

Chapter 7: Social and Organizational Foundations

Content and Form: A Method Takes Shape

The production of *Showdown at Haunted High* (Spangler & Students of Salina School District, 1987) caught the attention of the community and laid the groundwork for a Lovewell Summer Academy Program from 1990 through 1996 in cooperation with the Salina Public School System (Kansas Unified School District 305) and the Salina Arts and Humanities Commission. Parents, teachers and arts leaders were now interested in the method we used to create and implement the show. The feedback was very good, and some of us who were observing the process as a possible model were interested in taking this concept to the next level of organizational development.

Mary Koch was the widow of a wealthy Kansas oilman and a generous patron of the arts in Wichita. Mary and I had first met in Charleston, South Carolina, at the Spoleto Arts Festival. We struck up a friendship and, consequently, I was invited to be her houseguest in Wichita for a few days each time I came home to visit my family in nearby Salina. She threw lavish parties during my visits and encouraged me to play and sing my songs and talk about my dream of Lovewell Institute for the Creative Arts.

Mary brought a van full of her friends to Salina to see our production of *Showdown at Haunted High* (Spangler & Students of Salina School District, 1987) and we talked of how the project had been cosponsored by the school system and the local arts commission. Soon after seeing the show, she connected me with her lawyers and encouraged me to start the process of forming a not-for-profit organization that would continue to develop my concept and theory of the Lovewell Method. She vowed to help make this happen.

I was a musical and theatrical artist currently living in Florida who had never

taken a business or accounting class in my life. There was that moment of panic when I realized that Mary Koch saw the value in this new brand of community arts education and was determined to institutionalize it. Suddenly I had to become someone I had not yet been in order to help manifest this vision. Soon I was in the Wichita College Law Library researching similar arts organizational structures and filling out IRS forms to secure Lovewell Institute's 501(c) 3 tax exempt status. The Wichita lawyers did not know enough about the proposed Lovewell program or arts-based not for profits to be very helpful except to supply the appropriate application forms and proforma articles and by-laws.

It took me 2 years to define the organization in legal and corporate terms and complete the process of obtaining our approval as a not-for-profit corporation from state and federal authorities. During this process, I learned more than I really wanted to know about the IRS and not-for-profit corporate structure. A theme of new birth emerged out of this period.

After our daughter Marjorie Ann was born in 1987, all priorities in my life changed. For me, there was no turning back or quitting this job of fatherhood. Here was my opportunity to have the family I always wanted. There was no instruction book but there was something inside me that said if I had learned anything about love from all the spiritual reading and processing I had done, now was the time to put it to the test. I was about to learn the practical application of all those lofty ideals of selflessness, stewardship, and unconditional love. This was my opportunity to grasp principles of sustainability and the evolutionary process that would get me through the next phase of my life. It was a test that I chose to take.

Martha and I purchased a little house in Big Pine Key (29 miles northeast of Key West), moved the grand piano down from New York City, bought our first computer, and set up a home and an office. Collaborators on my three active musicals loved coming to the Florida Keys for work sessions. I still occasionally flew to New York to produce TV jingles. Caedmon Records commissioned me to write and produce a children's record based on my own stories and music. *Dancing Animals* (Spangler, 1988a) was a creatively rewarding project involving the authentic sounds of animals being electronically "sampled" and integrated into the musical fabric of the story-songs. All of the recording and mixing was done at a small studio in Key West utilizing the talent of my local musician friends. Martha and our new child helped inspire these songs and stories.

In May of 1988, I got a call from a representative at BMI that the York Theatre in New York City was interested in speaking with the authors of *Nefertiti* (Spangler & Gore, 1977) regarding a possible production. They told me that Christopher Gore had just died and I would need to make some legal decisions regarding the future of that project. Chris had been nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay for *Fame* (Gore & Parker, 1980) and had been actively involved with writing the TV series spun off from the hit movie. We had not been in touch with each other for a few years. Christopher's brother, Rick, was a lead writer and science editor of National Geographic Magazine. Rick and I met and decided to revive *Nefertiti* by developing a new script based on Christopher's work and staging a reading of the retitled *Children of the Sun* at the York Theatre in New York (Spangler, Gore, & Gore, 1989). This was the rebirth of a project that had been abandoned a decade earlier.

In 1989, Martha and I had our second child, Catherine Helen. Big Pine Key had been a culture shock for us after living in New York City. My income was dropping dramatically to around one quarter of what I had been making in New York. We sold my studio co-op in New York City and eventually the house in Sag Harbor. It was good for our children to have a big yard and trees to play in, but it occurred to me that maybe we had gone too far. My original idea had been to get out of the big city, finish up the three musicals on which I was working, and start making some royalties. Income was still coming in from *Romper Room & Friends* (Claster & Claster, 1981) but not enough to support our growing family.

