Sfânta (Holy One): A Solo Show on Fame, Religion, and One Queer Girl Who Wants it All

Diana Lobontiu
dlobonti@wellesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection

Recommended Citation
https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/543
Sfânta (Holy One): A Solo Show on Fame, Religion, and One Queer Girl Who Wants it All

Diana Lobontiu

April 2018

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Prerequisite for Honors in Theater Studies

©2018 Diana Lobontiu
**Table of Contents**

- Artistic Statement 3
- Research and Inspiration 5
  - The Solo Show Form 5
  - Religious, Social, and Political Climate 8
  - Teodora de la Sihla 9
  - Stylites (Pillar Saints) 10
- The Writing Process 11
  - Lois Roach and Playwriting 11
  - Marta Rainer 12
  - Wintersession 13
  - Stephanie LeBolt 13
  - Language in Sfânta 15
  - Sfânta: What a Title! 15
  - Creative Process 16
- The Rehearsal Process 17
  - General Process 17
  - Finding the Characters 18
  - Design Elements 21
  - Budget 26
- Performance 27
  - Talkback 28
-Next Steps 29
-Appendix A: Full Script 31
-Appendix B: Scene from Playwriting 84
-Appendix C: Sfânta Program 89
-Appendix D: Sfânta Poster 90
-Works Cited 91
Artistic Statement

I am extremely passionate about theater, and I have wanted to write a solo show for years. I am drawn to theater because of the uniquely compelling power it has to affect people. Theater performances can draw dozens of people into a room where they sit in the dark for a few hours and live the story being told in front of them. The very nature of theater is transitory, but so immediate; during a performance, the audience members can laugh, cry, or start to question something they had never questioned before. It is this effect of questioning that I am most interested in. How can seeing a piece of art spark conversations that bring about real life change? That is the goal of any work I produce.

This project is perfectly suited to my educational goals and accomplishments both at Wellesley and abroad. I am a Theater Studies major, and I have taken all the acting classes the department has to offer. I am a member of the Wellesley College Shakespeare Society, have acted in numerous Upstage shows, and am the president of Dead Serious, Wellesley’s best (and only) improv troupe, so I think it’s safe to say that I love performing. I also work under David Towlun, Wellesley’s Production Manager, as a Production Manager’s Assistant, and I’ve cultivated a fair amount of technical ability ranging from scenic painting to lighting plots to set construction, some of which I used in constructing my set for this project. Last year I studied abroad at the National Theatre Institute at the O’Neill, an acclaimed theater conservatory where I focused exclusively on performance and writing. At the National Theatre Institute I discovered my love of writing, found my artistic voice, and was able to marry acting and writing through my thesis project. I used my analytical abilities that Wellesley has nurtured to gather research and make a logical storyline. I engaged critically with my writing, thinking of the logistics of how to
get characters from place to place, how to convey the passage of time, and how to make the audience understand the conventions of my character switches. This project also required a great deal of creativity: I had to think non-judgmentally about finding the initial characters and the plot through my writing and discovering how each character moves through space.

Not only am I passionate about this project because it allows me to write and perform, I strongly identify with many of the issues it presents. I am a queer, Romanian immigrant who was ensconced in religion as a child. In fact, I wanted to be a saint for a long time. My faith provided me with a framework for the world and made me feel safe, but because of it I struggled for many years with my identity as a queer woman. I felt different from the rest of my religious community, and had trouble seeing myself as anything other than a sinner and an aberration. I have since worked through that, so much so that I’m using my life experiences to guide the creation of this piece. Personally, I am taking my struggles, putting a version of them in my script that’s not just a cathartic unburdening but a piece of art with internal logic (and jokes), then presenting them in a compelling way. Generally, I am increasing visibility for queer, foreign people by putting their stories on a stage. I think especially in the current political climate, it is important that we remember the incredible diversity of the human race, and learn to identify with groups unlike our own. I can only hope that my piece will inspire conversations about religion, queerness, foreignness, and how they intersect.
Research and Inspiration

Solo Show Form

What intrigues me the most about the solo form is how different devices can achieve different storytelling experiences. A solo show can be anything from a fully formed narrative to a series of monologues to an hour’s worth of stand-up. Going into the year, I was experimenting with what form I would use. I write stand-up fairly regularly so that is a form I’m comfortable with, but I knew from the outset that I didn’t want to write a show about myself in the first person. At first, I wrote several monologues for Teodora, the main character, but they didn’t seem complete with only one voice. In terms of playwriting, I think my skill lies most in snappy dialogue, and even though while writing it I had no idea how I would change quickly enough from character to character to make it seem like an actual dialogue, that is the form that solidified over the months for me. However, to prepare for writing and performing my show, I was inspired by three solo shows in particular which run the gamut in terms of form: Whoopi Goldberg’s Direct from Broadway (Goldberg), Melinda Lopez’s Mala (Lopez), and Sarah Porkalob’s Dragon Lady (Porkalob).

Direct from Broadway

Whoopi Goldberg comes out as a series of characters, each delivering funny, and occasionally heart-rending monologues. None of the characters interact with each other, and some of them are vastly different, but all of them are fully fledged people with nuanced backgrounds. Direct from Broadway emphasizes embodying the different characters, and does not include the playwright who wrote the words in the narrative. Going into writing Sfânta, I
knew I didn’t want to include my own voice in the narrative, and I was seeking to emulate the smooth way in which Goldberg transitions between the different characters.

**Mala**

In contrast to *Direct from Broadway*, Lopez’s *Mala* tells the story of the playwright herself caring for her dying mother during a blizzard in 2015. Lopez delivers most of the show in monologue as herself, and sometimes plays other characters who interact with each other in bits of dialogue. Although it was refreshing to see Lopez deliver the work that she wrote as herself, simply and truthfully, I thought it made for some passive storytelling. Instead of plunging the audience into the action, Lopez provided a good deal of exposition and philosophizing on old age. The liveliest parts happened when Lopez played both herself and her mother, arguing or loving each other or refusing to speak to each other. They brought the audience along on the journey as more active participants, which is something I admired. After seeing both shows, I determined I wanted my show to be a mix. I wanted the audience to drop into my scenes the way I dropped into the dialogue heavy scenes in *Mala*, and I also wanted to play a vast array of nuanced characters like Goldberg did in *Direct from Broadway*.

**Dragon Lady**

*Cue, Dragon Lady*. I was fortunate to be able to watch Sara Porkalob’s dress rehearsal when she brought her show to the ART in Boston, and I was blown away. The form of the show was exactly what I was looking for. It was a narrative about three generations of Filipina women and their struggle to survive once they emigrated to the United States. During the show, Porkalob flowed seamlessly between over twenty characters, some with only one or two lines. She jumped from past to future to past again, and the place changed not only physically but in tone as well,
sometimes dreamy and surreal and sometimes brutal and present. And I followed along every step of the way. I was able to identify every character, even when Porkalob was performing scenes with up to six people in them. I attribute this to her clear physicality, as well as her huge vocal range and shifts. Because the show was mostly dialogue, it snatched my attention from start to finish, and even though there was one actor playing all the parts, the stakes were so high that quite a few of the scenes were heart-rending. Formwise, this is what I wanted my show to be: active, dialogue heavy, and comprehensible.

Sfânta

Throughout a lot of the process I struggled with finding a reason to make it a solo show. Going in, I knew I wanted to take this project past Wellesley, and performing a one person show is logistically easier and cheaper than finding a group of seniors who would want to continue the work post graduation. I also wanted to challenge myself, and see how it feels when I only have myself to play off of onstage. Beyond that, one actor should play all the characters because the story is told by Teodora, an extremely selfish person. Teodora is growing up, and at the beginning of the play she only cares about herself and making herself better. I could have written one giant, selfish monologue in which Teodora rants about how great she is, but I created other characters to keep her in check. They’re stretched and distorted through Teodora’s lens, but fundamentally they exist to show that she is not alone, that there are consequences for her actions, and to represent the conflict between her inner selfishness and reality. Teodora depicts the other characters, which emphasizes how flawed a character she is without saying it outright. In the beginning of the play, Teodora keeps a tally of every sister’s sins in the convent, kicks Iosefina out of their room to have more time to pray alone, and chokes Andreea for telling her
she won’t go to heaven. However, throughout the play Teodora learns how to care about and for other people: she confesses her feelings for Iosefina, goes back to save the village from an Ottoman attack, and leads everyone in the woods to safety. She couldn’t have done any of this without the other characters there to push back against her, call her out, and ultimately need her help. Having multiple characters makes the play active, and allows them to affect one another in the way a monologue never could.

**Religious, Political, and Social Climate of Romania**

I began the process by researching the religious, political, and social climate of Romania in the 1600’s. At first I looked at Romania as a whole, but later I chose to focus on Moldova because that’s where a majority of the Orthodox convents were (Faroqhi, 80).

The country of Romania emerged around 1000 AD (Hitchins, 23). It was then split into three provinces which were all independent of one another: Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldova. I’m Transylvanian so I originally intended to set the show in a Transylvanian convent, but it turns out there are only two Romanian female Saints and they were both from Moldova, so I focused my attentions there instead.

Moldova had its own ruler, Prince Dimitrie Cantemir, and full autonomy, but it was a tributary to the Ottoman Empire, which required yearly tithes from the Prince Dimitrie (Hitchins, 75). Ottoman troops were often stationed in the countryside to prevent unrest, and there are numerous records of Ottoman forces attacking Moldovan villages (Faroqhi, 70). The 1680’s marked the beginning of some unrest in the Romanian provinces, and starting in 1683 Romania and Austria joined forces to temporarily defeat the Ottoman army in Vienna. Despite technically
being ruled by the Ottomans, most Moldovans spoke Romanian, and the primary religion was Russian Orthodoxy, a vestige of the Byzantine Empire. The educated language was Slavic, but most of the lower classes spoke Romanian. By 1680 the clergy had begun to preach sermons in Romanian, and in 1679 the first prayer book was translated from Slavic to Romanian (Hitchins, 83). In Teodora’s time, especially given the dearth of priests, the Sunday services would have been spoken in Romanian.

