road with one destination, but that it is rather multiple destinations with several routes. Performing will always hold a special place in my heart, but I have learned that you can perform and work in other areas without running into complications of time.

Thinking back to my worries from the end of junior year, I see where I was coming from. Pythio may have not been in the show that often but this allowed me to look into queer theory and connect my minor to my major for the project. I have been interested in queer theatre for a while now but my project within the junior seminar for the WGSS department developed more interest for this section of performance.

My other concern from the beginning of the school year feels reasonable to have. I was worried about not being challenged through the role and that would make the senior project less than what I expected or even wanted for myself. While I believe that

this senior project has turned out to be one of my best pieces of academic work, I do not feel like the role of Pythio challenged me.

I think most of my challenges from this production would be present in any of the roles due to the nature of a musical. Over the year, I was challenged with both personal beliefs and outside opinions that I was not a good singer. I actively had to suppress these thoughts and work through my voice lessons to become a better singer. Another struggle that would have been present given any role, was the initial struggle to build the character. I believe that it might have been slightly harder for me to build Pythio due to the mysterious factor of the character, but the need for movement, costume understanding, and building a character biography would have been needed for any role. But once I had more movement to understand and knew what the costumes looked like, I built a character rather quickly. The last struggle was the want to not do a musical and this is because of my general performance history. I had hoped to perform in a play for my senior project and had assumed that I would be up until the end of my junior year. As I stated previously, I had not been cast in a musical in a while and I have bad memories from high school. This led to me being upset about the musical but ultimately came to terms with the fact that I would be performing in one for my senior project. This struggle had nothing to do with the role of Pythio or the show, but rather, with my personal wants.

However, for the role, I was not challenged in a way that I can account for. I did not struggle with getting off-book as Pythio does not have a substantial amount of lines, I felt like I was quick to be off-book even. Pythio was not a new feeling of performance for me either as the role felt like a mix of myself and past roles. I am similar to Pythio as I tend to be over dramatic and also present myself as a queer individual. I pulled from the roles of Dr. Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Kaliopé in *She Kills Monsters*. I pulled the drama, sass, and confidence from Frank and the kindness and caring side from Kaliopé. To me, it felt like Pythio was an extension of these roles so it was not a new character.

Even without the presence of a challenge, I still enjoyed and even loved my time as Pythio. Pythio has taught me several lessons that I now appreciate and will use in my life. Over my senior year, I have actively explored different forms of hormone therapy

and finally landed on one that works for me. With Pythio, I found this new form of self-love and with that, they took time to discover and become the truest version of themselves. Pythio does not care what the outside world thinks or says about them because they found confidence and self-love, and through being with them over the last few months, I can now understand this strength. Using Pythio's strength and self-love I can accept my gender identity and gladly present myself as who I am. I can now move forward into the world without care for what others may think or say as I understand now what it means to only care about what I think for myself. Even though I had initial worries about the project, it worked out in the end and provided me with the greatest lessons of all. Pythio has taught me that I am beautiful, strong, resilient, powerful, and worthy. Or as I once (realistically more like one hundred times) sang, "Like a picture that's been painted and is hanging on the wall, an admired but untouchable..."⁴³

⁴³ Jeff Whitty and James Magruder, *Head over Heels* (Broadway Licensing, 2018) (Page 18).

APPENDIX

A

Pythio, born as Mira, was born in Arcadia. Being born on the cusp between the astrological signs Cancer and Leo, they show characteristics from both signs. From the Cancer side, they have the ability to live between the emotional and material realms of the world. This allows for them to connect to their emotions and their third-eye, allowing for them to be highly intuitive, even psychic abilities manifest within them. Since they live in between realms, they will do whatever it takes to keep their peace and protect themselves both emotionally and physically. This sign is ruled by the moon, allowing for Cancer placements to take on a maternal role within relationships.

These characteristics are only further pushed by their Leo cusp placement. The sign of Leo is a fire sign, portraying their passion and loyalty to themselves and loved ones. However, Leo is also the sign of dramatic and theatrical characteristics, which Pythio is known for being of these characteristics. The Leo sign is ruled by the sun, which allows for bravery to be one's true self. Pythio being born on the cusp of these two signs allows for them to use both placements to anchor themselves between the earthly and celestial worlds.

They care deeply about their family, but they often struggled with gender and their identity growing up. It was only after they gave birth that they fully realized their struggle. During the birth of their daughter, Mopsa, Pythio was confused about their identity and they felt this confusion on several layers, these being: spirit, body, mind, soul, and heart. With these uprising emotions, they could not hold their true identity back anymore. While they feared to bring this discovery of their authentic self to their husband, Dametas, they still proclaimed the news. Dametas ignored their courage and flew into anger, casting them into exile.

With this cast into exile, they were left lonely causing them to become desperate for connection and an understanding for their new identity. While in exile, they traveled to Egypt where they discovered a secret underground community. This community embraced Pythio's new found identity and celebrated them, some of the community members even took in Pythio for their chosen family. At this time, the friends and chosen family taught Pythio about freeing oneself through dance, makeup, and costumes. Pythio started thriving with these newfound ways to express themselves and then was reborn. The love and support here let Mira die and Pythio be born, and Pythio sent word that Mira had perished in Egypt to their family back in Arcadia, so they would not look for her.

