

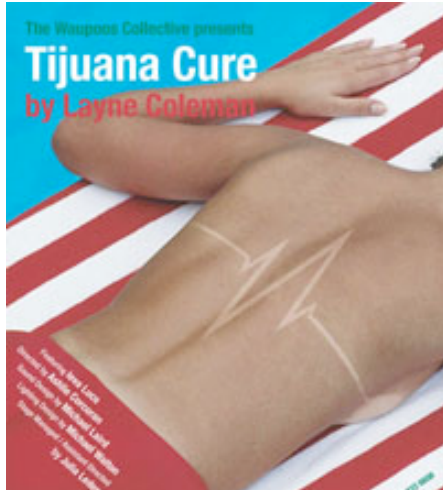


Theatre Smash

# A STUDY GUIDE for Theatre Smash's

## *Tijuana Cure*

by: *Brendon Allen*



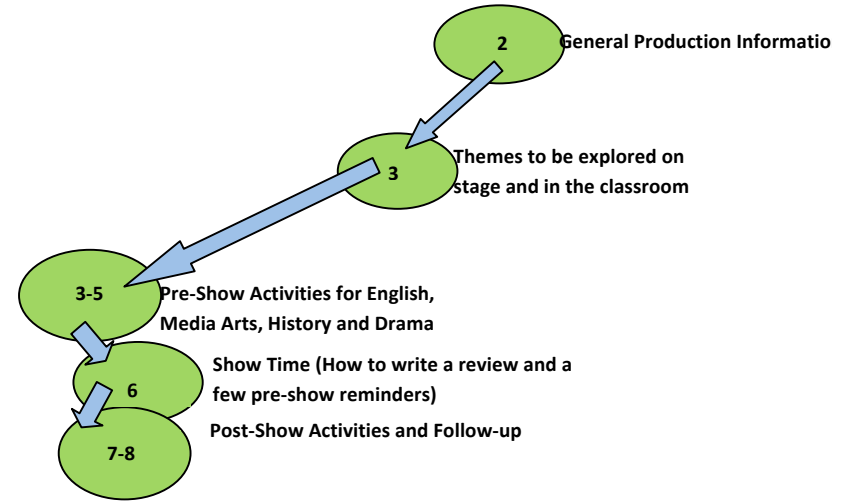
The **PERFECT SHOW** to sneak in just before March Break or to start off with when you get back on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March! Classroom extensions in **DRAMA, ENGLISH, MEDIA** and **HISTORY**.

Student Matinees and Artists Directed Workshops can be arranged March 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> by calling 416-939-4212 or by going to [theatresmash.com](http://theatresmash.com)

### SHOW SCHEDULE :

(outside of possible student matinees and workshops that can be arranged by calling 416-939-4212)  
 Tickets can be bought for the following shows by contacting the Theatre Passe Muraille Arts Box Office at 416-504-7529 or [www.artsboxoffice.ca](http://www.artsboxoffice.ca)  
 Tijuana Cure: March 10-28

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## General Production Information

### Tijuana Cure (Show History and General Info)

Since 2005, Layne Coleman, Ieva Lucs and Ashlie have worked together to adapt Layne's prose text for the stage. This collaboration resulted in a Summerworks 2007 presentation of the piece which starred Ieva, was directed by Ashlie and was designed by Theatre Smash regulars, Michael Walton (lighting) and Michael Laird (sound). Julia Lederer was the assistant director and stage manager.



Layne Coleman



Ashlie Corcoran



Ieva Lucs

Layne Coleman ● Playwright

Layne Coleman is the past Artistic Director of the Theatre Passe Muraille. Layne has written six produced plays one of which, *Big City Slammers*, was adapted into a feature film. Layne was a resident screenwriter at the Canadian Film Centre for two years. He has been developing new Canadian plays as a producer/director/writer/actor for three decades and has directed and acted in many productions across Canada. Recent directorial credits were at: Theatre Passe Muraille, Tarragon, Factory, CanStage, National Arts Centre, Kingston Summer Festival, The Regent Theatre and Blyth Festival.