Teodora de la Sihla

I based Teodora on an actual Saint, Teodora de la Sihla. Teodora was married to a man, but felt the call of God and moved into the convent at Vârzașești in the 1670’s. She lived a few years there and took her vows under the tutelage of Sora Paisia, the Mother Superior there. Then in 1680 Ottoman forces pillaged the convent, and Teodora and a group of nuns were forced to live in the woods, which they did for ten years, worshipping God and surviving off of blackberries. After Sora Paisia grew old and died, Teodora ventured even further into the wilderness, and lived the rest of her life in a cave in the Neamț mountains. She survived off of breadcrumbs that birds would bring her in their beaks from a nearby monastery. Towards the end of her life, two monks from the monastery followed the birds and found her in her cave, glowing and naked. She told them to bring a priest to absolve her of her sins, and after they did, she died saying “Thank you God, for everything.” (Viata Sfînte Teodora de la Sihla) Quite a few of the events match up with my play: my Teodora lives in Vârzașești, she is under Sora Paisia’s guidance (begrudgingly) and the group does have to leave the convent after they are attacked by
Ottoman forces. We never know whether this Teodora becomes a Saint, but we do know she has to sacrifice a great deal to save everyone at the end of the play.

**Stylites (Pillar Saints)**

Growing up, I feverishly read several biographies of Saints, and I remember being impressed and horrified at the actions they took to become closer to God. One practice that struck me in particular was that of Stylites. These saints would live on columns for twenty years, and the more holy they were, the more they would stand. I was impressed by this image and how effectively it conveyed extreme and ostentatious faith, and researched how the practice came about, and who the first stylites were. It turns out that the practice started in Assyria, but had pretty much died out by the 1600’s (Thurston). There were a few Romanian stylites in the 1400’s but few after that, so I thought, perfect! Of course Teodora would be the kind of person to bring the practice back after 200 years.
Fall semester I took “The Art of Playwriting” with Professor Lois Roach, so I had the opportunity to have scenes read from my play every week. I chose to focus my whole semester on scenes from my play and didn’t deviate from that, which was sometimes to my detriment, as I found it hard to stick to the week by week deadlines when I was trying to construct a larger piece of theater. I remember I went in with the clear expectation that I would finish one act of the show (around 30 pages) by the end of the semester, and spend the rest of wintersession writing the second half. That didn’t really happen. Our first assignment was to write a monologue (see Appendix B), and that was the first big flash of inspiration I got all semester. It was to me the crux of the show I hadn’t written yet, so I found it the easiest to write. Once I had this creative idea, I found it difficult to expand it, and to get myself organized enough to write the things I was thinking of down. I played with different ideas throughout the class: using a scarf worn different ways to denote the other characters, for instance. Since I myself have short hair, and nuns have to shave their heads once they take their vows, I also thought of integrating it into the play by having Teodora preemptively shave her head (even though she’s only a novitiate) to emphasize how eager she is. This would have been seen as offensive as she was technically not a nun yet, and I wrote a scene in which Andreea threatens to tell the Mother Superior about it. However, in streamlining my play I found other more high stakes issues (like Teodora choking Andreea) for Andreea to hold over Teodora’s head that were more visceral. I found it difficult to remember that what I was writing was a solo show, since I wrote so many characters and a different classmate would read for each of them whenever we presented our work.
At the end of the semester I typed out what I thought was my first act (which in truth turned out to be the majority of the play), and not only did I not like it, I thought it would impossible to perform. I wrote a scene in which everyone poisons each other and dies (or so you think), and I had no idea how that could ever happen. Little did I know that this scene would turn out to be one of the most dynamic and fun in the show, and become a catalyst for Teodora’s journey towards selflessness. I also wrote a mute character, which in a solo show with six other characters is extremely difficult to portray, but with some blocking achieved one of the more tender scenes in which Teodora is trying to guess Iosefina’s declaration of her feelings for Teodora through charades. I created all these restrictions for myself, which at the time I had no idea how to surmount, but which in the end made me resilient and innovative as a performer after conquering them.

Although I struggled in playwriting and didn’t produce my best work, I think the experience was valuable. I learned to look at each character as an individual human being with their own wants and needs, when my tendency was to mash them all into bit parts next to Teodora’s leading lady. At the time I felt discouraged because I hadn’t met the goals I’d set at the beginning of the semester, but looking back I was building the skeleton onto which I fitted the rest of the play.

Marta Rainer

Over the course of the first semester I met with Marta, my advisor, and we discussed the drafts I’d sent in to Lois. Because my drafts were pretty general, her input couldn’t be specific, and I don’t think I was at a point in my process where that would have been helpful. She guided
me with general character questions and things to consider, and was very helpful in terms of finding the next steps. I remember when my one act was due for Lois’s class and I had no idea what to write, we sat and brainstormed possible endings for the characters. We agreed that the first scene should end in chaos, and thought of the specific ways each character would act to carry it out.

**Wintersession**

During wintersession I didn’t really touch the play. I didn’t feel excited by it, and I didn’t know what to do to change that. I let the weeks pass by until one week before the start of the second semester, I sat myself down and seriously edited all the work I had written. I found myself putting jokes in, tightening the lengthy monologues, and writing things that I felt excited to read. I used Romanian language specifically: whenever characters swore or talked about God. This giant push exemplified the process generally: feverish, intense, good work in short bursts, punctuated by lulls in which not that much happened.

**Stephanie LeBolt**

I was tasked with finding my own director for the piece, so I reached out to alums who work in theater locally, and I was connected to several. I met with a few, and decided to choose Stephanie LeBolt, a director and choreographer in the Boston area. Stephanie grew up Catholic, so she had an interest in my piece, she specialized in new work, and she had a lot of movement experience, which turned out to be immensely helpful in creating the blocking for seven distinct characters.
The first semester, Stephanie and I met once and talked about general images she saw in my work, and questions she had. It was only until the second semester began that the real work started. By then I had my rewritten version of the first act, and we worked from that for a few weeks. I didn’t have an ending yet, and I wouldn’t for a while. I remember after about three weeks of rehearsal in which we focused on the first few scenes, Stephanie and I sat down and talked about the script. Parts of it were still too general, several characters were not fleshed out enough, and everyone’s motivations were unclear. But Stephanie suggested that instead of focusing on that, I write an ending. I was a little hesitant because I thought that that was not my top priority, but I got to writing. I wrote the last 15 pages of the play in three days, and I was so proud of them. Because I had already set up the characters, I could afford to let them breathe and heighten their circumstances. It was one of the most fun parts to write, and is now one of the most fun parts to perform, because it’s nuts. After she accidentally poisons everyone in the convent and runs away, Teodora rides a sheep back with an arrow stuck in her side to warn the village about an Ottoman invasion, and leads everyone to safety.

The final scene checks in with every character except Teodora after a year of living in the woods; things have changed an absurd amount, both in the characters’ relationships and in their setting, a forest in which sheep are used for transportation. Then I created the final moment of Teodora, who has run away from the other characters to search for Iosefina, being unsatisfied with the role of savior. After I had the ending, going back and making characters more specific was easy. I never expected this backwards approach to work, as I’ve alway written chronologically; it’s certainly what we’re taught at Wellesley. But in this instance doing things in
the “incorrect” order allowed me to let loose and create, which in turn allowed me to inform my characters in earlier scenes from the ending.

**Language in Sfânta**

I wanted audience members to know that the play is set in Romania without having to explicitly state this. One of the easiest ways to do this is to insert Romanian language, but I had to insert it intentionally. At the beginning of my writing process I had this idea that Teodora was so rigid in her religious beliefs that she could not say swear words or sexual organs/acts out loud. So I thought, what if she can say them, but they’re so odious that she can’t say them in English? Additionally, it didn’t feel right for Teodora to call Dumnezeu, her closest friend and greatest role model, God. Dumnezeu means something to Teodora, and giving him an English name felt like blasphemy. And that’s how the convention of Romanian was born: characters use it whenever they’re describing something base like swearing or sexual acts (in Teodora’s opinion). They also use it when referring to exalted, spiritual things like God and prayers (for example, Sora Paisia’s communion prayer before everyone is poisoned is in Romanian). In this way I anchored my show in Romania with language, and emphasized the struggle between Teodora’s natural, human tendencies and her saintly ambitions with the high and low language being Romanian.

**Sfânta: What a Title!**

I wasn’t sure what the show’s title would be until I finalized my script. I knew I wanted it to be short, and I wanted it to be in Romanian, as that felt authentic to me. I chose Sfânta because
it means Holy One, and it is gendered to denote a woman Holy One. This was important to me because there are so few women saints, and if you speak Romanian you can tell right off the bat that this play is about one of them. I also think that the title of the play should act almost as a spine throughout, and Teodora’s journey from a petty, wannabe Saint to a disillusioned savior searching for her beloved challenges the idea of what a saint is while driving the protagonist towards becoming one.

Creative Process

After writing this piece, I’ve learned what my creative process is, and picked up several tools to make it easier on myself. First of all, I can’t wallow in the gray area of exploring for too long or I’ll lose steam. Once I have a creative idea it helps me to think the plot through, make an outline, and think clearly what actions lead to the next. Something Stephanie and I worked on was writing the bad version of the play: if I knew where I wanted the characters to end up, what would be the simplest, most straightforward, unpoetic way to get them there? This approach was immensely helpful, as it helped get me out of my own head and look at the big picture of the play instead of getting bogged down by small details. Anyone can write the bad version of a play, because that’s the labor intensive part: the crafting of lines and the poetry comes later, but it must build on the structure the “bad version” (i.e. the plot) provides.

I also confirmed how valuable plot is to me. Once I know the arc of the play, I can go back and write in jokes and character development. But first I need to know the events that lead the character from the beginning to the end of the play. It’s retracing backwards in a maze: once you know where everyone ends up, getting them there is the easy part. I never thought this
analytically about creative work, and I think it was extremely valuable to be able to apply critical skills to creativity to make an understandable, structured work.

Something I struggled with this whole year is the lack of consistency in my process. Sometimes I’d churn tens of pages out that I felt pretty good about, but most of the time I’d just sit there waiting for an idea and feeling bad when one didn’t come. Being inspired is a heightened state to be in, and I’m coming to accept that it can’t happen all the time. I’m starting to embrace the inconsistencies, and now see them as a pattern that I should try to work off of rather than a fault I should try to correct.

**The Rehearsal Process**

**General Process**

At first, Stephanie and I worked with the version of the script we had in February to find character’s physicalities. However, since the script changed a lot in that time, a lot of the physicalities shifted over the course of rehearsal. I was consistently asked to make bigger physical choices, which at first seemed absurd and embarrassing to me, but after considering that because the rest of the characters are seen through Teodora’s lens they should be absurd, I started to step over the boundaries of “realistic acting” more. I think there are a lot of commedia dell'arte aspects in the characters, because they are so big and bold in such different ways.

