**The Proximity Etude**

Nevena, Sara, Vukashin, Jana, Nataša, Jerry, Stefan (fence)

Nikola, Kristina, Georgina, Anja, Teodora, Stajko (performance area)

Six actors spaced throughout the farthest points of the space, facing the audience.

Six actors high up on the fencing at stage left, from upstage to downstage.

The performance area actors speak their names to the audience, confidentially, conversationally, as if trying to tell strangers who they are through the speaking of their names.

The fence actors do the same.

Each time the performance area actors speak their names, they fall to the ground.

They rise only when they are called by one of the fence actors, who speak as if they have suddenly lost someone they care very dearly for. The fence actors alternate speaking their names to the audience and calling out the names of the performance area actors.

After some time, Nikola, onstage, calls, “Stop!” and the actors stand and are silent. He claps his hands and the fence actors begin to climb down to take their places at the stage left side of the performance area. The onstage actors leave the performance area and sit stage left also.

**The Entry Code Etude**

Nevena (Visitor), Teodora, Nikola, Kristina, Anja, Georgina, Jana

Six actors form a line across the performance area. Nevena walks from the audience to the entry point upstage centre and enters the space.

She tries to open the door (the line of actors) but finds that it is locked. When she touches them on the shoulder each actor sings a word they have been given by the director, a different word for each shoulder. They sing the words operatically.

The woman is confused by the talking door. She calls for her friend to come and let her in. No one comes. She has to figure out the entry code.

The entry code is always three words, and always a phrase. The words given to each actor change from rehearsal to rehearsal, show to show, and the code changes, too.

An example of the code words:

I NOT FREE FEEL OKAY ANYTHING

But if she touches the code-holder on the other shoulder, a different word comes out:

GO CAN PAIN AM CAN’T STOP

An example of the code:

I AM FREE

**The Tale of Two Cities Etude**

Stajko (Boy), Stefan (Friend), Sara (Mother), Vukashin (Dead Boy)

A Boy sits in the middle of the space., reading a book. He stands moves restlessly about the room, finally gazing out his window. He makes a speech about being brave in the face of unjust oppression, when everything goes against you, when life tells you it is not fair, and that one must go on, one must continue to remain oneself, to set an example with dignity and honour even if you are starving and alone. He paces the limits of his cell and shouts to the assembled masses below to organise, to make a revolution for freedom, to use his sad case as an example to inspire their liberty.

His Mother calls him from afar.

She arrives at his door and knocks. She asks him through the door if he is coming downstairs for dinner. He responds to her as if she was his jailer, suggesting some new kind of torture or punishment. She persists. He refuses to give in, knowing that the food is poisoned, or that the regime will take a photograph of him eating to show the masses that he is happy, part of the ruling class, a collaborator.

His Mother says she has no intention to photograph him while he is eating. But if he doesn’t want to eat, then he can sit in his room all night.

The Boy says of course, he must rot in prison, it’s what the regime wants, and he will live as an example of the rebellion for freedom from oppression.

The Mother asks him how he is being oppressed. The Boy asks if there is ice cream in the fridge. The Mother says no. The Boy replies that this is oppression.

The Mother leaves.

Soon after his best Friend shows up. He’s just seen a science fiction movie and he wants to play space aliens. From afar the Mother calls that the boy doesn’t want to come out, but the Friend is welcome to ask. The Boy replies that he can’t come out. The Friend asks why. The Boy says because he is in prison. The Friend thinks that is cool. He asks the Mother why the Boy is in prison. She says he’s not in prison. He tells this to the Boy, who replies that of course the authorities would say that. It is a plot, and if he comes out, they will both be killed. The Friend thinks this is cool.

The Boy in the room tells his Friend to go away before he too is imprisoned. The Friend says he will try to set him free. He begins to use special ultra-high-frequency lasers to open the door. He tries to unlock the code using a special computer-linked device that analyses a million codes a second. He tells the Boy he will set up a teleportation device to transport him from the room to the top of the stairs. They argue. The Boy in the room says there are no lasers in the 18th century, and no computers, and certainly no teleportation devices.