Ashlie Corcoran ● Director

Ashlie directed *Tiny Dynamite* and *The Bus* for Theatre Smash and produced *Norway Today*. She is a former Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Intern Director, and directed *The Bear* for the COC. Other directing credits include: *The Secret Garden* for Resurgence Theatre, *Tijuana Cure* for Summerworks Festival, Luminato Festival's *Luna*, *A Boy Called Newfoundland* with Gateway Theatre, and *The Play About the Baby* at the Battersea Arts Centre. She has a MA from the University of London and is a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab. She participated in a directing internship at Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater and is a British Council Chevening Scholar. In the New Year, Ashlie will assistant direct *Fidelio* at the COC and will be one of two Shaw Festival Director Interns.

Ieva Lucs ● Actor

Ieva Lucs is a graduate of the National Theatre School and Stratford Conservatory. Theatre credits include Julie in Theatre Smash's *Norway Today*, Juliet in *Juliet (and Romeo)* (LKTYP), Sarah in *Trying* (Persephone Theatre), Hesterpryne in *The Groundwater's* SummerWorks Festival production of *If We Were Birds*. Her film credits include an appearance in Atom Egoyan's upcoming film *Adoration*.

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### Tijuana Cure ● Synopsis

Based on Layne's own true life experience, *Tijuana Cure* tells of the battle that he and his late wife, Carol Corbeil Coleman, fought against her abdominal cancer. Layne explores a trip he and Carol took to Tijuana, Mexico, in order to attend a diet-based health clinic. At almost every corner of his present-day, Mexico-bound experience, the character actively recalls a past event which helped create the middle-aged man he became: his first kiss, his first girlfriend, the first time he saw the Beatles, the time when he and his wife first became lovers. Sometimes these memories catch the narrator off guard – other times he intentionally grabs on to them. Through them he avoids the certainty of his present nightmare and finds the hope he so desperately requires.

Above all, this play is a love story. Even in the midst of grief, illness and midlife crisis, we see how much the narrator adores his wife. Layne's words celebrate the power and strength found through this love.

### Tijuana Cure ● Why should this play be a part of my classroom?

*Tijuana Cure* is a new take on the classic story of "the journey." This journey is tied to humankind's search for answers to the mysteries that surround us. What interests us in these stories, is witnessing the goal modify or change completely as the voyage comes to an end (or possibly a new beginning). A general map of The United States dominates the background of this study guide, because the character (or collection of characters embodied in one actor) in this show crosses the USA to find a cure for his wife's abdominal cancer. What he finds is unexpected; it becomes a modern road trip with life and death stakes.

*Tijuana Cure* is a one person show and the production you will see is tactfully recreated by Ieva Lucs. The craft of the solo-performance is impressive and effective. As a teacher myself, I believe that a solo-performance is even more effective from the position of a high school student, as they are in the midst of a very self-focused point in their development; almost a one person show of their own. To witness a character journey through an array of life changing experiences, such as: love and loss, loyalty and disloyalty, secrecy and acceptance; the students will start to see this sharing, this analysis that exists within performance as normal and healthy. By watching a solo-performance the students get a stark example of the Shakespeare idiom "...all the world is stage", but in solo-performance this stage is as close to life as possible, because from lights up to lights down, you are alone. This experience can be very inspiring and can lead to a higher awareness of their behavior as a living solo-performer in their own lives.

The Narrator's journey in this play takes the audience through his own development as a man, a husband, a lover, a dreamer, a potential widow and eventually a source of empathy for his wife, Carol. The adaptation of this work of prose by Coleman, Lucs and Corcoran moves with a deep sense of truth and fearlessness within the narrative; the script itself offers so much for an adolescent audience.



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Pre- Show Activities for  
*Tijuana Cure*

Cancer as an invisible antagonist

1. DRA, ENG, HIS, MED

**Leading Question:** Cancer's presence in our lives is increasing daily, yet cancer continues to be quite taboo, why do you think this is the case? The seminal cells of cancer exist within all of us, shouldn't cancer be the one thing we should be discussing more?

Have the students do an online search to see how cancer is being explored by the media. What imagery do we see? What is the tone of the message (optimistic, hopeful, aggressive, pessimistic...)? What forms of advertising/publicity persists (fundraising, health and safety warnings, event publicity....)? Does the portrayal change with time? Do these images make them think of anything else?

2. DRA, ENG

Create a scene in which cancer is the antagonist to your protagonist. You can choose to take the statement literally or figuratively, but either through a written scene or improvised, take this conflict to a deeper level. Raise the stakes and complicate the scenario.