Once we roughly blocked the show and had worked on a few scenes, Stephanie and I had a meeting in which we really looked at what aspects of the script weren’t working, and a lot wasn’t. So in the next two weeks I revamped a lot of the minor characters, rewrote scenes, and wrote an entire ending to the play. I had a product that I was proud of at the end, but we also only
had two weeks until opening because spring break was scheduled the week before and I wouldn’t
be in town to rehearse. We focused all our energy on blocking the whole play, which we did by
the Monday of tech week. I ran the show through two times before I opened. I remember feeling
so unprepared opening night, but once I performed everything felt good, and I felt like I was
improving by leaps and bounds since just a few days before.

If there’s anything I’ve learned from rehearsing a solo show, it’s that with one person you
can move mountains in literal minutes. For instance, we reblocked the whole strangling scene on
opening night, something I would never have thought possible in a regular play. But because it
was just me, we did it in ten minutes, and it was one of the best parts once the show went up.

**Finding the Characters**

**Teodora**

Of all the characters, Teodora came most naturally to me. The play is told through her
lens, and I can find the biggest part of myself in her. During the first rehearsal I tried doing
different walks to distinguish the different characters, and hers stayed the same from that day
throughout the entire process. Her movements are very direct, and when speaking to other
characters she always faces the front. I think an aspect that came through her physicality is just
how much she cares about the things she cares about: she stands straight and at the ready, like
someone is watching her follow the rules. She stands so straight she’s a bit rigid, actually, which
is in service to her character. Her voice also most closely resembles my voice: it’s a little whinier
and younger, since she’s 14, but other than that the way she talks is like I talked in high school
while earnestly trying to impress everyone in my AP Chemistry class.
**Andreea**

Andreea took a bit of coaching, as did all the characters who were of higher status. Stephanie and I discussed how a key part of her character is her nosiness, and we wanted to incorporate that into her physicality, so whenever she talks she leans over almost to a comical degree. She purses her lips and holds one arm out with her wrist down. She, and all the other characters besides Teodora, has an exaggerated physicality in order to distinguish her from the seven other characters. It took a while for me to find her voice, a valley girl accent so deep it was hard not to dip into vocal fry. We tried several more soft spoken versions of Andreea’s voice before settling on this one, and I fully credit rewatching Regina George’s monologues from *Mean Girls* for helping arrive at this version. Because of her taxing voice I found it very difficult to speak as her for long periods of time, but as the show went on I managed to get her voice across without as much vocal fry and with more ease.

**Gheorghe**

Playing a frat boy who thinks all women love him was no small feat for me. I understood Gheorghe’s voice from the beginning of the rehearsal process, but I struggled with the physicality for a bit. It got to the point where I would watch cis-men walk across campus and imitate them in order to try to get the confidence to walk the way Gheorghe would walk. I remember one day I walked all the way to the ville exactly the way Gheorghe would: I pretended that everyone wanted me and put it into my body, and it was liberating. Ever since that day I felt a lot more comfortable with Gheorghe’s wide stance and swinging torso.
Cristina

The main challenge with Cristina was portraying her pregnancy. The longer we rehearsed, the more heavily pregnant my physicality got: a week before we opened I started waddling under all that weight. However, once I got in the swing of a scene, slipping into and out of her physicality was actually pretty easy; even though at first her pregnant frame seemed ridiculous, it was kind of comforting to go back to. The audience would easily recognize it and so it felt safe. In terms of voice, I remember talking with Stephanie about what it would be, and Stephanie suggesting that she’s a nagger. With that direction my voice became very high pitched, and I think I was just playing with the text when in one rehearsal I emphasized the word “hard” in one of her monologues. It stuck, and ever since the long, drawn out way Cristina says “hard” got audience laughs.

Sora Paisia

When I thought of Sora Paisia, I thought of a drill sergeant. She barks out words like they’re orders, and over-enunciates everything with relish. Out of everyone, she is definitely a character who loves talking and who loves to hear herself talk. Her strict, rigid posture is similar to Teodora’s, but there’s more tension in her shoulders: she’s what Teodora would be in twenty years.

Tataie

I think I truly found who Tataie was during the dress rehearsal. Before that I made his back generally hunched with age, and not much else. We were reblocking a transition scene in
which Tataie has to sneak in and drink some poison, and I remember I just cackled a little and rubbed my hands together. I think that cemented his physicality and his voice and made them creepier, like a “dirty old man in a subway station”, to put it in Stephanie’s words. And a dirty old man is much more specific than any old man.

Iosefina

Because she doesn’t speak, I struggled with finding a physicality that matched Iosefina’s character. Originally I envisioned her as strong and silent, but during one rehearsal I found that I naturally tended to make her smaller, so she became hunched over and took small steps and didn’t occupy a lot of space. I don’t think I found the sounds only Iosefina would make, and I think that that’s a step for a future production.

Design Elements

Marketing

I struggled at first to find an image that captured the feeling of my show. I scheduled one photoshoot while we were still rehearsing with Colleen Sullivan, a Wellesley alum who is also a photographer. We held the shoot in the black box theater, and unfortunately the lighting wasn’t great so we weren’t able to capture good photos.

I realized I didn’t want my poster for the show to be a realistic photograph, because the show itself is not realistic in the least. So I researched icons of Stylites, whose poles provided some of the prominent images in my show, and I found an icon of Simeon Stylites, the first pillar Saint. I then photoshopped my face onto his face on the icon, which I think is a great summation
of the irreverence of my show’s language juxtaposed with the serious, reverent environment of a convent.

Costumes and Props

Since the play is set in the 1680’s I was looking for a costume to convey that time period, while maintaining the absurdist tone of the piece. I didn’t want to be dressed in full Romanian garb, but I wanted a subtler, more generalized version. I searched through the costume shop (thanks to Chelsea Kerl, Wellesley’s costume designer) and browsed the historical section until I found a costume with the general shape, which included a muted peasant shirt and a green covering to go over it, coupled with a very colorful belt. The costume had the general shape of a traditional Romanian one: large flowy sleeves, chunky in build, with a knitted belt that had most of the colors of the Romanian national flag to secure it in place. I went barefoot because I felt that trying to find an authentic Romanian shoe would date the show too much and anchor it in a place of reality, and having no shoes conveys a sense of liberty and fun.
My Costume vs. Traditional Romanian Costume

In terms of props, I wanted to minimize them as much as possible, and have only the most essential ones. I included a vial for the poison, a sack (technically a medieval coin purse I bought from Amazon), and an arrow onto which I glued feathers. I only used props that I couldn’t mime because either Teodora or the other characters physically engaged with them a lot, and they were necessary visuals to tell the story.

Set

One of the earliest images that came to me was that of a pole. Growing up I had read about Stylites and they had always impressed and terrified me, and after I researched them I confirmed that the image of a human standing on a pole resonated, representing an extreme
physicalization of faith. Ideally I would have liked to have climbed an actual column, but within the confines of theater tech I had a steel pole flanked by a wooden top and a steel base with a PVC pipe fitted over it and painted to look like a tree. David Towlun, Wellesley’s production manager and my boss, connected me to Wooden Kiwi Productions, a shop in Waltham, where I commissioned my pole. Peter Colao welded the pole, which I picked up from the shop and painted and texturized myself in order to give it the general shape of a tree. Working with the pole turned out to be pretty difficult, as I had to heave myself up onto it (earning a fair amount of bruises) and once up it teetered a precarious amount.

I chose to perform the show in the Wellesley Chapel because I felt that it fit perfectly with the theme of religion of present in the play, but that the irreverent nature of the language would provide a nice contrast to the formal setting. Personally, I think it’s always refreshing to see theater done in alternative spaces, so I was elated at being given the opportunity to perform in the Chapel.

**Lights and Sound**

I wanted lights to be used simply and in service of the story. In the first scene, Teodora is recounting the other characters’ sins against her and acts them out, taking the audience from the present to the past. My lighting designer, Calla Nelles-Sager, included a few light cues to indicate when the scene was the real present and when we shifted to the past. Additionally, she had more saturated lights to represent transitions and particularly absurd scenes (like the ending) while she focused on more realistic, white light in the more grounded scenes.

Stephanie and I agreed to use sound to tell time in the play. Our sound designer, Marta Rainer, gave life to transitions and slower paced songs were meant to convey the passage of
more time than faster paced songs. She focused on female pop artists from the 21st century, as they provided a contrast to the traditional setting of the Chapel, and underlined the angsty tones of the play.
## Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>I found a costume in the costume shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>For the medieval coin purse I bought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>$9.75</td>
<td>For 30 posters from the Wellesley copy center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair and Makeup</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>I'll be using my own products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>All equipment will be borrowed from the department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>For the construction of the pole at Wooden Kiwi Productions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space and</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>Custodial fee for the Chapel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>The cost to cover transportation for Stephanie LeBolt, who works in Boston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,059.75</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Performance

I chose to perform my show on Orthodox Easter weekend, as the convent in my play is a Russian Orthodox one. The performance ran just under an hour every time, only changing run-time by a couple of minutes. My first performance schedule was:

- Thursday, April 5th @8pm
- Friday, April 6th @8pm
- Saturday, April 7th @8pm
- Sunday, April 8th @8pm (Russian Orthodox Easter Sunday)

I think the thing that struck me most about performing my piece was how much it resembled stand-up. After my first run-through, my mind was whirring with adjustments that needed to be made, lines that needed to be cut or extended, and jokes that needed to be punched up. After the first performance I found myself doing all these things almost automatically; I haven’t made any of those changes to the script yet, but they settled in my bones in a way that felt right during the performance, and I don’t think I’ll forget them anytime soon. I was astonished at how comfortable I was hacking away at the script mid-performance, cutting this unnecessary line and that one, as well as how, once I’d performed the show a few times, I knew where the laughs would happen so I played those moments for all they were worth. I think knowing when the fun moments happen is the greatest thing I could have gotten out of performing my new work, and the experience was extremely informative.
In terms of the acting itself, the first time I ran through the show I was exhausted. This semester I’m taking a running class in order to graduate with enough P.E. credit, and I thought that the class (and my occasional runs along Lake Waban) would prepare me for my performance, but I was sorely (emphasis on sorely) mistaken. I couldn’t breathe for at least half an hour afterwards as I sat there taking in the notes my director gave me, but not having the strength to write them down. But the next time I performed it, I didn’t feel as tired, and so on until by the end of the run I could do the whole show without getting significantly winded by the end. It’s helpful that by the end of the run I adjusted to the physical demands of the show, but in the future I intend to run more intensely and do a fair amount of weight lifting at least a couple of weeks before I perform. I think vocally I dropped into a more comfortable range for all the characters while maintaining the distinctness in their voices, and physically I was just more aware of when to conserve my energy and when to go all out (the poisoning scene).