I was regularly flying to Kansas for Lovewell Board meetings and to produce an informational and promotional video explaining the Lovewell program. The Salina School District and I were also setting up the Summer Academy that was to begin in

1990. After several exploratory trips to Miami and Orlando, I realized that making an income from jingles in Florida was going to be more difficult than I thought. The jobs were few and far between, and many of the clients were either naïve, unscrupulous, or both. In New York, the commercial advertising industry was very centralized and professional with strong unions to protect the rights, income, and benefits of the musicians, singers, and actors. Protecting the rights of artists was a subject that interested me and continues to be a theme of the Lovewell philosophy.

The York Theatre reading of *Children of the Sun* (Spangler et al., 1989) went well, so we scheduled a full production at the Tennessee Williams Fine Art Center in Key West. It was produced by Mark Leonard Simmons who had put together the staged reading for the York Theatre in New York. Rick Gore and I worked hard on the new script and lyrics. We cast the leading roles in New York, brought in a fine musical director, and opened the show on October 14, 1989. I directed the production and it was informative to see it please the audience and receive positive response from local reviews, but Rick Gore and I knew there was still work to be done. Directing the show had been very rewarding, and I became more interested in seeing the vision through-- from the conception to the writing to the directing. Years of rewriting to suit the whims of the directors or producers was beginning to make me weary and wary. What often happened was that my collaborators and I would expend enormous effort to get a show in shape just to be sent back to the drawing table because the current producer decided the show should focus on something entirely different. This happened too often. Even if we were paid a fee for the option on the material, it was never enough to cover the time and effort put into the rewrites.

Directing my own material was very appealing. I had fond memories of writing

and directing my shows in college. The clarity of my intention as a writer was intact because as the stage director I built that clarity into the production. There is a myth in our business that an artist loses his or her perspective by performing the duties of both author and director. Although it can and has happened, that fear of losing perspective is more a superstition than a fact. My experience was teaching me that there were many ways to secure the integrity of a vision. I wanted to grow as a director so I could learn how to better communicate with professional designers, actors, and technicians. I wanted to know what went wrong so often between the vision in the writer's head and the reality that ended up on the stage. Was it an inability of the creative team to communicate with each other? Was it a lack of skills in consensus building? Or was it overinflated clashing egos on a destruction course?

I was motivated to create, through the Lovewell concept, a nurturing environment where creativity and self-expression could thrive. The Lovewell Method could be a vehicle by which to teach and encourage collaborative skills--things such as honoring differences, achieving synthesis, surrendering to the vision as it unfolded no matter whose idea it was. These are values and practices that are teachable and can be learned.

Even though writers and directors are stewards of a common vision, being a writer requires different skills than being a director. It occurred to me that students of interdisciplinary arts needed to be well aware of those distinctions, especially if they endeavored to do both. The best way to learn about the real differences between creative arts skills and interpretive arts skills was to be actively involved in a project that required both types of skills to be integrated on a continuum. During a Lovewell Workshop, students would have a chance to see where their specific skills and interests situated them on that continuum. This idea would become a cornerstone of the Lovewell workshop structure.

The Official Lovewell Programs Begin

On July 17, 1990, the first official Lovewell Summer Workshop was held in Salina, Kansas. Careful planning and preparation helped make it happen but I still came down with a rare case of shingles because of the stress on my nervous system. Students came from Florida, New York, and Kansas. They lived in the dormitories at St. Johns Military Academy and attended workshop sessions and rehearsals at the Salina Community Theatre. This was the first of eight successful summer workshops in Salina. As Lovewell grew, we incorporated more community partnerships and activities. We formed a cultural community out of the students, parents, teachers, and local artists who

recognized what we were doing and wanted to be a part of it.

Back in the Florida Keys, I was adjusting to my new life with Martha and our two children. Traveling to and from Big Pine Key was costly in terms of money and time. It is literally at the end of the earth. There were no job opportunities in Monroe County that would suit me and support my family. I had worked as an actor and director at the Red Barn Theatre in Key West. The average pay for an actor in that theatre at that time was \$18 per performance. This included a 60-mile round trip to every rehearsal and performance. *Sesame Street* (Henson, 1969) and other more current children's shows were displacing *Romper Room & Friends* (Claster & Claster, 1981). Once syndicated on 200 television stations, it was now playing on far less. Soon after returning from the 1991 Lovewell Summer Workshop in Kansas, Martha and I moved our family to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. There were more employment and cultural opportunities, and we thought there would be better schools for our children.