3. DRA, ENG, HIS, MED

Research and discuss famous heroes/heroines in the face of cancer. You may start them off with a few examples. You may see examples come up from the students' personal lives. After sharing these examples, list the adjectives that come to mind; record these words as they will be useful later.

4. DRA, ENG, HIS, MED

The students have now addressed cancer from a media angle, through a created scene, through celebrity, and also through adjectives. Re-read some of these examples to serve as inspiration for a written monologue that each student will create; if you intend to share these monologues, it is important that you tell the students that before they start writing. **(HIS)** You can have your students write a monologue from the perspective of the celebrities they listed in the previous activity, trying to represent the time period and the true perception of cancer at that time.

Cancer as an invisible antagonist **CONNECT DIRECTLY TO TIJUANA CURE**

The main conflict or antagonist as I have called it above in the play is cancer and how it's presence sends a ripple effect through the lives of Carol and Layne. Layne spends a great deal of his time trying to escape the realities of his wife's decline by getting lost in his own memories and by getting lost in the "attractions" that Tijuana has to offer. Everyone has realities or responsibilities in our lives that we try to escape from, as the students watch *Tijuana Cure* they should keep their own person connection to cancer and their own tendency to escape from it. One of the most powerful discoveries a person can make is to acknowledge the conflicts around them and accept the reality that travels with that conflict. Once Layne makes the cancer a visible reality for him, he can start to love his wife again in a deeper fashion.

Themes to be explored on stage and in the classroom

Cancer as an invisible antagonist

Music as a storytelling tool

How we grieve

Solo Performance

Staging autobiographical information

The Gerson Method? Physical and Emotional Cleansing

**Tijuana Cure**



Study Guide Note

*Tijuana Cure* is a flexible show that is accessible to a variety of subjects. The majority of the activities will connect directly to a Drama classroom (**DRA**), but extensions will be included where possible for English, Media Arts and History classrooms. These extensions will be labeled with **(ENG)**, **(MED)** and **(HIS)** accordingly.

Warm-ups and/or hooks are often used in a Drama classroom to help ease the students into the often elaborate themes that can be addressed in a play. I would encourage teachers to use warm-ups that they feel connect to the activities of this Study Guide with a focus on discussion, creative writing and role playing.

The following activities have only been organized as either PRE or POST- show; it is up to the instructor's discretion to use or omit activities as they choose. I do believe that the students' experience of watching the show will only be enhanced by addressing the material deeper either on your own or with the help of the study guide.

When exploring some of this material, since it deals with issues like cancer and death, which obviously affects us all, the instructor must be sensitive to the students' limitations during the work and discussions.

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Pre- Show Activities for  
Tijuana Cure ...continued

Pre- Show Activities for  
Tijuana Cure ...continued

Music as a storytelling tool

1. DRA, ENG, MED

**Leading Question:** What is your favorite song right now? How does this song represent you? Divide the class into smaller groups (3-6) in which they will discuss one of the following relevant statements: your weekend, your summer job, your favorite road trip, your favorite movie....etc. The statement should be something that the students can discuss for about 1 minute each in a colourful fashion. Have the students develop a playlist for the story, event or experience they have described and bring it back to the group to share. After sharing the playlists, the groups are challenged to combine the play list (try to have no more than 5 songs), to be the soundtrack to a new **(ENG)** story, **(DRA)** scene, **(MED)** screenplay. If the resources are available I would encourage the student group to develop their new story into a film project with the soundtrack included.

2. DRA, ENG, MED, HIS

Now that the students have some confidence using music as a tool to reinforce a story, they will be ready to use it as an introspective device. Have the students create the soundtrack for their lives, they should be reminded of the standard plot line rise towards a climax, as their soundtrack should have some sort of build in mind. It might help if they focus on some of the major landmarks in their life thus far (childhood, first kiss, summer camp, first job, first date, middle school graduation, family trip, favorite concert...etc).

3. DRA, ENG, MED, HIS

Use the 'soundtrack for your life' created in the last exercise and create a 5 scene story breakdown of a fictional road trip that you have not yet taken. This road trip can be presented as a **(MED)** road documentary, **(DRA)** series of scenes, **(ENG)** story or graphic novel, or a **(HIS)** time capsule story.