Now that I’ve performed the show I can also assess which scenic elements worked for me. The next iteration of my show won’t have a pole, as it was too cumbersome and while safe, wobbled so much that it was distracting and scary to audience members. It was also interesting to talk to audience members about the space, as some said that the formal chapel made them reluctant to laugh. I can’t help but wonder what performing it in the improv theaters I’ve been scheduled in for the fringe festivals this summer will do for an audience.

**Talkback**

After my second show, I participated in a talkback moderated by my director with the audience. Stephanie first asked me what my process was, which I discussed. She then asked the
audience what moments stuck with them, what relationships they liked, what they were confused by if anything, and what they took away as the show’s message. Most people remembered Teodora riding the sheep and getting shot by an Ottoman arrow in terms of moments. One comment that stuck out to me about the play’s takeaway was the doggedness with which people strive to achieve their goals, and the striving to lead an extraordinary life and feel special. Many of the audience members said they loved Iosefina and Teodora together, but that they’d like to see more of their relationship onstage. That was very valuable, as having more of a glimpse of their relationship will make the ending so much more heartrending. Audience members also noted that they got confused about all the different physicalities present in the poisoning scene, which I corrected and incorporated into my subsequent performances.

**Next Steps**

My first steps after submitting this thesis are preparing for the Ruhlman Conference, and for a full length reprise of my show on May 12th. Because these dates are so soon, I won’t focus most of my energies into rewriting beyond solidifying what I learned in my previous performances. Instead I will focus on reblocking the show using a chair instead of a pole. I think this will be less impressive, but on a budget more manageable, and more safe.

Once I graduate, I will be performing my show at the Minneapolis and Philadelphia Fringe Festivals starting in August. I was fortunate enough to be awarded the Pamela Daniels Fellowship for my project, which is financing my travel expenses and festival costs. Between now and then I will rewrite the show, particularly to focus more on Teodora and Iosefina’s relationship. Because the show ends in heartbreak for the two, it’s extremely important for the
audience to see them interact and understand why they love each other. I also want to make it more difficult for Teodora to give Iosefina up to become a Saint. I will also be combing through the script and paring it down by cutting superfluous or out of character lines, especially in the Cristina and Andreea scenes, and only keeping the things that move the plot forward quickly. I think that this is a play that will die if it doesn’t move quickly enough, and I want to honor that as much as possible through the writing.

After I perform at these festivals, I’ll have a better idea of what a non-Wellesley audience is like and what they respond to, and I’m sure I will tailor my show to incorporate their needs as well. Over the next couple of years I want to develop Sfânta to become as precise and streamlined as possible.
Appendix A: Full Script

SFÂNTA

By Diana Lobontiu

Cast of Characters

TEODORA MOLDOVEANU - 14. Has wanted to be a Saint since she can remember, but mostly for the fame.

SORA PAISIA - 32. Mother Superior, in charge of the convent and feeling the pressure

ANDREEA POP - 15. New to the convent from Iasi, Moldova’s capital. Cool and rich.

IOSEFINA - 16. Laysister, tends the sheep. Mute.


ADRIAN MOLDOVEANU - 45. Teodora and Cristina’s father.
GHEORGHE FIERAR - 18. Vlad’s brother and Teodora’s betrothed

TIME: 1680

SCENE: Vărzărești, a Moldovan convent, and the surrounding woods.

SCENE 1

SETTING

Teodora’s room in the convent. The room is empty, save for one four foot tall pole in the center.

AT RISE

Teodora is standing on the pole, looking down. She is acting out her own death and canonization.

TEODORA

Teodora of Vărzărești was a saint. O Sfânta. She died in the year of our Lord 1699 at just 32 years old… weird, the exact age Jesus Christ was when he was crucified. Coincidence? I think not. She started her journey in an abandoned convent in Moldova. She spent her days surrounded by sad old nuns and gross village people who never recognized her talent. But soon she felt the call of Dumnezeu, and left the literal cesspool of a convent to
venture into the wilderness of Moldova, surviving off of blackberries at first but later she was so enlightened she literally didn’t even need food. She was only sixteen when she ascended atop a tree to get closer to Dumnezeu and there she stayed. She became a stylite, which is the most extreme form of asceticism, even though no one had done it in like two hundred years. She didn’t care about the cold or the heat or that she was really scared of heights because she was too busy caring about Dumnezeu. And Dumnezeu definitely loved her just a little bit more than everybody else. After her death she performed countless miracles: the blind could see, the quadriplegic could walk, and one time a couple who was having relations outside of marriage said they had to stop because they felt like she was watching them. Then they got married but they still never got intimate again, all because of her. We will now say her Acatist.

Rejoice, Our Lady Teodora, who from childhood served Dumnezeu;
Rejoice, that the troubles of the world have not stopped you;
Rejoice, Holy Teodora, the spiritual flower of Moldova.
At least that’s what I hope they’ll say after I die. (a sheep bleats. Teodora jumps off the pole) The sheep are already waking up? It is way past my bedtime. (clasps hands and prays)

Forgive me, Dumnezeul meu, for I have sinned. Well, I haven’t, but basically everyone I know has. Forgive Andreea, Doamne. My new roommate. She’s not in bed! It’s the dead of night, and we only get like four hours of rest. I know she’s from big fancy Iasi, but she can’t just walk around at night. I’m just worried because it would be really sad if something happened to her. Forgive her for whatever sinful thing she’s probably doing right now. And speaking of Andreea’s sins she was super rude to me this morning. I mean, I was so nice to her, I walked up to her and introduced myself:

(Teodora reenacts meeting Andreea)

TEODORA

Hi, I’m Teodora, I’m your new roommate. I’ll be showing you around. I know this convent inside and out. I can tell you which sisters to talk to and which sisters not to talk to because they’re deaf. I can show you how to make sure you get the biggest portion of mămăligă at dinner and where the best place
to poop is—it’s not where you would think. Stick with me and you can be a nun in no time.

ANDREEA

I don’t buy into the “nun” aesthetic. Speaking of aesthetics, if everything here is as dirty as your great hall, I would only upset myself by looking at it. Just take me to my room.

(Reenactment ends, Teodora is back to praying)

TEODORA

Our room. Our room! Which she’s not in anyway so I don’t know why she wanted to be here so bad.

Forgive Gheorghe, Dumnezel meu, for flirting like a gross idiot with Andreea today. I don’t know why he thinks women like him, he’s dumb and he’s bad at his job. And still he’s so confident! He just walked up to me and Andreea and was like –

(TEODORA reenacts scene with ANDREEA and GHEORGHE)

GHEORGHE

Heey hot stuff, I can take you to your room.

TEODORA

That’s literally my job.

ANDREEA (to GHEORGHE)

Are you a servant here?

GHEORGHE
I’ll be your servant anytime babe.

ANDREEA

I like a man who knows his station.

TEODORA

He’s not a servant he’s a blacksmith. A bad one.

GHEORGHE

I am a bad one, T. (to Andreea) But I’m much more than that. I’ll be serving as your altar boy this morning, and I’m in charge of the wine. (to Teodora) So be nice to me or you don’t get to drink out of my sack later. (winks at ANDREEA)

TEODORA

Don’t call me T.

GHEORGHE

You’re not my wife yet, T., you can’t tell me what to do. (to Andreea) I didn’t catch your name. (Andreea tells him) Andreea. I’m gonna call you A. I’m Gheorghe, you can call me G, that’s what I am. Catch you at communion, A. (sniggers), I got a bell to smith.

ANDREEA (completely seriously)

I like a man who knows how to spell.

(TEODORA is back to praying)

TEODORA
Father Timofei taught him like three letters and now he thinks he’s a genius. “I got a bell to smith”. I wish his stupid tongue would fall out of his stupid mouth. Oh, he tongue of the bell fell out like an hour after he smithed it and now it won’t ring. I hate irony, I hate him. But like in a Christian way. The way you hated Sodom and Gomorrah. I love him but I also want to eradicate him from the face of the planet, you know? It’s a delicate balance.

Dumnezeul meu, forgive Cristina Moldoveanu, my sister, for being so boring. She always talks to me for like five hours about being a future mother and I’m like not interested and it’s getting really hard for me to pretend like I am. Like today after the service she cornered me and was like:

(TEODORA becomes CRISTINA)

CRISTINA

Teodora, how are you, how was your week? Ugh, I barely managed to come, life at home has been so hard, but I always try to make time for family. It’s hard being a pregnant wife. Ever since that spark flew in Vlad’s ear you know he can’t smith anymore and things have been hard. Of course we have a whole field of corn and two sheep which is more than most people have so it’s actually really not that hard, but it’s still hard.
(TEODORA becomes herself again)

TEODORA

You know what’s hard? Listening to that and not wanting a spark to fly in her ear.

Forgive Tataie, my father Adrian Moldoveanu, for swearing in public today. I mean during communion Gheorghe accidentally spilled some wine on him and he was like:

(becomes ADRIAN - gruff, old)

Bată-te-ar boala, rahat cu ochi!

(becomes Teodora again)

You don’t even want to know what that means. Gheorghe deserved it, he’s the worst altar boy, he’s so uncoordinated. That’s because all he does is drink the communion wine. And spill the communion wine. And one time I saw him snort it and I’m not really sure what that did for him, but I will figure it out. And that’s the man Tataie decided I’m gonna marry. Tataie can’t even control himself, but he has no problem deciding my life for me like I’m some kind of sheep with nothing going on in there.

Forgive Sora Paisia, for standing in my path to holiness. I asked her if I could take my vows for like the ninth time, and all she said was:

(TEODORA becomes SORA PAISIA, trying to maintain control)
SORA PAISIA
For the last time, Teodora, you aren’t ready to take your vows. You need to have been a novitiate for at least a year, and it’s only been a week.

TEODORA
I understand, but I think my circumstances are extraordinary.

SORA PAISIA
Extraordinary how?

TEODORA
I mean... (gestures to self)

SORA PAISIA
Teodora, I’m trying to lead a bankrupt convent of thirty ancient nuns who are boycotting service because I’m a woman. Sora Elena said she’d rather be slaughtered by Ottomans than hear a woman speak on a Sunday. And honestly, we don’t have the money to feed them anymore, so she might get her wish. You’re a good girl, Teodora. But at the moment I have no time for your vanity. I will tell you it is a vice you must control if you ever hope to take your vows. So start with that.

