

MARY ROSE BRANICK

This feels just a little too big to fit into some words, but I will do my very best.

To my incredible teachers:

Ursula, thank you for your love. Eva, thank you for your optimism. Richard, thank you for your wisdom. Stephen, thank you for your inspiration. Marco, thank you for your encouragement. Eileen, thank you for your brightness. Gerhard, thank you for your generosity. Linda, thank you for your spirit.

And to my beautiful class:

Xavier: to my very first friend - I've always remembered. Thank you for being my ultimate go-to in all things. I appreciate you more than you know.

Amara: oh, my lady. Thank you for your big love and big laughter. You are truly a woman to behold. And of course, dear friend, thank you for sitting in the car with me.

Assata: my guiding light and older sister. Thank you for every conversation – our friendship is so dear to me. I have learned more from your spirit than I could ever say!

Christine: my person since Sept. 2017 in the CVS parking lot. I am in such awe of you. You are a gorgeous force of nature. Your beautiful love is something I will always know.

David: my dear friend. Thank you so much for kindness, your generosity, and your time. Thank you for always making me feel lighter. Your energy is special.

Michael: my inspiration in so many ways. Thank you for your softness with me. Thank you for your persistence and strength in all things; I have learned so much from you.

Garrett: my big brother. Thank you for your warmth, bear hugs, silliness, and giant heart. I think you are so extraordinary. Your friendship means the world to me.

Thank you, everyone, my teachers, my class, my designers, my directors, and my stage managers. Working with you has changed me, and you're forever sewn into my DNA. We had a pretty beautiful time. Thank you!

Never in a million years could I have predicted that this is how my graduate training would end. Similarly, I could not have predicted the course of my graduate training, period. According to the bard, the course of true love never did run smooth.

XAVIER CLARK

I would like to thank the UCSD T&D Faculty and staff, with special shout outs to Stephen

Buescher, Kim Rubinstein, Marybeth Ward, Allan Havis and Deborah Stein, for your ongoing mentorship and trust in my work as a multidisciplinary theatre artist. Many thanks to my 2020 War Buddies for all the lessons. And last but not least, massive thanks to my emotional support system, Andrea Abello, Hannah Finn, Janet Fiki, and my mother Hatice Clark. I would not have made it to this point without your care, love and laughter. Here's to the next chapter!
With love and gratitude.

AMARA GRANDERSON

So I must ask myself, "was this true love? My graduate training program and everything my class & I endured? Was that love?" Well, I've heard it said that true love IS work. And I worked to catch up, I worked to succeed, I worked to understand, I worked to defend, I worked to repair. I worked to grow. I worked my ass off. Love is not bliss. That's ignorance. Love is labor. And I have labored against and with my those in department for three academic years. I am by no means done with my training. I'm a mere sapling. But UCSD provided the fertilizer, the soil for my *roots* to grow. Special shoutout to Roots and all the black UCSD students who came before me, Nubia, Deleon, Yonatan, Janet, and Sidney, and the ones still holding it down, Anthony, Didi, Jada, Jordan, Dave, Vivian, Maddie & Corneilus, I love you and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. To Brandon O Sullivan, B.O.S., this degree is obviously earned in your honor. I cherish your personhood, your passion, your humility, and your legacy. Till next time. And to Kichi, Rish, Xa, Vid, C Peezy, GG, and Boatie. You all are the family I never wanted and never knew I needed. Thank you for being my mirrors & my pillars. Thank you for seeing & knowing my whole personhood. There's none like us out there, PERIOD, so let's bring the heat!!! Class of 2020, WE MADE IT, rona or not.

ASSATA

Attending graduate school is a much bigger experience than simply pursuing a higher education. For me it was the hardest and most jarring experience of my life. Moving to San Diego meant being uprooted from my southern home, community, and all around support system. It was as if everything I had known previously.....vanished. And all that were left standing were me and my prayers.

In this life nothing is more consistent or permanent than God and ourselves. And throughout this three-year journey I learned that myself and God were more than enough to get me to this day-graduation!

And yet I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those who were chosen to teach me the lessons of life, along the way. Those who believed in me, sharpened me, and loved on me.

Thank you Amara, Christine, and Mary Rose for being my anchors, angels, and war buddies.

Thank you for being the feminine love and care that I so desperately needed. Thank you for mirroring back to me what greatness looked like. Thank you for holding me accountable to become a more open-minded, thoughtful, and honest person. Our office was my safe space!