4. DRA, MED

Students can also use these soundtracks to create soundscape poetry using a song or a series of songs. The goal is to tell a story using sound, words and music. The stories can be as abstract as they choose. Poetry is encouraged because it pushes their work away from Radio Drama. Soundscape also allows them to toy with audience arrangement and distance. If you have a studio style classroom, there is nothing as effective as having the class lay on their backs with their eyes closed, this allows the actor to use physical proximity to their audience as a way to deepen their story as well.

Music as a storytelling tool **CONNECT DIRECTLY TO TIJUANA CURE**

Music is a very strong element in Layne's life and memory. Often particular recognizable songs are used to trigger particular memories for him. You of the songs used to trigger flashbacks are listed in the next column. **(ENG, HIS, MED)** Some may want to briefly study the lyrics and historical relevancies of some of these songs as it may clarify the historical validity of Layne's journey.



The songs from the Beatles are a major Musical pattern in Layne's life.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) <i>Welcome To Tijuana</i> – Manu Chao              | 5) <i>She Loves You</i> – The Beatles                   |
| 2) <i>You Know What to Do</i> - The Beatles           | 6) <i>Why Don't We Do it in the Road?</i> - The Beatles |
| 3) <i>Last Kiss</i> – J. Frank Wilson & The Cavaliers | 7) <i>Sexy Sadie</i> – The Beatles                      |
| 4) <i>All My Lovin'</i> - The Beatles                 | 8) <i>If I needed someone</i> – the Beatles             |

The Gerson Method? Physical and Emotional Cleansing

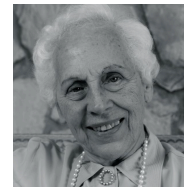
1. DRA, ENG, MED

**Leading Question:**

On the next page there is a comment from [www.gerson.org](http://www.gerson.org), which is the Gerson Method's official website. The Gerson Method is an actual approach used to address cancer through diet and boosting the immune system. Read the following quote aloud and simply ask what the class thinks. Obviously some will react pessimistically to this and others optimistically. This quote might also make them think of other "cleanses" that are prevalent in pop-culture and associated primarily to healthy living and often weight loss. This method becomes Carol's beacon of hope and solace, do the students see that in its description.



Dr. Max Gerson, founder of the Gerson Method, died in 1959. Gerson reported on his experience with the regimen in a book, *A Cancer Therapy: Results of 50 Cases*. The therapy is considered unsupported and potentially hazardous by medical organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Cancer Society. It is this disbelief in the Gerson Method that forces the clinic to exist outside of the borders of the United States.



Charlotte Gerson, daughter of Dr. Max Gerson, continues to publish and promote her father's findings. Charlotte founded the alternative treatment centre after her father's death in Mexico.

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**Pre- Show Activities for  
Tijuana Cure ...continued**

Throughout our lives our bodies are being filled with a variety of disease and cancer causing pollutants. These toxins reach us through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the medicines we take and the water we drink. As more of these poisons are used every day and cancer rates continue to climb, being able to turn to a proven, natural, detoxifying treatment like the Gerson Therapy is not only reassuring, but necessary.

The Gerson Therapy is a powerful, natural treatment that boosts your body's own immune system to heal cancer, arthritis, heart disease, allergies, and many other degenerative diseases. One aspect of the Gerson Therapy that sets it apart from most other treatment methods is its all-encompassing nature. An abundance of nutrients from thirteen fresh, organic juices are consumed every day, providing your body with a superdose of enzymes, minerals and nutrients. These substances then break down diseased tissue in the body, while enemas aid in eliminating the lifelong buildup of toxins from the liver.

With its whole-body approach to healing, the Gerson Therapy naturally reactivates your body's magnificent ability to heal itself - with no damaging side-effects. Over 200 articles in respected medical literature, and thousands of people cured of their "incurable" diseases document the Gerson Therapy's effectiveness. The Gerson Therapy is one of the few treatments to have a 60 year history of success.

Although its philosophy of cleansing and reactivating the body is simple, the Gerson Therapy is a complex method of treatment requiring significant attention to detail. While many patients have made full recoveries practicing the Gerson Therapy on their own, for best results we encourage starting treatment at a Gerson Institute licensed treatment center.