(Teodora goes back to the present)
Well at the moment I have no time for her corruption, but I can tell you it’s a vice she really must learn to control. Everyone
knows she takes bribes. If I gave her some aspirin she would have let me be a nun yesterday.

Forgive Iosefina, Doamne, for overreacting. The other night we were hanging out, and I was counting up all the sisters’ sins for the week and some pretty weird stuff happened so I didn’t want anyone to hear. Iosefina can’t speak, so that’s not a problem. And we were so close together our lips accidentally touched, no one could hear us. But then I left to go poop, and Gheorghe pops out of nowhere and grabs me by the arm and he starts threatening to have me kicked out and I’m like is this about the sisters’ sins because you have really good hearing if it is, and he was like no it’s about Iosefina don’t ever hang out with Iosefina again. And I was like what why, and he said being that close to a girl is a sin, and I think he’s right. You’re the most important part of my life, and I have to put you first. I can’t be a saint if I’m hanging out with girls. So this morning I told Iosefina:

(reenacting scene with Iosefina)

TEODORA

Iosefina, you’re a distraction. I need to redevote myself to Dumnezeu if I’m ever going to be a nun. So I asked Sora Paisia to live alone and she said maybe, so this is my room now. Pack
your stuff up, and try not to make too much noise, because I’ll be praying.

(Teodora becomes Iosefina and angrily walks out of the room, goes back to the present)

And she packed and left, but she made so much noise. I should be mad, not her. She’s the one getting in my way. Now my path to you is wide open, Doamne.

What was that?

(TEODORA slumps against the pole and pretends to sleep as ANDREEA walks in carefully and slowly, and slides down on the opposite side of the pole and also pretends to sleep. TEODORA gets up and stands right above ANDREEA, almost on top of her.)

SCENE 2

TEODORA

Well, well, well.

(ANDREEA jumps)

TEODORA

Not even going to pray before you go to bed?

ANDREEA

Oh, hello T.
TEODORA

It’s Teodora. Are you going to pray? Or I could tell Sora Paisia you were out all night doing Dumnezeu knows what. Forgive her Doamne, for she has sinned.

ANDREEA

I don’t like your tone, you nosy peasant.

TEODORA

Firstly, she called me a peasant when I’m beloved by you, Doamne, and you own the entire world last time I checked. Secondly… well I guess she was out feeding the poor at 3am.

ANDREEA

I was just trying to have a little fun in this dead end village. That servant - the one who knows how to spell - was showing me around. It’s a disgusting place, I don’t want to imagine what it looks like in the daytime. I mean, the 1660’s called, they want your well back. Not that this convent is any safer. I ran into a homeless girl sleeping in your yard like a wild animal.

TEODORA

That’s Iosefina, she’s actually your equal if not your better, and she didn’t have to sleep in the yard but she did because she’s outdoorsy.

ANDREEA
Well you’re certainly defensive.

TEODORA

We used to be friends. Before she found the outdoors.

ANDREEA

Oh yes, “friends”.

TEODORA

Why are you saying friends like that? Friends are fine. But if you’re called to serve Dumnezeu then friends tend to get in the way of your relationship to him.

ANDREEA

Well, then I’m glad you’re not friends anymore.

TEODORA

As I was saying, she was out with “G”, who puts the “G” in degenerate (yeah I know how to spell too), and “G” probably showed her around real good (which starts with a G and I know that because not all people in the country are illiterate). He probably showed her everywhere, Doamne. North, east, west, south.

ANDREEA

Why do you care where I was?

TEODORA
He’s given directions to every woman in the village, and he’s my betrothed.

ANDREEA

I’m doing you a favor. He might get in the way of your relationship to Dumnezeu.

TEODORA

You should not be out with him at night. That’s what curve do, and I would hate to think you’re a curva.

ANDREEA

You know my parents can have you kicked out for speaking to me like that? Faster than you can form another weak insult with your slow peasant brain.

TEODORA

I’m not a peasant, my father is Dumnezeu.

ANDREEA

I’m not a curva, I’m a worldly woman.

TEODORA

So worldly you probably let Gheorghe do whatever he wanted to you.

ANDREEA

Oh, do you want a preview of your wedding night? First, we kissed, with tongue. Then he pulled my skirt up and kissed my
pizda, with tongue. Then he was rock hard, so he took his pants off -

TEODORA

You’re pregnant aren’t you? Why would you do that with Gheorghe?! I’m sorry, it’s my Christian duty to help you. We’ll hide the bump, we’ll say all this sheep’s meat is just like really agreeing with you and then we’ll find a midwife and you’ll have the baby, and we’ll take it to a convent.

ANDREEA

I’m not pregnant.

TEODORA

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’RE NOT PREGNANT.

ANDREEA

He couldn’t get it up for more than like two seconds. Maybe he only likes peasants.

TEODORA

I’m gonna cut my ears off! And you’re gonna go straight to hell.

ANDREEA

I’m going to sleep.

TEODORA

I’m going to tell Sora Paisia.

ANDREEA
Go ahead, tell her.

TEODORA

Don’t tell me what to do, you curva, I’m Dumnezeu’s chosen one!

ANDREEA

How would you know you’re Dumnezeu’s Chosen one? Has he ever told you that? For that matter, has he ever told you anything?

TEODORA

He doesn’t have to!

ANDREEA

He doesn’t have to because he doesn’t want to. You’re a prissy, unnatural tattletale and those are not the kinds of people who get to be Dumnezeu’s chosen ones!

TEODORA

Take it back! (grabs Andreea) I am Dumnezeu’s favorite. My father is Dumnezeu, and I’m a saint, do you get that?!

(TEODORA chokes ANDREEA up against the pole, then releases her)

TEODORA

Doamne, I’m so sorry.

ANDREEA

You’re not a saint, you’re insane.

SCENE 3
Andreea runs out of the room. Teodora runs after her. They push and shove each other until they reach Sora Paisia’s room where they burst in. Sora Paisia is counting her money, and she spins around.

SORA PAISIA

Girls, what is the meaning of this?

ANDREEA

Sora Paisia, Teodora just attacked me. Look at my neck, it’s covered in bruises.

TEODORA

Sora Paisia, she just got here today and she was already out trysting with Gheorghe, bringing the stench of sin to the convent.

ANDREEA

It was Teodora who wasn’t in our room. I sat patiently by the window half the night to welcome her when she came back, and I tried to tell her to sleep it off, but she kept telling me she was a Saint and that I had no right to judge her.

SORA PAISIA

Teodora is this true?

TEODORA
Of course it isn’t! Well, some of it is, I might have said I was a Saint but that was more of a prediction than a statement. Sora Paisia, she was the one who went out with Gheorghe, my betrothed, and they did tongue things.

ANDREEA
I’m sorry, who is Gheorghe? I’m very new here and I don’t really know anyone. But he’s your betrothed, you say? Oh, then I understand everything.

SORA PAISIA
Teodora, this is not how nuns behave.

TEODORA
Obviously I didn’t go out with Gheorghe, he’s disgusting!

ANDREEA
Is that any way to talk about your betrothed?

TEODORA
Shut up! Everything she’s saying is a lie!

SORA PAISIA
Teodora, did you cause those bruises?

TEODORA
Well, technically yes.

ANDREEA
Sora Paisia, I’m sure you can agree that Teodora is not headed down a righteous path. I was just trying to help her in whatever small way I could, and this was the thanks I got. And on top of that her hands were filled with — what’s his name? Her betrothed — they were filled with his seed —

TEODORA
You disgusting curva!! (Teodora lunges at Andreea, but Sora Paisia grabs her)

ANDREEA
You see, Sora Paisia? I don’t think my poor neck could take another strangling. And my parents would be very upset if their daughter was murdered on her first night here. Upset enough to cease their donations.

SORA PAISIA
Enough. Teodora, you would have killed Andreea in front of me. You must be punished. I’m confining you to the cellar. Indefinitely.

(Sora Paisia takes her down to the cellar, by going around and around the pole. Once there she ties Teodora to the pole, while Teodora kicks and screams)

SCENE 4
TEODORA

You can’t do this to me! I hope a plague of locusts comes! I hope the water turns to blood! I hope your firstborn son dies! I know that didn’t make sense but I’m angry!

(Sora Paisia ties Teodora to the pole and leaves)

I didn’t do anything wrong. She was out of line, Doamne. If you tell people they’re nothing and no one loves them then of course they’ll try to kill you.

And how dare she tell me all those nasty things about her and Gheorghe? I can’t even think about it. Why there was so much tongue? And did it all start from just kissing? Kissing is so innocent, it’s just some lips touching some other lips. Like when I kissed Iosefina it was innocent. I mean it would have been nice to kiss her longer, but I would not want to use tongue. And I would have liked to kiss her harder, but not like rock harder. And maybe I wanted her hand to grab my hip, but… wait a minute. Longer, harder, hip touching, it doesn’t sound innocent when I put it like that. It sounds exactly like what Andreea and Gheorghe did. But it’s not, I would never have done the stuff they did, mostly because I didn’t know what that stuff was before Andreea told me. But if I had known what that stuff was, would I have done it? Yes. Well, some of it. The hip
touching definitely. And while we were doing it my hip area
definitely started tingling but I thought I was just sore from
praying so much but no! It’s because I like women’s hips.
Now I understand why Gheorghe said it was a sin to be that close
to a girl!
Every day is gonna be torture, because in one of them I’ll brush
against a woman’s hip and then I’ll touch a woman’s hip and next
thing you know I’ll be kissing a woman’s hip while the flames of
Hell lick my feet. I can’t trust myself to be pure and I don’t
wanna be alive if I’m not pure. There’s no point in living. And
there’s only one way to save myself from temptation. I gotta
kill myself. Which is a mortal sin but at least it’ll be quick.
And I won’t have to see everyone’s ugly faces again because I’ll
be dead. Unless they cry, I would like to see that. (struggles
for a bit with the rope unties herself) It’s a sign!

(Teodora looks around, sees the pole. She takes the rope from
around her hands and winds it around the top. She ties a sling
out of it and places it around her neck. She pauses.)
I guess I could try to redeem myself. Saint Mary of Egypt did,
she seduced a whole boat of men before she became a saint. She
probably kissed a lot of hips. But not women’s hips because
women shouldn’t be at sea.
(she tightens the belt, then stops)

TEODORA

Doamne, I’m acting insane. (shouts) I can’t kill myself without a priest here. Helloooo!!! Could someone get me a priest so he can confess me? For no reason in particular it definitely doesn’t have to do with hips!!