Once Pythio was born again, they flourished and even created a new chosen family, filling the sadness of leaving their daughter back at home. As time passed, Pythio learned how to accept what had happened in their past and they grew from it. With this acceptance, a member of their chosen family showed Pythio how to access their third eye and use their psychic abilities. In their studies, they learned how to possess their powerful divination abilities. Over time, Pythio became a renowned psychic who could foresee the future, and many called them an oracle.

As the years passed by, Pythio still had a sadness tied to the loss of their family, but specifically their daughter. They knew that the connection of giving birth tied them together forever, so Pythio would sometimes use their gifts to watch over Mopsa. After twenty years of being sent into exile, they had a dream that startled them. This dream included a vision of Arcadia losing its beat forever due to the stagnate nature of the kingdom's values and traditions.

Once Pythio had this premonition, they knew they had to go back to Arcadia but furthermore, face their own fear of the kingdom not accepting their true identity. While saying goodbye to their new family, one member told Pythio, "Whatever happens out there, do not let it affect you. You are strong, beautiful, and powerful. If they can not see that, that is their own fault. Do not let them decide who you are, you know who you are, and they can not change that. If they can not change their ways, that is on them, not you. Love you and you will do great things. Goodbye now." With this, Pythio wiped a tear from their eye and started on the journey home. On the travels to Arcadia, they received more premonitions about the four prophecies that if proven true, would cause Arcadia to lose its famous beat.

When they arrived close to the kingdom, they sent one of their followers, a snake, to give a note addressing the King to meet them at Delphi's temple to hear the prophecies. Once the note was sent off, Pythio prepared for the meeting. Gathering snakelettes to keep them company and to help present the prophecies. After some time, the King arrived, but with Dametas by his side. Seeing this, the emotions flooded back to Pythio from the fateful day twenty years ago, but they knew they could not show these emotions so they would be taken seriously. After the news was delivered, Pythio disappeared to regather themselves and move on to keep an eye on everyone.

The kingdom started to move so they could try to prevent these prophecies from happening, but Pythio knew they would happen either way. While in the woods, Pythio had a premonition again, this time it consisted of a person following the royal family, but there was something special about this person. Pythio could sense that the soul of this person was longing for two things, love and something else. Taking a deeper look into

the soul, Pythio knew what was missing but did not know how to help them achieve this need. Asking for a sign from the spiritual world, they received a vision of a chest.

They asked the owls within the forest to help them deliver this chest to the soul, and then Musidorus stumbled along. Knowing immediately that this was the soul within the vision, Pythio decided to take them in like they did back in Egypt and help them explore this unknown need of the soul. Pythio has often dealt with people who were not the brightest, but while handling Musidorus, Pythio found out they had to be direct with them but still caring. During this meeting, Pythio could feel the nervousness but excitement that Musidorus when looking at a reflection of the transformation, this caused both of them to be excited for the next steps.

As time passed, Pythio watched over everyone and even played a bit with their divine powers to help lead everyone on the right track to acceptance and love. The ultimate test was when Mopsa and Pamela, the King's daughter, expressed their love for each other and everyone accepted them both. Pythio watched this and knew that the kingdom had grown in love and acceptance over time since their banishment, and was ready to reveal themselves to everyone. With this, Pythio connected back to their daughter and confronted Dametus on his betrayal. Pythio told Dametus that they would take him back if they accepted as their truest self, not their past self. When Dametus agreed to this, Pythio's fear of not being accepted was diminished and they learned that love can heal all troubles and pains.

APPENDIX

B

SCENE 2

(The Oracle's Temple. DAMETAS and BASILIUS enter a temple, gazing around them in wonder.)

#2B THE ORACLE'S TEMPLE

DAMETAS

Da-Met-us

An aura serpentine assails my senses.

BASILIUS

Indeed. 'Tis the temple of the Oracle.

(Ensemble Hisses. PYTHIO appears amidst their Snakelettes.)

PYTHIO

(revealing themselves) start upcenter stage

You have startled me from sleep, travelers.

DAMETAS

My, such a handsome phantasm she is!

move center center

BASILIUS

She? Are you sure?

(to PYTHIO)

Art thou man or woman?

PYTHIO

How is gender germane to the discussion?

BASILIUS

Things need to be one thing or another.

PYTHIO

My qualities transcend your rude opinion!
Pythio is a non-binary plural.

movement?

DAMETAS

Neither he nor she, but...they. You are they.
Pythio the Oracle is they.

PYTHIO

A Marvelous designation, Dametas!

Dahmetusssss

DAMETAS

You know my name?

BASILIOUS

(Rudely interrupting)

So. Got your note. Here we are. Say the sooth.

PYTHIO

Not all I say will soothe.

BASILIOUS

We're listening.

(Thunder and lightning. Ensemble hissing.)