In February of 1992, I signed a contract as Artistic Director of the Drama Center in Deerfield Beach, Florida. It was a private for-profit theatre owned by a doctor who wanted to get involved in the local cultural scene. Even though it was a small theatre that needed many improvements, we did some wonderful work there. I directed plays, set up a youth theatre, began an outreach into the community, and built an audience. Unfortunately, running a quality theatre cost more than the doctor had anticipated. He was not the type to give up control to a not-for-profit board in order to obtain grants and donations. Every time there was a bad week at the box office he panicked and my salary was renegotiated, then Martha and I panicked about how to pay the bills. I quit my job when the doctor's unethical treatment of the artists who worked in his theatre started to reflect on me. I had enough of defending the unappreciated artist to the inexperienced

producer. One can learn a lot about diplomacy by being stuck between management and labor. This is one reason larger theatres try to keep the artistic activities separate from the business activities.

Traveling from Ft. Lauderdale to New York, Washington, Kansas, and Los Angeles was much easier than it had been from the Florida Keys. My musical projects kept inching along--more rewrites, more meetings, more readings. Cleaning up from Hurricane Andrew took some time, and I remained busy recruiting for the following summer's Lovewell Workshops. At the same time, the community of Ft. Lauderdale was beginning to hear about the Lovewell program.

In 1993, our third daughter, Isadora Maxine, was born just before it was time to leave for the fourth annual Lovewell Summer Workshop in Salina. I made very little money from Lovewell but our family always looked forward to the summer trek halfway across the country. We visited family and friends in Texas, Kansas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and Florida. There were over a 100 applicants to the Lovewell Workshop, and we ended up with 45 students onstage (including 2 students from Sweden). We had stretched enrollment to the limit so we expanded the staff to 17. *Tribe* (Lovewell Institute, 1993) was a powerful show, and we had a number of distinguished visitors who traveled from New York, Florida, and Sweden to observe our production. I began to develop some procedural policies and elements of curriculum based on evaluations and lessons we had learned from past programs. The workshop activities and training were clearly evolving into an interdisciplinary arts education methodology. Directing and guiding the students and staff through the creation of this elaborate theatre piece was one of the high points of my life. The sheer volume of performers onstage and technical and support staff backstage posed logistical and organizational challenges I had

never encountered. The endeavor was successful and gave me a sense of achievement I had never before experienced. After the production of *Tribe*, I felt that we were on the right track in developing a viable interdisciplinary arts education methodology.

Bettie Clark, a board member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County, Florida, traveled to Kansas to observe the summer workshop. I had met previously with David Hughes, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs, during which he expressed interest in establishing a cultural arts program for their 10 clubs and nearly 10,000 kids in Broward County within the sixth largest public school district in America (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Not wanting to reinvent the wheel, David Hughes embraced our prepackaged cultural arts education program. Bettie Clark's mission in traveling to Kansas was to determine the legitimacy and applicability of the Lovewell Method to the Boys & Girls Clubs. Clark and Hughes were impressed and had no problem convincing the Boys & Girls Clubs' Board of Directors to implement a Lovewell Program in Broward County by March 1994.

On June 2, 1994, we opened *Keep On Movin* (Lovewell Institute, 1994a), an inner-city musical telling the story of rival gangs coming to a truce and transforming their ghetto into a real community. This was another enlightening lesson in the practical application and integration of the arts into a social situation starving for the authentic benefits of culture. Most of the students in the program would be labeled "at-risk." The students were 90% African American, economically deprived teenagers, and I was a middle-aged, middle-class White authority figure. I had learned a little about this type of challenge while teaching at the University of Pittsburgh as a graduate assistant. The Lovewell/Boys & Girls Clubs partnership quickly became an opportunity to further explore diversity issues and how they related to the Lovewell concept.

Up until my 6 years of directing a Lovewell partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs, I did not realize how ignorant I had been regarding diversity. I had not been born and raised in a diverse population. Teaching a history of jazz course in a Black studies program, traveling around the world as a tourist, and living in New York City had given me a false sense of confidence regarding my own prejudice. I suddenly realized that those experiences, as enlightening as they were, had not taken me deeply enough into the real anthropological, sociological, and personal realities of diversity. This experience provided me the opportunity to closely observe and participate in the process of telling important stories of a culture very different from my own.