The Friend begins to speak to the Boy as if he is an alien, come to take the Boy back to his home planet. The Boy tells his Friend there are no aliens in the 18th century. The Friend reluctantly leaves.

The Boy tries to go back to reading his book, but he is distracted and anxious. He goes to his window and reassures himself that he is doing the right thing. He sits. Hen he leans back his hand lands on the foot of the Dead Boy.

The Boy asks him what he is doing in his room, and how did he get in? The Dead Boy says nothing. The Boy calls for his Mom. There is no answer. He turns to the Dead Boy. Asks him again where he came from. He waits, anxiously. He asks the boy “Who are you?”

“I’m the boy who died,” the Dead Boy says.

But you can’t be dead, the Boy says. You’re here. In my room. With me. I can see you and…he decides not to try to touch the Dead Boy.

“I am here with you,” says the Dead Boy.

Go away, says the Boy. This is my room. I was a prisoner, inspiring my people to rebellion, and you ruined my game.

“It’s not a game,” says the Dead Boy.

The Boy is afraid, but he tries not to show it. This is my room. It’s mine, it’s the only place that is mine. I can’t play if you are here.

“You will stop playing,” says the Dead Boy.

But I don’t want to stop playing, says the Boy. It’s a world that’s all mine. I made it. I can be anything I want there.

“You have to go,” say the Dead Boy.

No, you have to go, says the desperate Boy. I don’t want to go, and you can’t make me.

“No, I can’t,” says the Dead Boy.

“Are you really dead?” the Boy asks.

The Dead Boy says nothing.

“What’s your name?” he asks the Boy.

“You know my name,” the Dead Boy replies.

“Why should I go?” asks the Boy.

The Dead Boy does not reply.

The Boy stays silent. He thinks. About what is inside, and what is outside. About the other boy in his room. He asks,

“If I leave my room, will you be gone when I come back?”

The Dead Boy promises that he will.

The Boy is silent. He thinks. He realises that the day of his execution has come. He tells the Dead Boy that he will do it, for the sake of the people, for the sake of his family. He will face his fate like a man.

He turns and thanks the boy and says, “I will not see you again.” The Dead Boy smiles, and says,

“Remember me.”

The Boy leaves his room. He closes the door, stands outside it and looks around as if at a new world. In a different voice from the one he used before, he calls to his Mother, and says that he is home.

**The Gambler’s Etude**

Nikola, Kristina, Nataša (Watcher/Responsibility/Family), Jerry (Will/Family)

Teodora (Watcher/Responsibility/Friends), Jana (Watcher/Injustice/Family),

Georgina (Watcher/Love/Money), Anja (Friendship/Betrayal/Friends)

A man in the street with 3 cards. He moves them in and out, playing 3-card monte. He calls to the audience, asking who wants to come and try their luck.

Six frozen Watchers are spaced about the performance area as aspects of the Woman’s life.

At the stage left edge of the space, the Woman walks through a confusing part of her life. She passes four Watchers, who hiss at her, calling her bad names: “Bitch”, “Slut”, Ugly” “Stupid.” She is momentarily affected by these taunts but keeps walking. She circles upstage and re-enters through the gateway. The Watchers continue to hiss at her.

The 3-card monte Dealer notices her. He decides she will be his mark. The Dealer calls out:

“Responsibility!”

And two people cross to the woman and attaches herself to her legs. She continues to walk across the front of the space, dragging Responsibility with her. Near the stage right corner of the space the Woman shouts:

“Love!”

And one of the frozen Watchers crosses and begins to help the Woman move forward by gently pushing her from behind. The Woman moves to the stage right edge of the space until the Dealer, focused on his game, shouts:

“Loss!”

And Love backs away and off the performance area. The Woman continues to move, slowly, with Responsibility attached to her, tiring. She shouts:

“Friendship!”

And a Watcher crosses from her position in the audience and begins to pull her forward with two hands. The Woman steadily moves upstage right at the edge of the performance area.