(From [www.gerson.org](http://www.gerson.org) )

**2. ENG, MED**

Have the students break up into smaller groups (3-6) and try to address the following research categories: Gerson Therapy, Health Restoration Centre, Max Gerson, Case Studies, The Gerson YouTube Channel. Have the students do brief presentations on their findings.

**3. DRA, ENG, MED**

As mentioned prior, the concept of the cleanse is all over the media and various health practices (both legitimate and non). Have a discussion with the class on what various kinds of cleanses exist in our lives. Are there practices that exist that bring about emotional cleanses? In smaller groups (3-6) have them create a series of 3 tableaux that examine a cleansing ritual that they see in society today that is not addressed by the Gerson Method.

**The Gerson Method CONNECT DIRECTLY TO TIJUANA CURE**

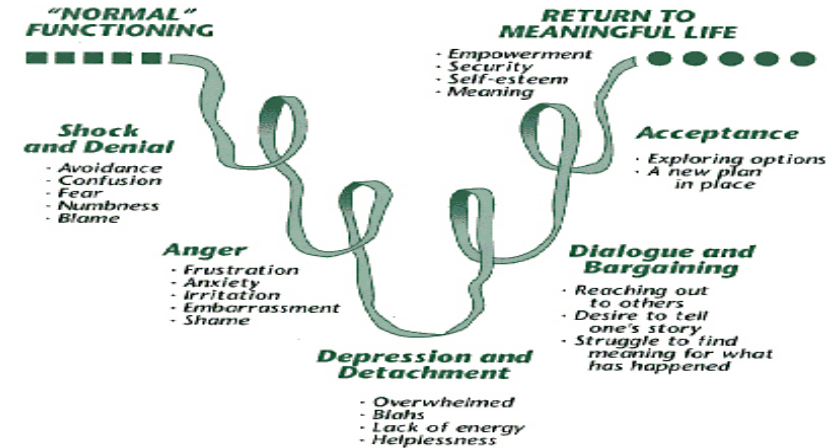
The concept of cleansing is essential to *Tijuana Cure*, as obviously it is for this treatment that Layne goes with Carol to Mexico; however, Carol is not the only one who is being cleansed through this play. Step by step Layne's escapism and his reflecting on the past act as a ritual cleansing for him as well, as he prepares himself for his wife's inevitable death and life on his own without her.

**Pre- Show Activities for  
Tijuana Cure ...continued**

**How we grieve**

**1. DRA, ENG**

Leading Question: There are several theories that track and map the pathway of grieving. Do you believe that all people grieve the same? An example of this theory comes from [www.irvinehousingblog.com](http://www.irvinehousingblog.com) , below. Do they believe this theory?



Often grief is discussed as a state of mind that takes over after a massive loss, but there are several circumstances in life which deal with grief before the loss or "anticipatory grieving." ([www.oralcancerfoundation.org](http://www.oralcancerfoundation.org) ). There are several moments in life where we start to grieve and go through various reactions like denial, panic, disbelief, self inflicted punishment, and escapism. Discuss some of these moments of anticipatory loss with the class. Break them up into smaller groups (3-6) and give them options on how to tell a story about this form of loss (**DRA**: tableaux, moving pictures, movement, theme museum, **ENG**: multiple perspective monologues)

**How we grieve CONNECT DIRECTLY TO TIJUANA CURE**

*Tijuana Cure* shows a very unique perspective on the denouement of a loving couple in the face of cancer. It is apparent that due to Carol's intimacy with the cancer, that she is prepared to take whatever comes her way and is simply hoping for some pain relief. What is unique about the cross-section this play allows is that it exams Layne's anticipatory grief and shows that it affects him in a variety of ways. Layne's grief is explored from a masculine perspective and explores this with fearless truthfulness. Layne and Carol's story allows the students to see that grief is an intensely personal experience and its route cannot be tracked. Many of your students have or will experience such grief in their lives and this perspective is important to show the true nature of the human condition. Through the experience of getting a bird's eye view on the loss and love that exists within *Tijuana Cure*, the students will see that the most important aspect of grief is to make it visible, to honour the person both in life and in death.

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## Enjoy the Show!!!!