The most important thing I learned is that talent, motivation, inspiration, and imagination occur naturally to young artists regardless of their socioeconomic profile, their educational experience, their race, gender, or grade point average. During the 1st year of this project, we worked for 4 months in an afterschool format, wrote the dialogue and songs, and told the stories these kids wanted to tell about their neighborhood and their dreams for a better life. Then we rented the most attractive state-of-the-art theatre in Ft. Lauderdale and presented their creation to the community. *Keep On Movin'* (Lovewell Institute, 1994a) was the first of many productions for the Boys & Girls Clubs written by the kids with the guidance of a trained Lovewell staff employing what we were now calling the "Lovewell Method." A new cultural community was established in Broward County, Florida. The Lovewell staff, the board, and I struggled to adapt and refine the Lovewell process to serve the at-risk population.

The Accumulation Factor

The Lovewell Summer Workshop of 1994 in Kansas produced a remarkable piece of theatre about a group of art students who become radical activists in defense of free expression and continued governmental support of the arts. Many students who had been in the previous Lovewell summer programs now had the confidence and skills to bring the production to a new level of artistry. *State of the Art--The Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 1994b) was a triumph of what I call the accumulation factor--more faculty and more students with more experience in the methodology.

My professional career was going well with two unexpected projects racing into production in the last few months of 1994. The Miami Shores Performing Arts Center asked me to direct the world premier of a new musical about the life of Charlie Chaplin.

With the composer living in New York, the book writer in Los Angeles, and the lyricist in Miami, it was an interesting collaboration. Miami Shores Performing Arts Center assisted me in putting together a great cast and production team for *Chaplin--The Musical* (Anderson, Goldsmith, & Kinroy, 1994). Our production won a Carbonell Award (South Florida's most prestigious theatrical award) for "Best New Work" of 1994.

The other project was a unique concept put together by two entrepreneurs from Key West. I was hired by them to direct and cowrite *Flamingo Follies* (Spangler, Osolinski, & Kephart, 1994), a contemporary social and political satire using familiar songs with new lyrics. I never had so much fun and enjoyed so much laughter putting together a production. Often accused of being too lyrical or too serious, I took this as my opportunity to share a sense of humor I rarely got to exhibit. The producers spared no expense in providing a brilliantly designed set, lavish costumes, and first-rate lighting and sound equipment. We held auditions in New York and hired the best performers available. This was one of my first opportunities to hire a former Lovewell student who had also become a Lovewell staff member. Tamir Hendelman became our musical director and arranger. Good musical directors are hard to find, and it was very nice to employ a former student and staff member who was enormously gifted and could help me apply the Lovewell Method in the professional arena. *Flamingo Follies* ran for 3 years in Key West.

In 1995, Grace Mitchell invited me and several prominent South Florida educators for a short cruise to celebrate receiving her Ph.D. from Union Institute & University. I remember admiring her energy and determination to earn a graduate degree so late in life. It gave me hope that it was not too late for me. The following month, *Cry No More* (Lovewell Institute, 1995b) opened at the Parker Playhouse. It was the second

production of the Lovewell and Boys & Girls Clubs afterschool partnership. It proved to be another success and another step closer to establishing the value and applicability of our interdisciplinary arts education methodology.

The next several months were difficult. Ronn Robinson, my collaborator on *Play It By Heart* (Spangler & Robinson, 1979), died in May of 1995, and Martha's mother, Maxine Obrecht, died in June. I was scheduled to conduct a short informational workshop in Sweden in preparation for a full Lovewell cultural exchange program for the following year. Martha was pregnant with our fourth child. Upon returning from Sweden, I was scheduled to immediately leave for Kansas to direct the Sixth Annual Lovewell Summer Workshop in Salina. Our family stayed in Florida that summer and I went alone to Kansas. One week into the workshop, Hurricane Erin was bearing down on Florida and I returned home to evacuate our family.

This was the first time I ever turned over the direction of a Lovewell production to anyone. Gary Wayne did a fine job of directing the show with the help of our experienced choreographer, Leslie Bennett, and our music director, Tamir Hendelman. My lesson was that Lovewell Institute now had a staff that could conduct a successful workshop without my constant supervision. This was an unsettling but liberating thought. Now we really could expand. The hurricane passed, I returned to Kansas to see the performance, and soon we had our fourth daughter, Sheridan Rose.

In November, Lovewell Institute took a difficult step. Certain members of the Lovewell Board in Kansas felt that I should move to Salina and continue to expand the program there. There was a considerable amount of community ownership after 6 years of highly visible summer workshops. Meanwhile, the expansion that was taking place in Florida with the Boys & Girls Clubs was of little or no interest to the Kansas contingent.

The Salina program had never paid me enough to even cover my expenses, and I had never complained. But now I was depending on the Florida afterschool programs to help support my family. The parochial viewpoint of the Lovewell Board in Kansas made it impossible to meet the needs of an expanding program in Florida, Sweden, and beyond. I guess I knew that one day we would arrive at this dilemma. The crisis reached the point where the treasurer in Kansas would not even grant access to the financial papers to board members in Florida.