After some time the Dealer, focused on his game, shouts:

“Betrayal!”

And the Friendship Watcher slaps the Woman in the face and moves to a frozen position upstage. The Woman continues to move, more and more slowly, to the upstage right edge of the space, where a Watcher awaits, with Responsibility attached to her.

The Woman shouts “Will!” The waiting Watcher crosses to the Woman and begins to pull the Responsibility off. Each time he succeeds in removing one Responsibility he moves to the next. When he removes that Responsibility he sees that the first Responsibility has reattached itself to the Woman. Will removes each Responsibility twice before the Dealer, focused on his game, shouts:

“Injustice!”

And a Watcher crosses and jumps on the woman’s back, forcing her to push forward with great difficulty. Will continues to help but becomes discouraged.

At upstage centre the Woman discovers, downstage centre, the 3-card monte Dealer. Without looking at her he asks her if she wants to play. The Woman asks what she can win. He shows her the cards:

HAPPINESS UNDERSTANDING DESPAIR

She asks what is at stake. Everything, he says, shuffling the cards and looking out at the audience.

What can I bet? She asks.

Everything, anything.

The Woman agrees to play. Responsibility, Injustice and Will fall off and re-form with the other Watcher at downstage left.

What will you bet? Asks the Dealer.

The Woman looks at her options, the group of people who steadily regard her from stage left.

“Money,” says the Woman. One of the Watchers steps out from the group, isolated.

The Dealer shuffles his cards. The Woman picks a card. It comes up: Despair.

Money falls to the ground.

With shock the Woman looks at what she has done. The Dealer re-shuffles his cards and asks the audience who wants to play.

“Again!” says the Woman.

“Are you sure?” says the Dealer.

“Again,” says the Woman.

What will you bet, asks the Dealer.

The Woman looks at the group of people. They regard her.

“Friends,” she says. Two Watchers step out from the group, isolated.

The Dealer shuffles his cards. The Woman picks a card. It comes up: Despair.

The Friends fall to the ground.

The Woman looks at her departed Friends in shock. The Dealer asks the audience who wants to try their luck.

“Again!” says the Woman.

“Are you sure?” says the Dealer.

“Again,” she says.

You can stop at any time, the Dealer says.

Again, says the Woman.

And what will you bet? Asks the Dealer.

The Woman regards the remaining 3 Watchers, who look at her with great intensity. She thinks a long time.

“Family,” says the Woman.

The 3 remaining Watchers come forward, holding hands, the Sister in front and in the centre, the Father and the Mother behind. They look anxiously at the Woman. They may even speak to her, quietly, imploringly. She does not heed them.

The Dealer shuffles his cards. The Woman picks a card. It comes up: Despair.

The Family falls to the ground.

The Woman regards the damage wrought by her attempts to be free of Responsibility: Money, Friends, Family, all gone. She kneels by the side of the fallen pieces of her life and mourns.

The Dealer asks the audience who wants to try their luck.

“Again,” she says to the Dealer.

You can stop. I don’t encourage gambling, says the Dealer.

“Again,” says the Woman.

What will you bet? Asks the Dealer.

“Everything,” she replies.

But you have nothing, he says practically.

“Hope”, she says.

Hope it is, he says. The Dealer shuffles his cards. The Woman looks and looks at the cards. She asks the spectators if they know what card to pick. She turns to the Dealer. And chooses.

They freeze.

**The Exit Dance and the Relationship Throw**

At stage left, Sara and Nevena clap their hands, signalling the transition. Actors move into position for the Exit Dance, taking up positions 1/2 at DSL, 3/4 at DSR, 5/6 at SRC, 7/8 at USR, 9/10 at USC, 11/12 at USL. Sara shouts “I Love You!” to her partner. Each actor then shouts the phrase.

The Exit Dance begins: each pair completes one movement.

First shift: 1,3,5,7,9 and 11 move to the next position, in a clockwise direction.

Second shift: 2,4,6,8,10 and 12 move to the next position, in a clockwise direction.

