GROWING UP ABSURD

A ONE MAN SHOW

HONORS THESIS

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by

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Artist Foreword

Creating “Growing Up Absurd” has been quite the ride. In the beginning of my college career I got excited about the idea of writing an undergraduate thesis but didn’t know what I wanted to write it about. Initially it was going to be something about Shakespeare, then I wanted to do something about fitness and being a Musical Theatre major at Texas State and then I dropped the idea of doing a thesis altogether. Then, in the summer of 2013, John Hood approached me with the idea of writing a one-man show as my thesis after taking his Art of Storytelling class. This got my creative juices flowing. I immediately thought of all the grand things I could do by creating my own show: multimedia, pyrotechnics, juggling chainsaws, riding tigers… it was going to be epic. I started into the brainstorming process. Deciding that the main focus of the show was going to be stories about my past leading to my current state of being I started looking for other one man shows that have been produced either on or off Broadway. I found out that Billy Crystal was going to be re-mounting his one-man show, 700 Sundays, in the fall and winter of 2013. Knowing I had to get to New York to see this I applied for a SURF grant to travel and spend a week researching other one man shows and attending Billy Crystal’s show. I wrote a letter to Crystal requesting some form of correspondence so I could pick his brain about his process in producing his show. I got the grant and set out for New York City over winter break. While there I learned so much about structuring my show and what would keep an audience entertained.

When I returned from the city I went through several drafts and ideas with John Hood about my show until he suggested that I do the show by talking to younger versions of myself about life then and now. And play both versions of me. So with that I wrote a new script and started playing with physical and vocal qualities of each “Tim.” The night before my scheduled performance of the show I had a rehearsal with my father and girlfriend to get the bugs out and finalize the “Tims”. Only hours before the show I met with my friends who were helping with the technical aspect of the show and we spaced, lit, and teched the whole show. Two hours later the audience arrived and it was show time.

The most important lesson learned through writing and performing this thesis is that a one-man show is anything but that. There are so many people involved in re-writes, edits, tech, research, etc… I hope you learn something from this labor of love and more importantly are brought back to your childhood days.
Abstract

Being able to create your own work in today's industry is an increasingly necessary skill. It is no longer enough for the modern performing artist to be able to just act, sing, and dance. Jobs are few and far between and artists are constantly asked "what else" they do. In my thesis I explored writing, researching, directing, producing and performing my own piece of work.
Special thanks to John Robert Hood

Dedicated to Uncle J.J.
Pre show: 90s rock music plays. A grand piano is set stage right. The lights dim, a spot on the piano. Tim enters stage left, crosses to the piano and takes a bow. He prepares himself as if to give a piano recital. He plays the beginning to "Crazy Train" by Black Sabbath. He turns to the audience.

Tim
Hello everyone and welcome to my thesis presentation and the premier of my first one man show, "Growing Up Absurd"! I really appreciate all of you coming out tonight and want to make this quick and painless for all of us so... goodnight!

Tim starts to exit. House lights come up.

Young Tim
Wait, Tim! Wait a minute, Tim, you can't go yet! Mister! Turn off the lights again, fix it!

Tim
W-what was that?

YT
Tim, it’s me! It’s you when you were five.

He holds up four fingers. Looks. Five fingers.

Five.

Well what are you doing here?

YT
Well I came to tell some stories! I heard people were getting together and I thought that maybe, well, I could tell a story.

Tim
Um… well ok. What do you want to talk about? When you were born?

YT
No I don’t remember that one. But I was thinking maybe we could go back to California when we had the slip and slide- yeah slip and slide!

Young Tim sprints to one side of the stage

YT
Ok, ready? Watch me. Ready, ready? One, two, THREE! KOWABUNGA!!

He slides across the stage

Tim, c’mon you gotta try it, It’s so much fun!

Tim

Tim, I can’t, I’m a little old for a slip and slide.

YT

No you’re not- here watch me.

He sprints to the other side of the stage again.

Ok ok you ready?

Tim

I’m ready.

YT

One, two, KOWABUNGA!

He rolls around and kicks in the end of the slip and slide.

YT

Do you remember how much fun we used to have?!

Tim

Yeah we used to go through three or four in a summer!

YT

Yep! And Kevin and I-

Tim

Kevin is our brother.

YT

Kevin and I made games and we would see who could slide further and and and then we would bump into eachother and then mom got mad. AND remember that one time when Kevin went and he said, “You gonna get your peener wet!” and mom put him in time out and then it wasn’t as fun anymore.

Tim

I very clearly remember that Tim. What other stories do you have?
Well Kevin kicked everyone in the balls for a year and Annie ate snails in the garden.

Annie is our little sister.