### END OF PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES FOR *Tijuana Cure*

>We hope that both you and your students **enjoy the show**

>We also encourage that your students hold on to a program from the show and **write a review** of it either for a classroom assignment or simply for their own development as a critical thinker. We would love to get a chance to read any of these reviews. Please **send your classroom reviews** to the following email

[info@theatresmash.com](mailto:info@theatresmash.com) or mailing address: Theatre Smash 92 Wolfrey Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4K 1K8

>A good resource for student written reviews is included in the following column that helps break down all the important factors to examine.

>Please make sure you go through the **Theatre Smash Audience Expectations**, which is included below, with your class before going to the show. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure the proper behavior from the students you have brought to the show.



#### THEATRE SMASHs AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS:

- Arrive at the theatre with enough time to arrange for ticket pick up and to find seats for everyone. Late comers will not be permitted to enter the theatre.
- Please ensure that students have had a chance to use the facilities before the show, as there is no intermission.
- Please avoid crowding the front lobby or doors so other patrons can not get through, both before and after the performance. The lobby is used for two productions and the students must respect the other patrons.
- Please sit and stay in your assigned seat. Relaxing in your seat before the show by keeping your feet on the floor, crossed or whatever, just not bugging the person in front of you or beside you.
- Please remove all hats or other items that may block other audience members' view of the performance.
- Food & drinks is not allowed in the theatre. This includes gum!
- Please turn off any cell phones and pagers before the play begins.
- Please be polite and pay attention during the performance. Remembering that the actors welcome and rely on your responses.
- Respecting the fact that flashlights, lighters and laser pens are not only distracting for the actors and other patrons, but can also be very dangerous.
- Being really open with your friends, teachers, parents about what you liked and didn't like about the play. (But waiting to discuss it until after the play is over.)
- Realizing that when the lights go out, the play begins and whatever you had to talk about can wait.
- Text messaging during the performance. While it seems innocent enough, the lit screen distracts actors & those around you who are trying to concentrate on the play.
- Talking on a cellular phone or listening to you i-pod/mp3/etc. while the performance is on. You may be asked to leave for doing so!

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#### HOW TO WRITE A PLAY REVIEW

##### Writing the Introduction

The introduction should include the following:

- A. The title of the play, the name of the playwright, and any pertinent historical information regarding them (other similar works from this period? by this writer?).
- B. The name of the director, the place and date of the production you attended, and the name of the production company (again, do you know of any previous work by this company? this director?).
- C. The thesis of your review, which should include (possibly in more than a single statement) the following:

- A general impression of the relative success or failure of the production, based on what you actually saw and on your initial impression of how the play should have been performed.  
(Note that even if the production did not exactly coincide with your own conception of the play, you should not feel obliged to condemn the performance outright. Be open-minded and willing to weigh pros and cons.)
- Since you will not be expected to discuss all aspects of the production, focus your thesis on one or two major concerns that the performance has or has not addressed. Read your assignment carefully to find out which aspects of the performance are to be emphasized in your review.

##### Writing the Statement and Summary

Include a brief thematic summary (but not a plot summary) of the play, and support that summary with concrete evidence from the text.

You can include this summary in the introduction; or, if you wish to expand the summary, include it in a separate paragraph following the introduction.

##### Writing the Body of the Review

Remember that in the body of the paper you are obliged to deal specifically with each element of the production that you mentioned in the introduction and thesis.

In order to give your review a tight internal logic and cohesiveness, you should also discuss these elements in the order that you outlined in the introduction. Such points of discussion might include the non-technical (acting, directing) and/or the technical (lighting, scenery, costumes) aspects of the production.

For each element that you discuss:

- **Describe:** In as brief and precise a manner as possible, describe in detail the physical aspects of what you saw performed. Keep in mind at all times that whatever you include must in some way contribute to the assertion you made in your introduction and thesis. Focus on particular scenes or performances that will provide the evidence for your final evaluation of the play.

**Interpret, Analyze, Evaluate:** This part of the paper requires the most thought and organization and consequently receives the most attention from your reader. After you have finished describing important elements of the production, proceed to evaluate them.

In other words, assume that everything used in production has significance, but don't panic if you cannot find "answers" for all the questions raised by what you see in the production.

In the evaluation, you are given the opportunity to attack as well as commend the performance; if the production fails to answer questions that you feel need answers, then say so. If the question or problems are relatively minor, ignore them. Don't quibble at the expense of missing the more important concerns

##### Writing the Summary and Conclusion

Your conclusion should not merely recapitulate your thesis in a mechanical way.