Thankyou Garrett, Xavier, Micheal, and David for being my water, fire, and air. Thank you for teaching me that love is fluid like the water, and no matter where it flows, love is always at its root. Thankyou for being hot like the fire necessary when iron sharpens iron. And thank you for your softness like air- cool and pivotal to exhilarating just to get a whiff.

Thank You Faculty for illustrating what excellence looks like in every facet of the industry. Thank you for watering me daily with love, patience, belief, and craft. Ursula Meyer, Eva Barnes, Stephen Beauscher , Richard Robichaux, and Vanessa Stalling I am indebted to you. Thank you for empowering me with the tools that I need to move forward without you.

Thank you for your casting and allowing me the opportunity to show the world, and myself, who I am. A chameleon to whom comedy and play is right- like bread and butter.

Thank You to my family for showing me that there is no chapter in my life that you will not see me through. Because of graduate school I am more grateful than ever for your love.

Assata, you have grown to be the spiritual being that you were ultimately destined to become. Thankyou for your courageousness, persistence, and drive- for which I do not where you pulled it from to get to this point. And for the rest of my life I will thank the Assata of age 23 to 25 for doing the unknown, the unsought, and the unbelievable. My warrior, I love you!

DAVID PRICE

“Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? - every, every minute? No. The saints and poets, maybe - they do some.”

-Thornton Wilder

It feels pointless to ponder the significance of something when we know the significance is something we can't comprehend. But I do know this was significant. The many ways in which that will become true may never be known to me. Or they may become very obvious. The only thing that's obvious in this moment is that I have been given a privilege that demands responsibility. Responsibility to a craft, responsibility to a body of mentors, and responsibility to anyone who chooses to pursue a similar path. However, the ultimate privilege is to have people whose love exceeds any kind of responsibility. People who say “what will you do now that you don't have to do anything?” For me, that's my parents, my family, and Sarah. Seven billion people have done this all before me, and seven billion will do it again. What will be the significance? I'll try to realize life while I live it. At least some.

CHRISTINE PENN

Amidst all this chaos, I know one thing to be true: I feel honored to have the privilege to devote my life to my artistry and humanity. My time here at UCSD has given me a clear reminder of why.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate this furiously fierce class of 2020! Playwrights, designers, SM's, PHD's, directors, and actors: your work is so uniquely yours and dares to push the boundaries of how art is cultivated and created. I have so much gratitude to have been able to share this space with each of you. This huge accomplishment is just a marker for the very beginning.

I must say thank you to not only my 2020 class, but also the classes of 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022 who have helped shape my education. Your passion and curiosity in the work unlocks any story and elevates this world. I am grateful for your vibrant souls and the beautiful friendships we have made.

To my faculty, Ursula, Eva, Richard, Marco, Stephen, Linda, Eileen, and Gerhard: each of you infused my work with breath, soul, boldness, and range. Your mastery has taught me to stay hungry and always remain a student. Because of you, I see how qualities like intentionality, ease, and specificity not only create more intricate characters, but also build an honest & abundant life.

A huge thank you to all of my students who remind me about why being of service is so important.

To Kim Rubenstein, your soul has lived lifetimes. I am inspired by your goodness and enchanted powers. You are an embodiment of why art requires truth and humanity. You are my community.

To Jacole Kitchen, for making me feel empowered about what type of artist I am.

Thank you to Gerhard Gessner for yoga and the softness it has added to my life. Liam Clancy, Eric Geiger, Marcos Duran, Alison Smith, Maria Caligagan, Mary Peterson, Wesley Fata, and Melissa Cisneros: thank you for your commitment to the body; learning from you has made me endlessly curious about mine.

Robert Brill for your ease and exemplifying leadership. Michael Francis, Laura Manning, and Jeni Cheung for just being so badass. For every trip to the costume shop with Jan Mah, laughing at my silliness, and Elena, always giving me a peal of wisdom. Moments like that are what enrich life.

Thank you Mark Maltby for your patience and being the person that always has their head screwed on tight. For welcoming my friends and family with a smiling face AND a ticket to my show.

To MB- oh mama, if I didn't have you, this place wouldn't make sense. You made me feel on top of it with all the "business" here at UCSD. Together we are quite a pair! Also, no matter how much armor I needed to put on some days, you always gave me a place to take it off and be the goofball that is Chris.