PYTHIO

Arcadia has grown too orderly.
Bound by the iron yoke of tradition
It stagnates....

*move down stages
this line*

BASILIOUS

Our realm has never been in better hands!

PYTHIO

Mister Man, between mouth and ear, the wrong hole is agape!

hand up

#3 A VISION OF NOWNESS

PYTHIO

(sings)

THERE ARE SOME THINGS I MUST NEVER REVEAL
ABOUT THE WAY I THINK AND WHAT I FEEL.
KEEP THE SURFACE, SMOOTH, CALM AND COOL -
EYES AS DEEP AND BLUE AS A SWIMMING POOL.
AND I CONVINCE WITH CERTAINTY
NO INTERFERENCE WILL GET THROUGH TO ME.
LIKE A PICTURE THAT'S BEEN PAINTED
AND IS HANGING ON THE WALL,
AN ADMIRER BUT UNTOUCHABLE -
REFLECTION! A VISION OF NOWNESS!
A VISION OF NOW

*(PAMELA, PHILOCLEA, MUSIDORUS, GYNECIA, appear
amongst the Snakelettes.)*

PYTHIO

~~Hark!~~
Thy younger daughter brings a liar to bed;
He thou shalt forbid, she he'll then assume!
Thy elder daughter shall consent to wed;
She'll consummate her love — but with no groom!
Thou with thy wife adult'ry shall commit.

BASILILUS

Preposterous!

Hand!

PYTHIO

This fourth and last prophecy is crucial:
You will meet and make way for a better King.

BASILILUS

(explodes)

No such king exists in the world entire! — LOOK

PYTHIO

- And when each of my Prophecies proves true
- A silken flag shall flutter to the ground. *Sort of goes to Dametas*
 - On four of a kind you forfeit your beat; *Basililus*
 - Just one prevent, and Pythio you'll cheat. *Audience*

DAMETAS

If the beat dies out?

PYTHIO

The earth stands still. Thence
Begins a permanent distemp'rature. *distemp'rature*
The sun will hide his face from half the globe
And freeze it into dark oblivion.
The other half — an endless ocean of
Fire from which no being can escape.
All caused by your archaic, inflexible rule.
Snakelettes, slither hither! *calling*

PYTHIO

I'M YOUR CURIOSITY, NOTORIOUS
YOU'LL NEVER GET WHAT THEY SEE
WHAT YOU SEE
LIKE A

ENSEMBLE

AAH AAH
I'LL NEVER GET

Down stage

Pile on

*More
threatening*

*bestie has been wronged.
take sadistic enjoyment
in fear.*

ALL
PICTURE THAT'S BEEN PAINTED
AND IS HANGING ON THE WALL,
AN ADMIRER BUT UNTOUCHABLE -
REFLECTION! A VISION OF NOWNESS!

PYTHIO
A VISION OF NOW --
A VISION OF NOW!

ENSEMBLE
NOW! NOW!

Watch for the flags

PYTHIO

ALL
A VISION OF NOW -- !
A VISION OF NOW — *Run off*

(They disappear with a miraculous flourish.)

BASILIOUS
All flash, no substance, that — one!

DAMETAS
Let's hope so.
That was a divination most direct.
Most terrifyingly direct.

BASILIOUS
Agreed.
Let's not disclose these things on our return.

DAMETAS
Ignoring the Oracle of Delphi
Is not, historically speaking, a
Wise move.

BASILIOUS
I know how to handle this! No
Sense in waiting for a rival king to
Appear at our borders. Instead we'll hit
The road to find, then slaughter this usurper!
I shall ribbon him open throat to nuts.

DAMETAS
Hit the road?

no anger

Enter on cart -
leave SL and enter
upstage

owl - wise, intelligent,
showing to all a different
way of living, truthful,
friendly, care,
helpful

SCENE 6

(Another Part Of The Forest MUSIDORUS enters, exhausted,
chasing the travelers.)

MUSIDORUS

In the distance they do make encampment.
My tracking Philoclea proves ill-planned.

(He discovers a large pile of rubbish covered by a sheet.)

But hey, what's that there? Yon rubbish pile might
Prove treasure for a trav'ler unequipp'd.

(He lifts a blanket, revealing two skeletons. He screams.)

Unlucky pair, will you become a trio
Ere long? When dead I shall not put you out
By eating much. But look - I do espy
A note within one clutched and bony hand.

(He takes the note and reads.)

"O traveler, behold and now applaud:
These sad remains are of our theater troupe,
Starved for lack of Serious Message."
O 'tis a cruel business, that, and glad
Am I that I did not that life pursue.

SKU BRIDGE

VOICE IN FOREST

Who is't dares trespass my bosky coppice?

MUSIDORUS

O fearsome voice that speaketh - show thyself.

#6B ASLANT MY AVIAN ORBITS

Eck-e

Pop-up?

Ecce! Aslant my avian orbits
Dian's moon shoots her silver'd furbelows.

Die-An

VOICE

(A Large Owl [PYTHIO] is spotted in a tree.)

help discover
truthself

MUSIDORUS

You speak Eclogue! Art thou wise Athena?

rural, not-courtly
language.