Rather, you should try to show why your response to the play is valid and significant, based on what you have described in the body of the paper.

Do not add any significant new material, but don't be afraid to leave your reader with something to think about.

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Post show Activities and  
Follow up for *Tijuana Cure*

Some Potential Discussion Questions (all questions relevant for DRA, ENG, MED, HIS)

(Questions listed in no specific order)



We truly hope that you enjoyed the show. The questions below are meant to dig deeper into the themes of the play and possibly provide a spring board in future activities for your classroom.

>Please encourage your students to write reviews and submit them to us ([info@theatresmash.com](mailto:info@theatresmash.com))

1. As a play, *Tijuana Cure* manipulates time by jumping from the past to the factor being Layne himself. As the play comes to an end, Carol's prognosis is present of Layne's life have been all we know, does the future matter in the
2. Ashlie Corcoran, the director of *Tijuana Cure*, made a specific choice to cast against the gender of the central character in the play. How did this choice affect the story for you? How would the play change for you if The Narrator had been played by a man?
3. With *Tijuana Cure* being a solo performance, both director and actor must look to the most efficient and effective use of space. What are some of the tactics used in the show to tell this very elaborate story of several journeys within one lifetime and within one space?
4. Escapism is a common tactic used by those in situations that are not desirable. What elements does Layne use to escape from his reality?
5. The final line of the play from the Narrator is "Thank you," was this an effective choice? What did that do for you as an audience member?

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Staging Autobiographical Information (now it's your turn to make solo-theatre)

One of *Tijuana Cure's* greatest strengths is that it comes from a realm of heartbreaking truth, and after seeing the show I am sure you are still quite moved by what a brave choice it was to tell this story. This follow section gives you a chance to hear from both Layne Coleman, Ashlie Corcoran and Ieva Lucs, in hopes that you can use this plays structure to make your own short play.

1. DRA, ENG, MED, HIS

Below is a segment from an interview with Layne Coleman just prior to this show re-opening at the Theatre Passe Muraille. Read through the interview:

When did you realize that your writings could be the beginning of a play?

**Layne:** After I'd first written the raw material, I read it out loud to my daughter on New Year's Day. It seemed to work as an oral piece. My daughter encouraged me to put it out there. My second step of "putting it out there" was meeting with Ashlie, the director, and she took it from there.

How did the process of seeing an actor take on your story affect you?

**Layne:** It made me forgive myself, understand that my life had been about thwarted joy. When I watch Ieva I forget that it is my own story. Ieva makes being a boy/man seem like an absolutely wonderful thing.

Did this play assist in your own healing process?

**Layne:** Nothing seems to heal the sense of loss I have at the centre of myself, but when I watch the play I feel less alone with it. And Ieva makes me laugh in unexpected ways, laughter is healing, whether it is my story or someone else's story.

Are there parts of the play that are difficult to watch for you?

**Layne:** I found it hard to watch when the actor would say, "Whenever I am close to something, whenever I am about to get what I want, it is snatched away." And then she would turn away to the dark for a short time. For some reason these kinds of moments were the hardest for me to watch. I found it hard when the man, that Ieva was playing, was about to give up.

Above, Layne discusses the ups and downs of reliving his own loss through theatre. Do you think you would be able to address some of your darkest moments in such a public fashion?



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Post Show Activities and  
Follow Up for *Tijuana Cure*  
...continued

**2. ENG, DRA**

If you would have no problem doing this, perhaps you should use the model from *Tijuana Cure* to start retelling some of the ups and downs of your life. Keep in mind that this play started from a piece of prose that was a reflection on both Layne's past and present.

**3. DRA, ENG**

When you start to take your words and make theatrical decisions with them, it is often difficult to know how to direct the whole thing, because it is so personal. Here is some advice from Ashley Corcoran, the director of *Tijuana Cure*, interviewed just prior to opening the show this time around:

**What were the challenges of taking on something semi-autobiographical?**

**Ashlie:** When I first started working on this piece with Layne, I was a bit intimidated. Not only is Layne quite a well known theatre artist in Canada, but the material that he was asking me to investigate is quite personal and sad. I was worried at first that if I made suggestions about character arc or plot development, that I could be seen as not respecting the real lives lived in the piece. But, Layne taught me very quickly that he wanted me to treat the work as writing – as a piece of theatre. I saw that Layne wanted an outside perspective, and I lost my fear of speaking about the piece candidly.