Well, um. What about – oh! Our first play! The first one.

Yeah that sounds great take it away!

Ok so when we lived in California the first play we were in was when we were in California and this guy came from a theatre and wanted to direct “A Midsummers Nights Dreams” and he only wanted fourth graders but I said, “Can I please do it I’m in third grade?” and he said “Yes.” And so I did it and I was Demetius and – I have the movie. Mister can you please play the movie?

That’s me, I’m the boy.

My favorite part of the play is when we take the love potion and go to sleep and we all have a sheet over us and I did this.

He gets on the floor and snores. Twitches twice. Gets up.

It was my favorite because everyone else just laid there but I made an acting… choice… an acting choice. Everyone really loved it.

I’m sure they did.

They did.

I remember you wanting to be a professional actor right now right?
Yeah! I wanna be a professional actor just like Jim Carrey! I wanna be like him so bad!

Tim
You know, you gotta work pretty hard to be a movie star.

YT
I’m gonna be a movie star!
Tim
You can’t just be-

YT
I’m gonna be. A movie star.

Tim
Would you like to share some of your impersonations?
YT
What's an impershun?

Tim
Where you talk like people, walk like them? Why don’t you show the audience Ace Ventura and The Grinch.

YT takes in a deep breath and then

YT
Wait wait. Ok. Are you ready?

YT
You ready? Ready?

He starts to walk like Jim Carrey in Ace Ventura

"You must be the monopoly guy!” "Bumble-bee tuna? Bumble-bee tuna. Bumble-bee tuna!"

He bends over and starts talking with his butt doing the gorilla yell.

"Ahhhhhhhhhh"

Tim I think that’s enough.
"Am I just eating because I'm bored?" "Hate hate hate, double hate, LOOOAATHE entirely."

Tim
Ok, Tim, I think they get that we liked Jim Carrey.

YT
"Haa-he-ha-he-ha-he-ha-HA"

Tim
TIM!

YT is startled by this and sinks a bit. But not before...

YT
"You're an idiot"

Tim glares at YT.

YT
Sorry.

He Yawns

I’m getting tired Tim, I’ve got soccer in the morning and dad’s the coach so I can’t miss.

Tim
Are you sure you don’t want to stay up? We could talk to mom and dad?

YT
No that’s alright. Kevin and I play legos. Night!

Tim
(To Audience)
That was weird. Well, um, I don't really know where to go from here.

Ray
(From audience)
I have a story!

Tim
Not now dad. This is my show.

Ray
(Continues)
Ok so this one time when Tim was just a baby-

Dad sit down!

And we went to a-

So after 9/11 we decided to move to Libertyville, IL to be closer to our family in the midwest. Uh, is there another Tim that's going to show up?

Chubby Tim inhabits Tim. Pulls out a candy bar from pocket.

Hi.

Hi! Great! Which, uh, "me", are you?

I'm Chubby Tim.

Oh great. Which "absurd" and embarrassing stories do you have for the audience.

(With a mouthful)

Well, I kinda thought that we could just maybe... eat?

Don't you have any fond memories of moving to Illinois or anything like that?

Well I learned how to snowboard.

And?

It hurt my butt.

Isn’t there anything else?
I guess? I mean we were in a wheel chair after that concussion? (starting to get excited) Remember? (To audience) I just moved to Illinois and wanted to play hockey so we all went ice skating and I was skating really fast around the outside of the rink but kids who were smaller than me were chopping up ice on the outside and making little snow balls. I slipped on one and smacked the ice so hard I split my head open and had a cut like Harry Potter! And, and, and then everything got fuzzy and we got in the car and then the last thing I remember was falling asleep and Kevin saying, "Tim-Tim stay awake!" and I didn’t.

Kind of a downer story.

CT

Yeah. And then I woke up in a hopsital bed and a week later my leg starting hurting real bad and and and no one could figure it out and then it spread to both knees and ankles and my left shoulder and mom checked me into the Chicago Children's Hopsital on my 11th birthday.

Chubby Tim, it's pronounced Hospital.

CT

That's what I said, hopsital.

HOSpital

CT

Oh! HOPsital.

Nevermind.

CT

Ok. Well they threw me a party with Dairy Queen. DAIRY QUEEN. And they gave me a remote control car and I was playing with it at night because I was sad and missed mom and dad and this lady came up to me and asked me what I was doing and I said, “Playing racecar what are you doing?” and then she said, “Have you stooled yet?” and I said, “No I haven’t had to sit down.” And she told me that stool was poop! Then I was better but the kids still teased me and none of the girls liked me.

Chubby Tim that’s ok. I mean, we get a really pretty girlfriend down the line.
No. Way.