Goddess of wisdom

Sway with hips/arms

Thank you Queen
Command
RHPoin

I get that a lot, but no.

OWL
handsome/wise

Thou, first among Arcadian shepherds,
Whose intemperate blush doth become him,
Will meet his much-deserved end ere long.

you'll get what you should have.

MUSIDORUS

What sayest thou? Am I then to perish?

I

OWL

- 1) Ay, let Musidorus the shepherd die,
So like the Phoenix he may be reborn
To win Philoclea and moreover
2) Save her family—and Arcadia. *Opense*
Choose a role that by the King may long go
Undiscovered.

to do

Undiscovered

MUSIDORUS

This discarded trunk
Of costumes might help.

Girl What?

OWL

That's what it's there for.

separate

To Hades now doth Musidorus go,
A vision of the past. Here in the solemn
Stillness of the forest floor the blank canvas
Awaits the brushwork of your desires.

Here in the forest, you can become someone new.

(MUSIDORUS, stripped to his underpants, is rummaging in the costume trunk. He holds up a turban and a genie lamp.)

MUSIDORUS

Aladdin's Genie?

OWL

That lamp's all rubbed out. the last play had that...

(He holds up a Viking helmet.)

MUSIDORUS

Thor, God of Thunder?

OWL

Yeah! No...

(to audience)

OWL (CONT'D)

This lad,
I fear, is as dumb as—

MUSIDORUS

He holds up a box with a wig inside
--A box of hair!

OWL

(clapping hands)
Owlettes, fly nigh!

(The OWLETTES appear. One holds up a leather breast plate and skirt.)

MUSIDORUS

What is this?

OWL

That is the shapely armor
Of an Amazon!

MUSIDORUS

Re-gender myself
In a flowing wig and garments?

#6C SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART (MUSIDORUS)

ENSEMBLE

OH! SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART

MUSIDORUS

How classic.

#7 VISION OF NOWNESS (REPRISE)

OWL/PYTHIO

Now that you thought it up, you really should!
Since your mission will be fraught with dangers,
The wily strength and the ruthless weapons
Of the Amazons will best become you.

*This might be
beautiful.*

OWL/PYTHIO

LIKE A PICTURE THAT'S
BEEN PAINTED
AND IS HANGING
ON THE WALL
AN ADMIRER
BUT UNTOUCHABLE -
REFLECTION
A VISION OF
NOW
A VISION OF
NOW

MUSIDORUS

BEAUTIFUL

IS ALL I SEE
WHEN I LOOK AT ME!
BEAUTIFUL!
REFLECTION
A VISION OF
EV'RY MOTHER'S DREAM!
A VISION OF
NOW

OWELETTES

OOH
OOH
OOH

REFLECTION

A VISION OF
NOWNESS
NOW

enjoy every moment

I just helped someone become their
true self.

Exit SR

GYNECIA

Appreciating thy formality,
I shall respond in kind. Do stand apart.
I hope my flair for prose has not grown rusty.

(MUSIDORUS exits, then re-appears in GYNECIA's mind as she composes her letter.)

#14 THIS OLD FEELING

GYNECIA

THIS OLD FEELING, IT'S NEW TO ME -- I'M NOT SURE
HOW I SHOULD BE
I'D TATTOO MY VOW FOR ALL TO SEE
TO PROVE HOW MUCH YOU MEAN TO ME!
A MILLION TIMES SAID IN AS MANY SONGS
BUT BEFORE YOU, I COULD NEVER SING ALONG!

Oh, Cleophila! Hence my heart dispatch.

(She gives him a letter and exits.)

MUSIDORUS

I know not what may come to pass should I
Deliver this! Oh, how I crave counsel.
O Great Owl, show yourself again to me.

center stage

(Music: ORACLE/OWL appears.)

Tongue Pop

ORACLE

Well, look at you. Is it the girl or is it the gown?

MUSIDORUS

Such mad devotion did I not invite,
And neither from so many! Take back these
Trumperies. I abjure this masquerade.

ORACLE

Forsaking thy wig would undo all thy
Suitors—including plain Philoclea.

MUSIDORUS

O! Then in this performance I am trapped!

ORACLE
The burdens of beauty are many - I should know!
Thou better workest!

To the audience.

(The OWL vanishes. BASILIUS enters.)

MUSIDORUS
Um, here's a letter. Hope you like it. Bye.

(BASILIUS takes the letter and MUSIDORUS Exits. The lights shift again...)

BASILIUS
A letter from my sweet beloved! O,
My future happiness here lives, inside.

(In a separate light, his fantasy CLEOPHILIA appears.)

BASILIUS
THIS OLD FEELING

IT'S GOT ME UP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE
MY GOOD LUCK
I'D WAIT AT YOUR DOOR
TILL ETERNITY
BECAUSE YOU MEAN
THAT MUCH TO ME!

WELL, A MILLION TIMES SAID IN AS MANY SONGS

BOTH
BUT BEFORE YOU
I COULD NEVER SING ALONG -

BASILIUS
I LOVE YOU!