(As she’s tightening the rope, Iosefina walks in. Iosefina sees Teodora and immediately tackles her to the ground.)

TEODORA

Iosefina? Get off me!

(Iosefina waits until Teodora has calmed down, then gets off of her.)

TEODORA

Ow, that hurt. It’s a sign. I’m glad you stopped me, because now I can confess. I’m so sorry I acted like a dirty temptress the other day. I kept telling myself it was innocent, but it super wasn’t and the hip tingle I got should have told me that. I think I have feelings for your hips, but it won’t happen again because I won’t let it happen again.

(Iosefina puts her hand on Teodora’s hip)

TEODORA

Do you like my hips back?
(Iosefina nods, and throws Teodora’s rope to the side)

TEODORA

No no no no no! This can’t happen. What if someone walked in? What if Gheorghe catches us and he tells Sora Paisia and she kicks me out and I’m homeless and I have to sell my body to survive and the only person who will buy it is Gheorghe?

(Teodora reads Iosefina’s lips for the following)

TEODORA

You’ll wear burlap so I can’t see your hips. Won’t you get hot? Not as hot as Hell.

(Iosefina exits)

TEODORA

She’s right, maybe I can redeem myself, just like Mary of Egypt. Alright. Doamne, Teodora is back in the game. I’ll never touch Iosefina again, and Gheorghe will never touch me, and you’ll touch my soul forever when I become a Saint. But first I’m gonna redeem myself so hard. Rock hard.

SCENE 5

SETTING
The cellar Teodora has been locked in, which is the same bare stage with a pole in the center. A few hours before the church service.

AT RISE

Teodora is slumped against the pole, the rope loosely in her hands. She has been in the cellar for a week. She doesn’t move, and stares aimlessly at the audience. Cristina enters quickly, in a flurry of activity. Teodora’s interest is slightly piqued, but she does not greet or acknowledge Cristina.

CRISTINA

Teodora, how are you? Doamne it stinks in here. Are you sleeping enough? You look tired. I brought you some cozonac in case they’re not feeding you. Ugh isn’t there a window or something, how do you breathe in here?

TEODORA

Cristina, now is the time you pick to visit me?

CRISTINA

Oh, poor Teodora of course it is. When I heard you got locked in the cellar I was so worried about you.

TEODORA

Then why didn’t you come before, I’ve been here a week.

CRISTINA
Listen, you’re not the only one who has it hard. You should be grateful I’m here at all, you know I had to pay one aspru just to see you.

TEODORA

It’s nice to know Sora Paisia’s prices are going up. Soon I’ll be a luxury only princes can afford.

CRISTINA

No prince would pay to see you. Not that you’re not pretty, you’re just a little dirty right now.

TEODORA

If you only knew. I’m hip touchingly dirty.

CRISTINA

Teodora, I’m worried about you. Sora Paisia said you almost killed that Iasi girl. That doesn’t sound like you.

TEODORA

So did you come here to give me a lecture or?

CRISTINA

I came here to ask you a favor. But first you have to promise you won’t tell anyone about this. Not your friends, not the sheep, not even yourself. Your voice carries.

TEODORA

Fine I promise or whatever.
CRISTINA

It’s about Tataie Adrian.

TEODORA

Oh no, did he get drunk and slap a Sister’s butt again?

CRISTINA

No, of course not! Although the service hasn’t started yet, there’s still time. This isn’t about drink, this is about love. Tataie doesn’t love much except for drink, and Vlad. Doamne, he loves Vlad. I don’t think a vegetable’s ever been loved as much as Vlad is.

TEODORA

I know it’s like if you love him so much why don’t you marry him.

CRISTINA

Exactly! Listen, before the spark Vlad was great. He was strong and protective and he had such nice arms but now he just sits there and drools and while some people might like that, I don’t. I’ve found someone else, someone who appreciates me.

TEODORA

Whaaat.

CRISTINA
I mean I’ve known him for years, and after the spark he was so helpful to me, and for the past eight months he’s put the spark back in my life. The problem is he put the spark back a little too loudly the other night, and Tataie heard us. So now Tataie is threatening to disown me and kill him if we don’t stop immediately. [SL17] But I don’t want to stop, ever. He’s hot, and he can speak words, and he’s hot, which is three things Vlad isn’t. He’s my person. He’s my child’s father. So I decided to take matters into my own hands. (takes out a vial) But I need your help. You know Tataie likes to drink a lot of the communion wine before the service.

TEODORA

Of course, sneaking around makes him feel young again.

CRISTINA

All you have to do is sneak into the chapel in a few hours, slip this into the wine before he drinks it, and come right back. No one will know it was you.

TEODORA

Why me?

CRISTINA

I can’t do it, I’m pregnant. Help me, Teodora. I can’t have this baby on the streets, my child doesn’t deserve that.
TEODORA

That’s not just some fun wine flavoring is it?

CRISTINA

It’s nothing terrible, it’s just cucută.

TEODORA

Hemlock? That’ll kill him!

CRISTINA

Oh, so now you’re defending him? He abandoned you here without so much as a goodbye. I’m the only real family you’ve ever had! I pay your dues and I make you cozonac and I visit you, not Tataie. I mean, he’s going to marry you off as easy as he’d sell a sheep, and you don’t deserve that. You deserve the kind of happiness that I’ve found. Think about it, if Tataie isn’t in the icon anymore, you can be happy with Dumnezeu. We can both be free.

TEODORA

Who’s the father?

CRISTINA

I don’t think that’s really important now-

TEODORA

Who got you pregnant.

CRISTINA
Gheorghe. I know he’s your betrothed, but we love each other.

TEODORA

No you don’t! Gheorghe doesn’t love anything except a whole bunch of women and looking cool. I mean just this past week he got rock hard with Andreea -

CRISTINA

We’ve had our obstacles, and we’ve only come out stronger. Please Teodora, do it so my child and I have a home. I’m leaving the door unlocked so you can get out before service. I hope you’ll do the right thing.

(Cristina exits)

TEODORA

Fută-te-ar Sfinții până apară în Noul Testament Gheorghe! Why do you get all the women’s hips and you won’t even let me have one? No, it’s not about that. He’s ruining everyone’s lives! Mine, Iosefina’s, Cristina’s, even Vlad’s. Doamne, there’s no way I’m letting Gheorghe get away with this. He’s a menace, and he must be stopped. (takes out the vial, looks at it) And I know just how to do it. I’ll get rid of him, Doamne, and I’ll be the greatest hero Vărzărești has ever seen.

(Teodora starts to leave, but is cut off by Iosefina, who enters with some bread and water)
TEODORA (looking at the ground)

Iosefina. I can’t eat right now. (coughs twice) Because I’m sick. In my soul. I like can’t move because there’s so much evil in the world. I’ve said too much. Oh, Iosefina it’s terrible. My sister just visited me, and she was so so upset. She told me something I don’t even want to say. It’s about Gheorghe. He’s the father of Cristina’s child.

(Teodora starts to fake cry)

TEODORA

I told you it was horrible, why did you make me say it? And you know the new girl? Andreea “with tongue” Pop? It’s a little nickname I have for her because she did tongue things with Gheorghe and she says she’s not pregnant, but honestly who knows. And if you think about it he’s the reason we’re not hanging out anymore. He’s the one who said you were a sin.

(Teodora takes out the vial of hemlock)

That’s why he’s gonna drink this. Cucută. Cristina gave this to me because she wants Gheorghe dead, but she’s too scared to do it herself, so I must. So I need you to leave the door unlocked. [SL18] I know Gheorghe drinks most of the wine out of his sack waay before anyone even gets here for the service and then waters it down. He thinks no one notices but it’s my effing job to notice
sin. So, can you please help me? With Gheorghe gone, we’ll all be free.

(Iosefina nods)

TEODORA

Oh thank you thank you thank you! I knew I could count on you. You’re a true friend.

SCENE 6

AT RISE

Teodora mixes the hemlock into the wine sack like a witch over her cauldron, and hides. Gheorghe walks in, takes a short sip, looks disgusted.

GHEORGHE

Ugh, it tastes like rat pee.

(Gheorghe puts the sack back. Tataie Adrian walks in and takes a few quick sips)

ADRIAN

Pizda ma-tii they’re getting cheaper with the wine every week.

(Adrian puts the sack down and leaves)

SCENE 7

AT RISE
We are now in the church, and the Eucharist is being given.

SORA PAISIA

*Stapane, Iubitorule de oameni, Doamne Iisuse Hristoase,*

*Dumnezeul meu, sa nu-mi fie mie spre osanda Sfintele acestea,*

*pentru ca sunt nevrednic, ci spre curatirea si sfintirea*

*sufletului si a trupului si spre arvunirea vietii si a*

*imparatiei ce va sa sa vie.*

(Adrian, Cristina, and Andreea line up to take the Eucharist.

Gheorghe gives everyone a sip of the wineskin.Before each

interactions Sora Paisia says)

ADRIAN

(makes a throat slit gesture)

If you even look at Cristina I’ll kill you.

(Adrian leaves, Cristina comes up next)

CRISTINA

(as she sips from the skin, whispers to Gheorghe)

Gheorghe, does Tataie seem healthy to you?

GHEORGHE

Oh yeah babe, he looks like he could kill a man.

(Cristina leaves, Andreea walks up to Gheorghe)

ANDREEA

Love your sack, it looks sturdy.
GHEORGHE

It is sturdy.

(Andreea takes a long sip and walks away choking a bit)

(Sora Paisia offers Gheorghe the bread and wine)

SORA PAISIA

*In numele Domnului Isus Cristos.*

GHEORGHE

No thanks, it tastes gross. I mean, Amin. (takes the bread and wine, then Sora Paisia does the same)

SORA PAISIA

*Pomeneste-ma, Doamne, intru imparatia Ta.*

(There is a moment of silence as everyone contemplates the Eucharist. Then some heaving noises come from Adrian.)

ADRIAN (to Cristina)

What’s happening to me? (to Gheorghe) Gheorghe, what did you put in that wine? I knew it tasted like rat pee.

ANDREEA

How do you know that?

(Cristina is also heaving at this point)

CRISTINA

Oh no, I don’t think this is morning sickness.