My dear classmates, 2020 Vision: for seeing me and allowing me to see you. Getting to learn from each of your distinctive connections to the work gave me the permission to embrace mine. To the 7 of you, I am so deeply invested in your wellness. You are imprinted on me and I wouldn't change a thing.

To my Petra Team, thank you all for not only being so willing to be a part of the world I was so eager to manifest, but granting me the space to steer the ship. I remember saying that no matter what the product was, all I wanted was the journey to be a good one. And it was such a special experience, so thank you for your willingness to help me cultivate a safe space for kindness, imagination, queerness, and a little bit of magic.

Garrett Schulte, my teammate through it all:

Since day one of this program, I have felt held by you. Everyone feels that way. Because you are like architecture: unwavering and supportive. You make people feel powerful where they are and encouraged to build to where they can be. I see lights and stars at nighttime so differently because of you. Thank you for pushing yourself, inspiring the whole room to do the work, and giving me all your weight so that now I can hold you. My loving heart and artistic soul are forever bound to you.

Lastly, I want to thank Brandon O'Sullivan, whose memory will forever be a gift to my spirit. Thank you for the hummingbirds when I needed them the most.

I am so blessed with good people. I feel very glittery, thank you!

MICHAEL RISHAWN

Many thanks and all my gratitude to the faculty of UCSD, Marybeth Ward, Mark Maltby, Kim Rubinstein, Lamar Perry & Wesley Fata. Congratulations to the class of 2020.

Salut!

Michael Rishawn

GARRETT SCHULTE

Getting an MFA in Acting was the best thing I could have done for my life. And UCSD, years 2017-2020, was the best place and time to do it.

First I want to thank my class. You helped me grow to take on the world, but some key memories. Michael, being your valet in MC was everything. Xavier, you are the Mighty X to my Daddy G. David, work husbands today and every day forward. Amara, soul friends and secret Nickleback fans for life. Assata, this last year was such a blessing and an amazing

growth for our friendship; Duffy and Autumn Night will have their day. Mary Rose, the little sister I never had, three show streak, and THE car ride in SF. I love you all and can't wait to see where we go.

Mark Maltby, you gave me space to grow my video work. Thank you!

Marybeth Ward, you are everything. I might actually not be here without you.

Richard Robichaux, you continuously prodded me to take up the space I deserved. To be unapologetic in doing so and to be certain and proud of my work. To not be ashamed of doing what I'm really doing for real, really. Thank you for helping me own and stand in something that previously had made me shrink.

Linda Vickerman. I had been told before that I couldn't and shouldn't hope to be a singer. You told me I could but also that I *should*, and I can't thank you enough.

Kim Rubinstein, I can't ever fully explain the gratitude I have for everything you did for me while here. You got me through some of my lowest points. But as an artist, you opened every window and door, in all six directions and the directions we don't even know exist. You pushed me to be curious about all of my character's shapes, and consequently showed me to be curious about all of mine. Thank you.

Finally: Marco, Eva, Stephen, Ursula, Eileen, Gerhard, Mary, Maria, Wesley, and anyone else I may have missed. You have all brought such wonder to my life. Growing my voice, tuning my ear and helping me master my use of language, finding the reaches, expressions, and ease of my body, or simply owning my choices. Without you, life would have been lived with eyes shut. Thank you for opening them.

Christine Penn. My twin flame, the other half of my soul that I have met in prior lifetimes and lifetimes to come. There is no one else who sees me the way you do. Your search for truth in the world is infectious; your passion for art is amazing. I will always remember your first movement piece and feeling instantly connected to you, and seeing you write "beauty in the chaos". You helped me find that here and in my life, and I would not be who I am without you. I love you eternally.

My grandparents. You have given me a creed to live by: "Forge your own path, anything is possible." Thank you for believing in me before I even did and giving me the strength to stick with my gut. I love you!

My parents. You have given me pillars to stand on. You have been there for me always; coming to almost every game and play even though I was 1300 or 2100 miles away. You are always available for a phone call, always asking what I need, and always showing me what it is to lead with joy and love in life while also knowing how to get shit done. Thank you for everything you have done for me, and I hope one day soon I can repay you. I love you!

And when everything was just too much to handle, I thank the classes of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 for being there to remind me what joy, love, and artistry looked like. Designers, directors, playwrights, stage managers, actors, everyone. You are the most amazing, beautiful people and I love all of you!