GYNECIA
OH YES, I DO -

BASILIUS
(I DO!) I LOVE YOU!

MAD ABOUT YOU PAMELA

LOST IN YOUR EYES MOPSA

REASON ASIDE PAMELA

MAD ABOUT LOVE MOPSA

MAD ABOUT YOU PAMELA

YOU AND I MOPSA/PAMELA

(They kiss. DAMETAS, surprised, thinks about it.)

DAMETAS
O, I always waited for the day I'd
Be Father of the Bride; of TWO Brides, then!
If only my fair Mira were alive!

*(Magic sounds: "Vision of Nowness." The ORACLE is revealed.
Astonishment!)*

appear and walk Center

Lives Mira still. PYTHIO

Mira? DAMETAS

Mother? MOPSA

(DAMETAS and MOPSA share a Skidmarks moment.)

(SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART - DAMETAS + MOPSA)

Look around??

ENSEMBLE
OH, SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART

DAMETAS

But I sent you into exile,
And word was brought you perish'd in Egypt.

PYTHIO

Recall you the doleful circumstances
Of my banishment? I had just brought forth
My precious babe and had given her suck,
Yet was confus'd mightily in spirit,
Body, mind, soul, heart, and all what have you.
I had given birth to a daughter and
What finally emerged as well was a
New identity – one untethered to
Gender – that had been kept locked inside
Since first I knew my own name and station
In Arcadia. And I came to you
In fear to reveal my authentic self,
And you –

DAMETAS

Ignored your courage, flew into
A rage and cast you out. A shameful act
I've much repin'd these twenty sorry years.

PYTHIO

'Twas not your finest moment, no.

MOPSA

Mother!

(PYTHIO crosses to their daughter.)

PYTHIO

Oh Mopsa, my own, my sweet, my beautiful,
In my exile not one day has passed that
I've not wept for thee. Upon this, our reunion,
Canst thou show thy mother mercy?

Hug Mopsa

MOPSA

Promise you'll never go away again.

ORACLE

How could I? I have my child, my career...

DAMETAS

But I sent you into exile,
And word was brought you perish'd in Egypt.

PYTHIO

Recall you the doleful circumstances
Of my banishment? I had just brought forth
My precious babe and had given her suck,
Yet was confus'd mightily in spirit,
Body, mind, soul, heart, and all what have you.
I had given birth to a daughter and
What finally emerged as well was a
New identity – one untethered to
Gender – that had been kept locked inside
Since first I knew my own name and station
In Arcadia. And I came to you
In fear to reveal my authentic self,
And you –

DAMETAS

Ignored your courage, flew into
A rage and cast you out. A shameful act
I've much repin'd these twenty sorry years.

PYTHIO

'Twas not your finest moment, no.

MOPSA

Mother!

(PYTHIO crosses to their daughter.)

PYTHIO

Oh Mopsa, my own, my sweet, my beautiful,
In my exile not one day has passed that
I've not wept for thee. Upon this, our reunion,
Canst thou show thy mother mercy?

Hug Mopsa

MOPSA

Promise you'll never go away again.

ORACLE

How could I? I have my child, my career...

DAMETAS
And thy first love, if thou wilt take him back?

ORACLE
As Pythio—my truest self—not Mira.

DAMETAS
Sounds like heaven, for I do love you so.

(They kiss. Family reunion.)

3 counts

DAMETAS (CONT'D)
I'M MAD ABOUT THEM

PYTHIO
MAD ABOUT US

DAMETAS
LOST IN THEIR EYES

PYTHIO/MOPSA
REASON ASIDE

grab Mopsa

DAMETAS
MAD ABOUT LOVE

PYTHIO/MOPSA
MAD ABOUT US

hug

DAMETAS
THEM AND ME

PYTHIO/MOPSA
YES YOU!

DAMETAS
AND WE!

PYTHIO/MOPSA
WE THREE!

DAMETAS/PYTHIO/MOPSA
AND THEY!

SCENE 6

(Arcadia unfolds around them.)

PHILOCLEA

We're back in our old home, Arcadia.

#19B SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART (FULL COMPANY)

FULL COMPANY (EXCEPT PYTHIO)
OH, SKIDMARKS ON MY HEART!

Look and
WTF???

GYNECIA

It seems we have traveled in a circle.

PYTHIO

Indeed, and to draw a circle: One must
End where one began. Yet who resembles
Any of the Fools who started on the journey here?

finger circle and
walk C

#19C GO ROUND AND ROUND

(As the lights begin to fade...)

As soon as music
starts!

PYTHIO

Go round and round —

GYNECIA

Like light and light —

PHILOCLEA

Descending day —

PAMELA

And breaking night.

MOPSA

Our roads shall shortly separate;

DAMETAS

What may endure we now create;

BASILIOUS

Remember now this present sweet;

MUSIDORUS

We are alive.

We got the beat.

*What is this?
What does this
mean?*

ORACLE

Measure 6

*snap!
snap!
snap!
tongue
pop!*

CURTAIN. THE END.