**The concept of "The Journey" seems to be prevalent in this piece, what are tactics you used as a director to emphasize this idea for the audience?**

**Ashlie:** There are a few journey's happening in the piece. On the ground level, there is a very complicated journey that the narrator and his wife take to Mexico. Ieva and I worked very hard to be very specific about the stages of this trip. The characters keep on meeting roadblock after roadblock – and we wanted their resulting frustration to be very clear to the audience.

In addition, the narrator is going through three separate journeys, which interweave throughout the whole piece. The first journey involves the flashbacks which allow us to see the choices he has made and the paths he has followed to bring him to the present. The second journey tells his tale in Mexico, at the hospital. In this journey we see him struggling to deal with his wife's illness. The third journey is what the narrator undergoes in front of the audience – it is what happens in the one hour that he/she is onstage, sharing the story about Mexico with the audience. Sometimes the narrator wants to give up; he feels sorry for himself, or is angry at the audience. However, he feels compelled to finish his tale.

**The choice to have a female tell this story is interesting, what role does gender play in *Tijuana Cure*?**

**Ashlie:** The narrator is affected by women at every corner – his daughter, flight attendants, his first kiss, and most importantly, his wife. They all shape the middle aged man he becomes. Having Ieva play the male narrator, as well as all of these women, puts the female at the centre of this tale. I think this helps us, as an audience, see how important each of these figures, particularly Carole, are to the narrator.

**4. ENG, DRA**

Words of wisdom from a playwright and director; I thought it only fair to save the actor perspective for last. This interview was recorded with Ieva Lucs just prior to opening this run of the show.

**How was the process of creating a solo performance?**

**Ieva:** Rehearsal was 25% actual work on the script and 75% telling stories, getting to know each other, talking about love and life. The stories we told each other was, besides the blocking, the most important part of the process because it was our way of relating to the writing. I couldn't think of two people farther away from Layne's experiences, but somehow we searched in ourselves and found the places where the material struck chord.

**Was it strange to have Layne there? Did you base any of your characterization on him specifically?**

**Ieva:** In the beginning Layne wasn't there and I wished he was. I thought he could answer all the questions we had and that it wouldn't be so hard. But as we went on I realized without Layne we had the freedom to be really hard on the Narrator, to be flip about his (the narrator, the actor's role) feelings, to really get down and dirty. That way we created a real character not an imitation of a human being, our friend. The last few days before we opened at SummerWorks Layne came into our rehearsals and by then I was desperate for his approval. Ashlie commented that in those last rehearsal runs the character really rounded out and came alive.

**It is apparent that Carol and Layne go on an elaborate journey, both physically and emotionally in this show, what do you think is each character's goal on this trip?**

**Ieva:** For Carol, she is in that state of sickness where you cannot think of anyone else but yourself and your pain. You can see glimpses of the woman she once was and how much she loves Layne but mostly she is trying to, at first, protect herself and when in the hospital heal, heal, heal. For Layne: he wants to be her miracle man. He expects nothing but perfection from himself as care giver and constantly disappoints himself. He wants to be Carol, he wishes he could make her feel as good as she would make him feel. He wants to be with her and escape from her. He wants Tijuana to be the answer.

**What advice would you have for young actors who are interested in solo performance?**

**Ieva:** It's the most scary thing I've ever done as an actor, it will make you better, being on stage alone will teach you how to tell a story, what to do when you have an audience in your hand, what they like, what they don't (when to care about that and when not to) and they'll tell you when you're bullshitting. Also, find a GREAT, not just a good, director. There is no way I would have been able to pull this off without Ashlie. The only thing that allows me to get up in front of people for 55 min is feeling that Ashlie is standing beside me through her work and commitment. Her print is on this as much as mine, if not more.

Now with all this advice, you have a solid map to follow for your own journey. Keep in mind some of their bits of advice: **be specific, use something to help structure your character's journey, tell the truth, let the audience hear from more than one character, keep it fun, and make sure to get advice from the outside.** One of the best ways to start writing is to look to successful models and to emulate them. We hope that the strength of a piece like *Tijuana Cure* can help you use theatre to explore your own personal road trip, with its ups and downs. Break a leg and we hope to see you at our next production!



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