(Cristina throws up in Adrian’s lap. Adrian also throws up.)
SORA PAISIA
What is going on in my church? Stop acting like savages this instant. (her stomach starts to rumble) Ohhhhh Isuse I feel a hellfire coming.

(Cristina and Adrian are pawing at each other weakly)

ADRIAN
I never trusted you Gheorghe. You did this to me! I curse you both!

GHEORGHE
Um I don’t feel so great.

ADRIAN
You won’t feel so great when I’m through with you, you man curva!

CRISTINA
Tataie stop acting crazy right now.

ADRIAN
You’re in cahoots with him! You poisoned me and I’m acting crazy?!

CRISTINA
Well you’re not the only one who has it hard, I’ve been poisoned too, and I’m pregnant.

GHEORGHE
He he, man curva.

ADRIAN

I’ll kill you!

(Cristina gets up heavily from the pew and puts herself between Adrian and Gheorghe)

CRISTINA

You will not touch him! Because – you shouldn’t be violent in a church.

ANDREEA

You two are banging, aren’t you?

CRISTINA

Shut up, curva, I’ve had more than enough of your meddling.

ANDREEA

Maybe if you meddled with your little boy toy more often he wouldn’t need me to meddle with him.

CRISTINA

He told me he couldn’t even get it up with you!

ANDREEA

Maybe if you hang around old people enough you start to take on their characteristics.

CRISTINA

You filthy piece of rahat!
GHEORGHE
Hey, can we stop talking about my pula? It’s doing fine, (to Adrian) it did what your precious Vlad never could.

CRISTINA
Gheorghe not in a church.

GHEORGHE
Babe, stop. Everyone else in this village is a girl. Well I guess she’s from Iasi, but she’s still a girl. But you’re a woman.

CRISTINA
Then why did you wink at her when you were giving her the Eucharist??

GHEORGHE
Babe she mean nothing, what will it take to convince you? You have a five year plan, and a field of corn, and two whole sheep-

CRISTINA
Gheorghe I’m married.

GHEORGHE
–and you love taking care of me, and I think that’s excellent. I didn’t really plan on doing this but I guess when life gives you lemons you gotta keep your woman happy at all costs. Babe may I be so bold as to ask you to marry me?
Cristina, I told you he was no good. (punches his open palm) I can die happy if this is my last act.

Andreea

This is much more entertaining than Iasi.

(Iosefina enters. Everyone is quiet.)

Sora Paisia

Iosefina, you must send help!

Cristina

There is no cure, it’s cucuta.

Adrian

So you did poison me!

Cristina

Tataie, now is not the time, because I’m getting married and we’re all done for, and it’s Teodora’s fault. If you really want
to know, Tataie, she was only supposed to poison you, but she got all of us!

ANDREEA

I can’t believe I’m dying at the hands of a peasant!

(Iosefina points to Gheorghe. She advances on him.)

GHEORGHE

Wow that’s pretty aggressive.

SORA PAISIA

Iosefina, stop this at once, you’re acting violently. I will not have violence in my convent.

GHEORGHE (to Iosefina)

Hey babe, I just don’t think I’m your type..

(Iosefina lunges towards Gheorghe, but before she can get to him Cristina attacks her)

CRISTINA

Stay away from my husband you murderer!!

(Iosefina gets up and runs away)

CRISTINA

And never come back!

(Teodora runs in)

TEODORA
Why is everyone just lying on the ground? It’s extremely disrespectful to Dumnezeu. We have pews for a reason. Everyone get up!

CRISTINA

Teodora, you’ve poisoned us all.

ADRIAN

I disown her, I’m the patriarch!

TEODORA

I just put what you gave me in the wine. How was I supposed to know everyone would drink it?

SORA PAISIA

Teodora, leave. I banish you from this convent, and if you step foot here again I hope it is to die.

TEODORA

I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.

SCENE 8

AT RISE

Teodora runs in large circle around the pole.

TEODORA (as she runs)
I’m never coming back, I’ll keep running forever. Glad that’s solved, I feel better already. This is actually nice, I’ve never been to the woods before. There are like soo many trees and the leaves are changing color! They’re exact shade of puke that was everywhere in the chapel. This grass I’m on is like so soft, it’s fantastic for my arches. I wish everyone at the convent could feel this soft soft grass but they can’t feel anything anymore because I killed them.

I may beautiful on the outside but my inside is rotten. Maybe I’ve been worshiping the wrong deity all along. You know who would love me? Satan. I don’t sweat easily and I’m an incurable sinner.

(kneels down to the ground and knocks)
Hello, Satan? It’s me, your new disciple! You probably know me already, because I just poisoned everyone I know! I didn’t mean to - well, not all of them anyway, but they’re dead because of me. On a scale of 1-10 that’s pretty bad, right?

(sound of a horn)
So what is that, like above a 7 for sure?

(the horn blows again, accompanied by drums)
Where is that coming from? I can’t see anything in this effing forest. Maybe if I (starts climbing the pole) Ow, there are so
many branches - ow! Get to the top and then I’ll (stands on platform, looks down) See. (sees the Ottoman army) There’s dozens of Ottomans. I thought they were in Vienna, how did they -? They’re headed straight for the convent. Our bell isn’t ringing to warn the village, why isn’t it ringing? The tongue fell off. Gheorghe strikes again. The villagers don’t even know the Ottomans are coming. Iosefina probably doesn’t know either. I have to save them! (looks down) I can’t, I’m scared of heights. Um, alright, calm down Teodora, you are so good. Just climb down. (tries, but can’t) Oh, I can’t do that. Hey Satan? A little help here? Satan, come on. I was so bad for you don’t I at least deserve this?

(an Ottoman arrow shoots her in the side, she falls slowly off the pole)

Intinde-mi-as chilotii pe crucea ma-tii!! Satan, we are done! I know you’re evil incarnate, but haven’t you ever heard of doing someone a favor? Dumnezeul meu, I’m so sorry I ever doubted you I know what I have to do to make myself worthy: to the village! (starts limping in a circle in the opposite direction) I’ll never outrun them they have effing horses. Doamne, help me! This time I actually need it.

(a sheep wanders onstage)
Ahh! Doamne, you know I don’t like sheep, you can’t tell what’s happening behind their eyes and they’re like weirdly fast. Wait a minute, am I supposed to... do you want me to like, ride this sheep? I hope you know I would never do this for anything less than an Ottoman invasion, and I expect to be immediately canonized if I make it out alive. Here, sheepy sheep, come here. Your eyes are so dead, you probably don’t care if you live or die, do you? Do you want to maybe die in a blaze of glory and redemption? Yes you do, I know you do. Come here!

(Teodora becomes the sheep and runs around and around on the sheep to the village, where she screams)

TEODORA

The Ottomans are coming, the Ottomans are coming! Evacuate your homes! Run to the woods, yeah, that’s it, run away! Get out of here! Wait, is everyone running away from me? Is it my ride? Is this weird? That’s pretty rude to sheep, but fine, as long as you get out of here. Leeeaaave this place!! It’s dangerous!

(Teodora finishes shooing everyone out of the village, then rides the sheep to the convent, then lets the sheep go. Teodora calls after it)

TEODORA
Say thank you to your sheep people for me! Your eyes may be dead but your hearts are full.

(Teodora walks into the chapel. There are no more bodies there)

TEODORA

Iosefina, I’ve come to save you! What the – where is everyone? Where are the bodies?

(Sora Paisia enters)

TEODORA

Oh Dumnezeul meu, Sora Paisia! You’re alive?

SORA PAISIA

What in Dumnezeu’s name are you doing here, Teodora? You’d better be here to die. What is in your side?

TEODORA

Let’s just say, Satan is not a forgiving master.

(Gheorghe enters with Cristina)

TEODORA

Cristina? Gheorghe?

GHEORGHE

Whoah, sick new piercing!

CRISTINA

You have a lot of nerve to come back here after what you did.

GHEORGHE
You’re a murderer with a capital - what letter does murderer start with?

CRISTINA

M.

GHEORGHE

That’s what I said.

TEODORA

I’m not a murderer because none of you are dead.

(Andreea enters)

Although I wish some of you were. Hello, Andreea.

ANDREEA

Love your new look, are you physicalizing being a thorn in everyone’s side?

TEODORA

I’ll have you know a literal Ottoman shot me! And speaking of a literal Ottoman, their literal army is coming here because they can see the convent from miles away, and the bell isn’t ringing because, surprise! Gheorghe sucks, so I came here to let the village know and save everybody. I am so so happy that none of you are dead but the Ottomans could change that real quick, so we have to get away from here and hide, it’s our only chance.

ANDREEA
Yeah here’s the thing is we have no reason to believe you because you almost murdered us.

SORA PAISIA

She might have a point.

TEODORA

That was an accident, and I’m sorry, everybody, and I’ll keep being sorry for a long time but right now we have more important things to deal with.

ANDREEA

We don’t trust you because everything about you is fake. Your outfit is fake and your personality is fake –

SORA PAISIA

-The Ottomans were in Vienna last I heard, but they are notoriously fast–

ANDREEA

-and I wouldn’t be surprised if that arrow is just for attention.

TEODORA

Oh you mean this arrow? This arrow that I’m definitely just holding under my armpit because I’m an attention-curva? (starts pulling at arrow, it won’t come out) This-arrow - is- for-
effing - real - mother-effers - and - I’ll - effing - prove- it
to you-

(Gheorghe tries to help Teodora)

GHEORGHE

Aw here, let me help you babe -

TEODORA

Don’t touch my arrow, creep! (pause) Can someone please help me get my arrow out?

SORA PAISIA

Here, let me help (struggles with arrow) It’s not coming out -

CRISTINA

Fine, I’ll help.

GHEORGHE

I’ll supervise!

(they all heave, but nothing happens for a while)

ANDREEA

Do any of you even lift? Move.

(Andreea pulls the arrow out easily, Teodora shrieks)

ANDREEA

Shut up it’s only a flesh wound. Ew, someone take this weapon away from me.

(Sora Paisia takes the weapon)
SORA PAISIA

Wait a minute, there’s something written on here. Let me see...
oh, my Arabic is rusty, but I think this translates to:

“Should have payed the tithe. Love, the Ottoman army”.

CRISTINA

That’s kind of nice. Really personalized. Gheorghe, I wish you
did that something nice like that for me.

TEODORA

Do you believe me now?

SORA PAISIA

She’s telling the truth, there’s only one army in the world that
has this kind of flair. We’re in danger, we have to go.