#20 FINALE

[DANCE SEQUENCE]

ALL

WE GOT THE BEAT
WE GOT THE BEAT
WE GOT THE BEAT

OUR BEAT IS DIVINE!
OUR BEAT IS DIVINE!
OUR BEAT IS DIVINE!

EVERYBODY GET ON YOUR FEET
WE GOT THE BEAT
WE KNOW YOU CAN DANCE TO THE BEAT
WE GOT THE BEAT

JUMPIN' GET DOWN!
ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND
WHOO!

PRINCIPALS

WE GOT THE BEAT

WE GOT THE BEAT

WE GOT THE BEAT

WE GOT THE BEAT

WE GOT THE BEAT

ENSEMBLE

WE GOT THE BEAT
OOH OOH OOH

WE GOT THE BEAT
OOH OOH OOH

WE GOT THE BEAT
OOH OOH OOH

WE GOT THE BEAT
OOH OOH OOH

WE GOT THE BEAT
OOH OOH OOH

APPENDIX

C

A VISION OF NOWNESS

(7/24/18 CUTS)

3

CUE:

PYTHIO: "Mister Man, between mouth and ear, the wrong hole is agape!"

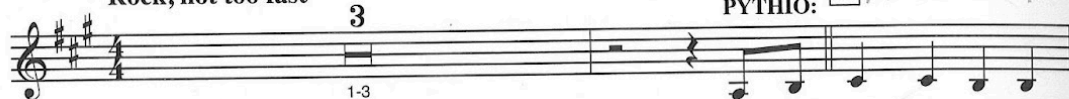
puppeteer

find shadow vowels
-wall(uh)
-Now (a)
-Reveal(a)

Music and Lyrics by The Go-Go's
Orch. by Tom Kitt

Rock, not too fast

D R PYTHIO: 5 M M R R



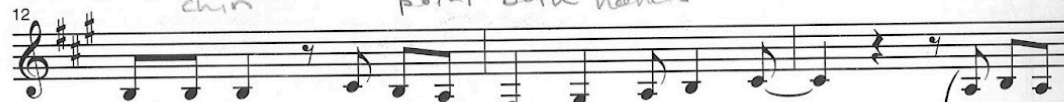
There are some things I must
palms up body



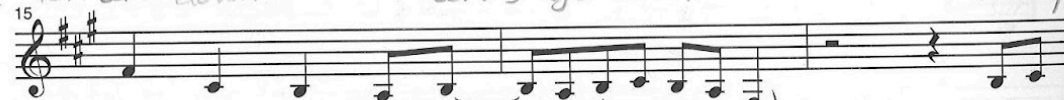
nev - er re - veal a - bout the way I think and what I feel Keep the
body/hip reveal flick wrist diamond



sur - face, smooth calm and cool - Eyes as deep and blue as a
chin point both hands



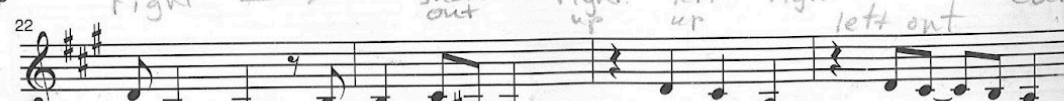
swim - ming pool And I con - vince with cer - tain - ty No in - ter -
left arm down arms go out carry



fer - ence will get through to me set down Like a
fair carry left



pic - ture that's been paint - ed and is hang - ing on the wall: An ad -
right shoot out right left right out Cut



mir - ed but un - touch - a - ble re - flec - tion! A vis - ion of
across out/w/ mirror/start flip/walk
clip walking

Jennifer Lewis

26

now - ness! A vis-ion of now! Hark!

arms up
PYTHIO: "Thy younger daughter brings a liar to bed; He thou shalt forbid; she he'll then assume! Thy elder daughter shall consent to wed; She'll consummate her love -- but with no groom! Thou with thy wife adult'ry shall commit." *look over shoulder*

arms go up hands @ hip boom
BASILILUS: "Preposterous!"

PYTHIO: "This fourth and last prophecy is crucial: You will meet and make way for a better King."

BASILILUS: (*explodes*) "No such king exists in the world entire!" [GO]

slower
PYTHIO: "And when each of my Prophecies proves true A silken flag shall flutter to the ground. On four of a kind you forfeit your beat Just one prevent, and Pythio you'll cheat."