Each shift is repeated 3 times which returns the actors to their original position.

Sara and Nikola walk into the centre. Jerry and Nevena remain where they finished the Exit Dance. The other actors form in two clumps of 4 at DSR and USL, watching as if at a high school dance, when a fight is about to break out.

Sara beckons Jerry to come to centre. He does. She takes him DSL.

Nikola beckons Nevena to come to centre. He does. She takes him USR.

Sara and Nikola begin the **Relationship Throw**, grabbing onto both hands of Jerry and Nevena and twirling them 3 times before launching them diagonally across the space to the opposite corner and partner. The throws are completed twice for each partner.

Nevena and Sara come into the centre and clap their hands. The actors not in the next etude move to their places off-space at left.

**Nevena and Sara’s Stories**

Nevena, Anja, Nataša, Jerry; Sara, Jana, Nikola, Kristina

Nevena and Sara move DSC, spaced apart. They begin to speak to the audience about Freedom. “What is freedom?” each asks. They talk about how their idea of being free when they were younger changed.

Nevena claps and her storytellers freeze in place for the first snapshot.

Sara claps and her performers freeze in place for the first snapshot.

Two girls “Nevena” (Nataša) and Milica (Anja), move to DSC and freeze, looking behind them, uneasily.

As this takes place, Sara speaks to the audience. Jana takes position USC as “Sara”, with Nikola and Kristina , her “parents” standing at a distance USL, regarding her disapprovingly. Sara speaks about wanting to be alone when she was a child, thinking of this as freedom. And then the night when her parents both left the house, and it became dark.

Nevana continues the story of walking through a forested park alone with her friend. Jerry moves into position as the man they encounter and freezes. The two girls move into position USR and freeze, looking at him.

Sara continues the story of wanting her parents to leave her alone. The Mother and Father move to extreme USL and turn their backs to the scene, freezing in position. “Sara” takes a position of joyous celebration and freezes.

Nevena continues her story. The man stands before the girls with his shirt pulled off, gesituclating wildly. They freeze in position.

Sara continues her story. Jana, as “Sara”, sinks to the ground with her head in heads, a picture of sudden anxiety as it gets dark outside and she realises she is truly alone.

Nevena continues her story. The actors reverse positions, changing the spectator’s perspective, as the man moves to USR and the girls to CSR, pursued by him. They freeze.

Nevena moves through the frozen actors to SC and speaks about how freedom is not always what you think it is, and how it can actually appear as danger.

Sara moves from her frozen actors to SC and talks about how freedom is sometimes what you thought was prison.

**The Prisoner Etude**

Sara and Nevena clap their hands. The actors in the performance space join with the other actors to form a V-shaped wedge across the space, with the point directed US, leaving a small gap. Vukashin moves USL past the gateway and begins to enter through the gateway. When he passes the human door it closes behind him, creating as straight line.

When he begins to speak to the audience the line breaks up into two tableaux: at CSR, a tableau of Freedom, as Jerry breaks away from a closed circle; at CSL one of imprisonment, as Teodora reaches out vainly from within a closed circle.

Vule speaks to the audience.

You brought me here to plead for my freedom, he says. You think that, after a year in prison, I must want freedom at any price.

But what is freedom? If I walk free, but I am guilty of a crime, am I truly free? If I am confined to prison, but committed no crime, am I truly not free?

If you decide to make me free, am I then free? Can one truly give freedom to another? Or can one only take freedom for oneself? Who is more free, someone who thinks they have the power to decide freedom for another, or one who refuses to let others choose his freedom?

If you decide I am free, I will walk free. But you will watch me every day.

If you decide I must stay in prison, I will stay, and you will forget about me.

Which is more free?

Vule turns and regards the two tableaux of Freedom and Prison. He claps his hands. The sculptures unfreeze and create the line of the door once again, the wedge-shaped “V”. He walks USC through it. The door closes behind him.

After a moment, Vule returns. He parts the actors in the centre and they join hands.

They face the audience.

They bow, and bow again, and depart.