CT

Yes way, do you want to meet her? Jess? Can you stand up please?

Tim

CT sees her and gets embarrassed.

Aren't you going to say hello?

CT shakes his head.

She's really sweet Chubby Tim, c'mon.

CT pokes his head out.

CT

Hi. Ahhhhhh!!!!

He runs around in excitement

Ok. That was TOTALLY AWESOME!! I’m hungry again.

Tim

Me too. Hey right now is when we wanted to be a chef right?

CT

Yeah! I wanted to be Emeril Lagasse! BAM! I would make shepherds pie and pasta and pasta a lot. And then I wasn’t a chef. All this running around is making me hungry I am gonna go eat.

CT exits the stage to get his food. Dad gets up and comes to the front.

Tim

Well that was chubby Tim.

Dad

Hey Tim, Smile!

Snaps a picture

Tim

Dad, no flash photography please.

Dad

Can I tell my story now?
Not yet dad. Maybe after the show is over.

Dad

C’mon Tim. I made you. From my loins. Which leads me to the story of when your mother, uncle and I....

Tim

DAD WHOA.

Tim's phone rings.

Sorry I have to take this, it’s mom. Dad, don’t do anything embarrassing.

Tim exits.

Dad

Now the party pooper is gone, his mother, uncle and I were in Northern California and decided to go to a nude beach. We brought Tim with us because he was just a baby. Actually, I brought a picture of it and slipped it into the slide show.

Picture comes up on the screen right as Tim re-enters.

There was this group of naked men playing paddleball together, and there was this one guy who was hung like a -

Tim

Dad whoa what the hell is this?

Dad

Just sharing some old family photos, thought it would fit in with the show.

Tim

(to the booth)

Change the picture will you?

Picture changes to mohawk picture.

Dad

Oh and this one!

Tim

Ahh! Change it again!

Changes to another mohawk picture.

Tim
Dad Really?! Dad Please sit down

He snaps a picture of the audience. Sits.

Well I guess I should explain that picture. In middle school I was really into Good Charlotte and Green Day so I would spike my hair with all different colors of gel and dress normally. Needless to say I was the coolest kid at Highland Middle School. So middle school finished and then… oh no.

He morphs into High School Tim

Hey.

Tim

Hey High School Tim. What’s going on?

HST

Oh nothing much I just heard you were doing a show and I’m an actor too so I was wondering if I could tell a story too. It’ll be short, it’ll be short I promise.

Tim

Ok fine, but make it quick.

HST

I have to set the stage first. Joel, will you hit the lights?

Lights change. Tim grabs two chairs and sets them center stage next to each other

The year: 2009. The Show: CATS. I was Mister Mistoffolees, the magic cat.

He does a double turn.

On the set we had a six foot platform that I would appear on and we had these flashpots that would go off. One night we do the explosion and I appear, but the explosion was a little bigger than it was supposed to be. So I come down do my tricks, bring back the fat cat, come back up to the platform and then I’m conjuring up the flashpot and this green bomb came up and went PEW-MEOW! And I fell off the platform, blind, and was like, “I can’t see, I can’t see!” and I was blind for two minutes and then when I came back on everyone thought I was dead. But. As you know…

Tim

Oh god, you’re going to tell it aren't you?

HST
I’m gonna tell it. As you all know… cats have nine lives

He licks himself

And now I have 8.

Tim

Wow that was a really terrible ending to the story.

HST

I know but I had to tell it. I am gonna go dance alone in my room. Oh I wanted to say hello to my future girlfriend, hey! Bye!

Tim

Ok well to wrap up the show I wanted to just take a few minutes to talk about someone near and dear to me. My mother's baby brother, Uncle JJ.

Pictures of Uncle JJ

He was only 15 years older than I was and so whenever he was around I was drawn to him. I remember seeing him play the saxophone in band and playing with his old toys with him in the basement of our grandparents home. He introduced me to "Dumb and Dumber" and had a bratwurst recipe that could cripple any German chef. On September 10th, 2001 we visited him on his submarine in San Diego, he was a nuclear engineer for the NAVY at the time. He showed us around the sub and we had cake in their mess hall and took a picture on his cot where he slept, which was next to a Tomahawk missile. We said our goodbyes and the next day two planes flew into the World Trade Centers and Uncle J was underwater for the next six months. This past Christmas he shared with us that the picture we took on his cot he saved and had in his pocket the whole time he was underwater and that it was that picture that got him through the mission. On March 16th of this year he passed away unexpectedly at the young age of 36. Tonight is for him. Uncle J, I know you are in a better place and are looking down on me and laughing to yourself about all of the absurd stories we have had together before you left us so soon.

Regular title screen comes up.

Thank you all for sharing this evening with me.