33 **meno mosso** 8 5

33-40 41-45

slower
PYTHIO: "The earth stands still. Thence Begins a permanent distemp'rature. The sun will hide his face from half the globe And freeze it into dark oblivion. The other half—an endless ocean of Fire from which no being can escape. All caused by your archaic, inflexible rule. Snakelettes, slither hither!" *what is this?*

curty smile
DAMETAS: "If the beat dies out?" [GO]

Più mosso (colla voce)

46 **rit.** 48 **13** **PYTHIO:**

48-60

ENSEMBLE:

I'm— a
 ahh—
 ahh—

78

1/2 ; 1/2/3

cur - i - os - i - ty! No -

80

vogue walls

tor - io - ous, you'll nev - er get what they see. Like a

ahh ahh I'll nev - er get what you see

ahh ahh I'll nev - er get what you see

83

101Kc early

pic-ture that's been paint - ed and is hang-ing on the wall. An ad-

pic-ture that's been paint - ed and is hang-ing on the wall. An ad-

pic-ture that's been paint - ed and is hang-ing on the wall. An ad-

87

like early

mir-ed but un-touch-a-ble— re-flec-tion! A vis-ion of

mi-red but un touch-a-ble ahh

mir-ed but un touch-a-able— ahh

91 (4) 97

now - ness! (sss)— A vis-ion of now!— A vis-ion of

nowoa

now - ness (sss)— now...

now - ness (sss)— now...

99

PYTHIO: "Watch for the flags."

wonder woman spin

now!—

now... A vis-ion of now... *nowoa*

now... A vis-ion of now...

103

The image shows a handwritten musical score on three staves. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. It contains the lyrics "A vis-ion of now!" with a long horizontal line extending from "now!". Above the line, there are handwritten notes: "breathe" above the first line, "sharp" below the first line, and "WOM" below the second line. To the right of the staff, there are handwritten notes: "botma Kick Split." and "WOM". The second and third staves also have treble clefs and a key signature of two sharps. They both contain the lyrics "A vis-ion of now!" with a long horizontal line extending from "now!". The third staff has a small "8" written below the first measure.

VISION OF NOWNESS (Reprise)

(7/13/18 CUT mm. 21-22)

7

start early

Music and Lyrics by The Go-Go's
Orch. by Tom Kitt

Segue from #6C

OWL/PYTHIO: "Now that you thought
it up, you really should! Since your mission
will be fraught with dangers..."OWL/PYTHIO (CONT'D): "The wily
strength and the ruthless weapons. Of
the Amazons will best become you."

Con moto

4 (Gtr 2) 3

1-4 5-7

8 **OWL/PYTHIO:** 9

Like a pic - ture that's been paint - ed And is

MUSIDORUS:

Beau - ti - ful is

OWLETTES:

ooh

11

hang-ing on the wall, an ad - mi-red but un-touch-a-ble

all I see when I look at me Beau - ti - ful

ooh ooh

15 **rit.**

re - flec - tion. A vis - ion of now

re - flec - tion. A vis - ion of eve - ry - moth - er's

re - flec - tion A vis - ion of now

A tempo *go up here* **A tempo (Head Over Heels)** *Breathly Full*

18 **19**

ness... A vis - ion of now...

dream... A vis - ion of now...

ness... now...

2 **rall. poco a poco**

ness... now...

19

HEAVEN IS A PLACE ON EARTH

16

{Thou with thy wife adultery shall commit.
Segue from #15B

Music and Lyrics by The Go-Go's
Orch. by Tom Kitt

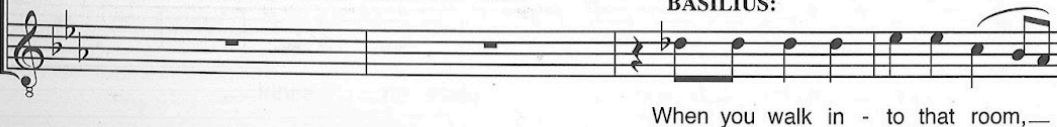
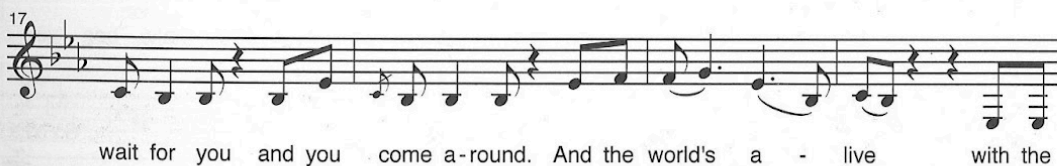
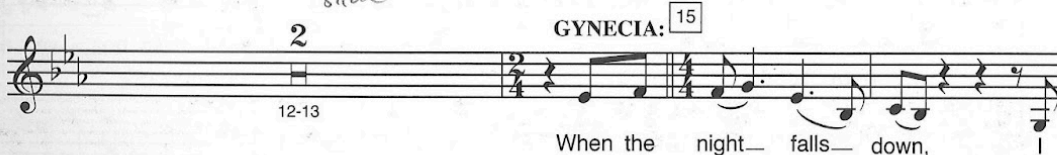
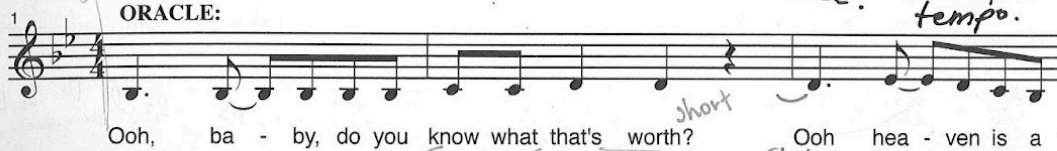
Rock/Pop

good breathe.
rubato
milk
ORACLE:

slide on "OOH"

Shorter birth

you lead the song here! take your tempo.