ANDREEA

We can’t just go, all my stuff is here. And the other sisters,
what about them? And my stuff.

SORA PAISIA

The other sisters can hang with us if they’re fast enough, and
if they’re not fast enough then they can suck it.

TEODORA

Do we have everyone? Where’s Tataie?

CRISTINA
I think we could go without him, I mean he probably doesn’t want to be found.

TEODORA

We’re not leaving anyone behind. Except the other sisters. Tataie? Tataie, where are you? Tataie? (Tataie enters, Teodora sees him) Tataie, there you are! Is that Vlad on your back?

TATAIE

I think the poison made me stronger. Let’s go, before the Ottomans get here!

SCENE 9

AT RISE

Each character stands on the pole

CRISTINA

Living in the woods is hard. I mean it’s better than being killed by the Ottomans, but it’s still hard, especially for me since I’m a mother now. Thank Doamne I’m free to be with Gheorghe, and thank Doamne he’s so good with the kid. I think it’s because they have really similar life philosophies.

GHEORGHE
Bruh the sick thing about living in the woods is there are like, no rules! I mean besides be kind and don’t die. I’m honestly super glad the Ottomans attacked, because now I get to just chill with my son and ride my sheep Timofei around and make sweet love to my woman without worrying that her dad will kill me! And I definitely don’t want to make sweet love to anyone else, mostly because there isn’t anyone else interested.

ADRIAN
I haven’t felt this robust since I was married. The love of a good man does wonders. Vlad and I, we understand each other… let’s just say, spark who?

ANDREEA
There is so much drama in these trees. Like the amount of drama is sickening, I love it. I literally specialize in it, because— I’m a spy. Now that I’ve told you, I have to kill you. Just kidding, that’s an oversimplification of spying. But ever since Teodora left two camps formed, the peasants and the convent people, and I spy on the peasants. I’m like really sorry for them, because they’re not even allowed to ride sheep, like that’s a basic human right. But that’s what happens when a tyrant rules over you. You know some people don’t do well with
freedom, and it’s super sad to see how the power has gone to their heads.

SORA PAISIA
I’m the unquestioned leader of the villagers. There are no cranky nuns refusing to come to mass here because I took care of them, and no one will ever forget it. The villagers do whatever I say. The other day I sneezed, so they chopped their cabins down to make me a massive fire so I could feel warmer. So stupid, I mean a cold is a cold a fire won’t cure you but there you go. They don’t have homes now. Ha! I love it here.

ANDREEA
Teodora? I haven’t seen her in years. I mean the peasants are like obsessed with her. They’re terrified of Paisia but they put Teodora on a pedestal. Literally, they wouldn’t let her come down until she performed miracles for them, it was super scary. Plus she always seemed lost without that sheep girl.

ADRIAN
Teodora. I was very angry at her before, but I forgive her, because without her would I have my beautiful Vlad? No. I don’t know where she went, but I hope she finds love, because everyone should have love.

GHEORGHE
Teodora? I hardly know her. I haven’t seen her in a while, but it’s funny because whether she wanted to or not she kind of made it possible for me and Cristina to be together. So I wish her well, because my life is what it is because of her, which is great because I sure love monogamy, it really suits me, I don’t have any unsatisfied needs whatsoever.

CRISTINA

She ran away a while ago. But the other day I was getting some air from my family, and I looked up, and I thought I saw a figure of some sort on a tree, and I remembered Teodora’s crazy dream about being a stylist or a – whatever those ascetics are who live on pillars to be physically and spiritually closer to Dumnezeu, and I thought, oh, maybe she’s doing it, good for her. Maybe Teodora is trying to be a saint.

Blackout

AT RISE

Teodora is now standing on the pole, searching for something on the ground.

TEODORA

Iosefina? Iosefina! Forgive me, Iosefina mea.
Appendix B: Scene from Playwriting

The Pole

By Diana Lobontiu

TEODORA - Has wanted to be a Saint since she can remember, but mostly for the fame. Petty and a know it all.

JOSEFINA - Tends the pigs at the convent, love animals. Kind and gentle, but wary of people.
WHEN: The Middle Ages
WHERE: a Romanian convent and the surrounding woods

Lights up on TEODORA sitting on a tree top, the kind that is just a trunk and no branches. There should be the illusion that the tree is impossibly tall. Andreea has been sitting on top of the tree for eight hours. It is raining. She is muttering prayers under her breath. JOSEFINA runs up to the tree trunk, panting and out of breath. JOSEFINA stands at the base of the tree, looking up at TEODORA, who notices her after a while.

TEODORA

I’m not coming down. Don’t even say anything. I know exactly what you’re going to say. I’m staying here until I become a motherfucking saint. So you might as well go back to your pigshit because this is my home now. I have everything I need. A pole.

Adjusts her butt painfully on top of the pole

Fresh air.

Looks up and it rains on her face and she winces
And water. I’m so well hydrated. I don’t think I’ve ever felt healthier. So go back to your disgusting life, you sinner. Go away! Sinner! Deviant! Devil!

A bird turd lands in TEODORA’s eye

Cocksucking sonuva - no, you know what? God loves me.

She turns the other eye to the sky

Here, shit in my other eye!

A bird turd lands in her other eye

Asslicking cunting - this is good! I’m better than Jesus! No one slapped him twice. See Josefina I’m already better than Jesus, so why don’t you just go.

PAUSE

Leave me the fuck alone. I don’t want you. I don’t need you. I never did. And I’ve never wanted anyone, except God. And Jesus. And the Holy Spirit. And you’re none of them, you’re just an
urchin covered in pigshit. Pigshit! Did you hear that? On the
outside and on the inside, because you have a pighsit soul.

PAUSE

Fine, stay there all day, see if I care.

PAUSE

Pretty soon I’ll become a Saint and ascend to Heaven and you’ll
just rot here. For nothing.

PAUSE

Josefina. Please. Just go. I don’t want you. I can’t concentrate
on God. With you here. I have to concentrate on God. Just leave
me alone.

PAUSE

Why did you kiss me? You ruined everything. I have to be a
Saint. I can’t be with you. Just go back to your pig sty. You
have your pigs, they love you. You love them. You’ll have a
chance at a good life. Relatively speaking.

PAUSE

Josefina I’m so tired. I’m so hungry. You’re making it so hard.
My butt hurts. So much. This tree isn’t even a pole, it’s like
sharp. It really hurts.

PAUSE
If you’re going to stand there until we both die, did you at least bring anything to eat?

JOSEFINA pulls a loaf of bread out of her bag and lays it at the base of the pole.

I’m not coming down. You’re a temptress. With your coming after me and your food and your lips.

TEODORA breaks down

Fuck you. I love you. Only because I’m hungry and my butt hurts. Josefina I don’t know what to do. I hurt so much, but God wants us to hurt, doesn’t he? So we’ll love him more. But I’d rather just not hurt. Which I know is a sin. But I’ve sinned already. I’m a sinner because of you. I love you now and I feel dirty like your pigshit got on me. I feel dirty inside because of you. And warm. I feel warm inside. How did you do all that to me. I don’t know what to do tell me what to do. I want to come down.

(laughs and sobs) I’m so scared of heights.

BLACKOUT
Appendix C:  Sfânta Program

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Dave Catlett  
Curt Lamy
Chad McMillan  
Collin Hiller-Thayer
Grace weniger

All my beautiful board ops!

SFÂNTA

ROUMANIAN PROFANITIES

Acio! a se asezea cu steaua! — I’ll hang my underwear on the family’s cross

Pie! ia-o! (Bray, Bray, Bray) in local Romanian — I hope the Saints talk you sad you come up in the New Testament.

Asta se zice — What would a crucifix.

Cruce! — The

Pute! — You mother’s vagina (actually a 2 word)

NOTE

One year ago I went for a run, and I stopped in the middle of the road because I had a thought: what if I name a comedy show a girl who needs to be a saint, not for the halos but for the tiara? I’m Romanian, and I felt like it was important to make what I was doing more authentic. I decided to call it "Sfânta," a Romanian word that means "saint." And what if I played all the characters? And get rid of the real Elena, a car is about to hit you. Our first scene, how I am. About to present my pet for an adoption (especially) and take myself to the church, give or take. Hopefully. Since then I have researched and studied the life of the first woman Romanian Orthodox saint, Elena Teodorova de la Băbăi. The teodorova could live in Vladimir, or Russia, or in the woods to escape in. Usually stuck in her house, and still becomes a saint. I wrote my version of her story, with a host of other characters, some fictional and some not. My character is much more skilled, much more letter, and twice as much as me.

Of course, I couldn’t do this without help, and I would like to thank Marla for her help and complete willingness to help us whenever we needed it, and Stephanie for her unwavering support and poetry-writing abilities. I’m lucky to have these wonderful women in my life, and I truly believe that they are the ones who make this show possible. Thank you all so much. It’s been a lot of fun. I hope you enjoy it as much as we did.

Cinnamon Lindsley

Director

Stephanie Latsha — a Romanian national that helped us to understand Romanian culture and customs. She is currently working as a diplomat in the Russian Federation.

Musical Director — Constantine Todorov, a Romanian composer and conductor. He is currently working as a conductor in the Romanian National Symphony Orchestra.

Stage Manager — Elena Teodorova, a Romanian actress and producer. She is currently working as a producer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Set Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian set designer. He is currently working as a set designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Lighting Designer — Elena Teodorova, a Romanian lighting designer. She is currently working as a lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian prop designer. He is currently working as a prop designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Costume Designer — Elena Teodorova, a Romanian costume designer. She is currently working as a costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian makeup artist. He is currently working as a makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian director's assistant. He is currently working as a director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as a stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Costumes Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant costume designer. He is currently working as an assistant costume designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Makeup Artist — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant makeup artist. He is currently working as an assistant makeup artist in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Director's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant director's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant director's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Stage Manager's Assistant — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant stage manager's assistant. He is currently working as an assistant stage manager's assistant in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Lighting Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant lighting designer. He is currently working as an assistant lighting designer in the Romanian National Theatre.

Assistant Props Designer — Ioan Teodorov, a Romanian assistant props designer. He is currently working as an assistant props designer in the Romanian National Theatre.
Appendix D: Sfânta Poster
**Works Cited**

Faroqhi, Suraiya, I.B. Tauris, “The Economic and Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire .”

*Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, 2005, pp. 65–75.


“Viata Sfintei Teodora De La Sihla.” Crestin Ortodox, 11 Apr. 2014,