25
you pull me close and you start to move.— And we're spin-ning with the

28
world a - bove and you lift me up in a wave of love.—

31 **GYNECIA ORACLE:**
Ooh, ba - by, do you know what that's worth? Ooh hea - ven is a
BASILIOUS:
Ooh hea - ven is a

34
place on earth! They say in hea - ven love comes first We'll make hea - ven a—
Ti Ti La Ti La
place on earh They say in hea - ven love comes first We'll make hea - ven a—

38 **GYNECIA:**
place on earth! Ooh hea - ven is a place on earth!— When I
place on earth! Ooh hea - ven is a place on— earth!—

76

77

place on— Ooh, ba - by, do you know what that's worth?

place on— Ooh, ba - by, do you know what that's worth?

place on— Ooh, ba - by do you know what that's worth?

place on— Ooh, ba— by do you know what that's worth?

79

Ooh hea - ven is a place on earth! They say in hea - ven love comes first

Ooh hea - ven is a place on earth They say in hea - ven love comes first

Ooh hea - ven is a place on earth! They say in hea - ven love comes first

Ooh hea - ven is a place on earth! They say in hea ven love comes first

83

We'll make hea - ven a ___ place on earth! Ooh hea - ven is a place on ___

We'll make hea - ven a ___ place on earth! Ooh hea - ven is a place on ___

We'll make hea - ven a ___ place on earth! Ooh hea - ven is a place on ___

We'll make hea - ven a ___ place on earth! Ooh hea ven is a place on ___

87

earth! ___ Hea-ven is a place on earth! ___

(alt.)

earth! ___ Hea-ven is a place on earth! ___

earth! ___ Hea-ven is a place on earth! ___

earth! ___ Hea-ven is a place on earth! ___

DAMETAS: "But I sent you into exile, And word was brought you perish'd in Egypt."

30A **ENSEMBLE:**

Oh! Skid - marks on my heart

Oh! Skid - marks on my heart

PYTHIO: "Recall you the doleful circumstances Of my banishment? I had just brought forth My precious babe and had given her suck, Yet was confus'd mightily in spirit, Body, mind, soul, heart, and all what have you. I had given birth to a daughter and What finally emerged as well was a New identity—one untethered to Gender—that had been kept locked inside Since first I knew my own name and station In Arcadia. And I came to you In fear to reveal my authentic self, And you—" [GO]

DAMETAS: "Ignored your courage, flew into A rage and cast you out. A shameful act I've much repin'd these twenty sorry years."

PYTHIO: "'Twas not your finest moment, no." [GO]

→ 31 **Slower**

14

31-44

Tempo Di "Mad About You"

MOPSA: "Mother!"

(PYTHIO crosses to their daughter.)

PYTHIO: "Oh Mopsa, my own, my sweet, my beautiful, In my exile not one day has passed that I've not wept for thee. Upon this, our reunion, Canst thou show thy mother mercy?"

2

50

7

48-49

50-56

MOPSA: "Promise you'll never go away again."

ORACLE: "How could I? I have my child, my career..."

DAMETAS: "And thy first love, if thou wilt take him back?"

ORACLE: "As Pythio—my truest self—not Mira."

DAMETAS: "Sounds like heaven, for I do love you so." [GO]

8

57-64

Vamp

66 68 **PYTHIO:**

Mad a-bout us! *slide*

DAMETAS:

I'm mad a-bout them! Lost in their

MOPSA
PYTHIO:

70 3

Rea son a side— Mad a-bout us! Yes you!

eyes Mad a-bout love Them and me And

GYNECIA: "To think I might have Daughters
three and one New son—"

MUSIDORUS: "Or daughter four! For Cleophila
I should like to keep around, I think, for Disguised
as she I found the she in me, And I'll include then
he with she, and thus A son and daughter both to
you I'd be, A Musidorus in totality."

BASILIU: "'Twould seem I never knew Arcadia
Or its people. " [MUSIC OUT]

75 77 **Freely**

We three! And they! 12

77-88

we! And they! 12

APPENDIX

D

SONGS BY
**THE
GO-GO'S**

ADAPTED BY
**JAMES
MAGRUDER**

BASED UPON THE ARCADIA BY
**SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY**

CONCEIVED &
ORIGINAL BOOK BY
JEFF WHITTY

*A joyously exuberant rock musical where
"love comes first!" Sass! Desire!
And, featuring the music of
the Go-Go's!*



**MARK
COSDON**
DIRECTOR

**BETSY
GETSCHMAN**
CHOREOGRAPHER

**WEI EN
CHAN**
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Head Over Heels contains some sexually suggestive content. This joyously infectious rock musical is recommended for audience members over the age of 16. The production includes some haze, abrupt lighting shifts, and loud music.

**PLAY
SHOP** THEATRE
ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

April 4-7, 2024

Thurs, Fri, Sat: 8:00 PM

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APPENDIX E







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