On November 10, 1995, Dorothy Gallagher, a hard-working Salina board member, and Bob Jones, a prominent Salina attorney active in the local community theatre group, came to Ft. Lauderdale to negotiate a deal that would allow Lovewell Institute to move forward and function as a truly national organization. I advocated a simple concept similar to the “national headquarters with local chapters” model employed by the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, and the International Thespian Society. Each local chapter would be responsible for securing the facilities and setting up the logistics and marketing of their specific program. The Lovewell “National” organization would be responsible for maintaining and developing the philosophy, policies, curriculum, staff training, trademark, and legal issues. The outcome of this difficult negotiation was that Lovewell Institute would move its headquarters to Ft. Lauderdale, and Bob’s wife, Pam Jones, would be elected onto the board to represent the Kansas program specifically. This was only a temporary solution.

From January to May of 1996, I revised and directed the latest edition of *Flamingo Follies* (Spangler et al., 1994) for the new season in Key West, flew to Sweden for another preliminary Lovewell Institute teacher training workshop, and directed a production of *Mame* (Herman, Lawrence, & Lee, 1970) for the grand opening of the Jerry

Herman Ring Theatre at the University of Miami, Florida. At the same time, we were preparing for the May opening of *Something Within Us* (Lovewell Institute, 1996c), the third annual production of the Lovewell/Boys & Girls Clubs afterschool partnership program. That summer included the much-anticipated cultural exchange program in Sweden and the Seventh Annual Lovewell Summer Workshop in Kansas. We took 9 students and four staff members from America to join 13 Swedish teenagers in Oskarshamn, Sweden, for 3 weeks where we created a bilingual musical titled *Backstage Story* (Lovewell Institute, 1996a). It was a splendid undertaking, and many lives including my own were transformed by this educational experience. Lovewell Institute could now confidently offer an effective international cultural exchange program. I can think of no better way to get to the heart of cultural differences than to create and present a large-scale production focusing on working out those differences onstage through artistic expression. The Kansas production, *Speakin' Easy* (Lovewell Institute, 1996d), was also successful, although I sensed the Salina Lovewell Institute contingency was having difficulty integrating all the exciting activity in Florida and Sweden.

CMU was producing a homecoming event honoring Scotch N' Soda alumni and invited me to perform some of the songs from my college shows. Stephen Schwartz, Mark Pirolo, Josephine Cuccaro, and many other friends were there to either participate in, or attend the performance. It was also nice to keep building a network with several Lovewell Institute alumni who were attending CMU's Theatre Department. For some reason, that experience gave me a much-needed boost--I think it had something to do with revisiting some of the most rewarding creative experiences of my life and reinterpreting some personal history.

During the following year, Lovewell Institute secured its legal trademarks,

Flamingo Follies (Spangler et al., 1994) opened a third edition in Key West; *Yo, Juliet* (Lovewell Institute, 1997b) became the fourth annual production of the Lovewell/Boys & Girls Clubs partnership; and *All Fall Down* (Lovewell Institute, 1997a) was the eighth annual summer production in Kansas. *Yo, Juliet* (Lovewell Institute, 1997b) was memorable because it dealt head-on with issues that were timely and pertinent--Ebonics and AIDS. Both were in the national news. We faced these themes daily in training our young artists not only to maintain their artistic and cultural integrity but also to communicate effectively with a diverse audience. The show was impressive and extremely relevant, and the publicity and ticket sales were tremendous. It clearly spoke straight to the heart of the community that had created it.

Several writing trips to Nashville produced a finished score of the new *Play It By Heart* (Spangler, Taylor, Hugill, & Robinson, 1999). After Ronn Robinson's death, I had invited Jerry Taylor to write some new songs with me for the production. Jerry had been doing well in the music business and could bring an authentic country sound to the songs in this new version with a book by Randy Hugill. I was also working on a smaller scale musical with Rick Gore titled *Surviving the Moonlight* (Spangler & Gore, 1996). Every musical I had written up to that point required a large cast that increased the budget and greatly reduced the chance of getting it produced. *Surviving the Moonlight* was conceived as an intimate story told in a very theatrical style. I experienced real joy in the hours spent actually creating these shows.

Florida passed charter school legislation in 1996, and I immediately formed a Lovewell committee to work on an application to the Broward County School District. After over 2 years of meetings, research, and writing, our application was denied. The superintendent said our charter school would be in competition with, and a threat to, the

district's existing performing arts magnet programs. Like so many decisions made by CEOs of large school systems, it was pure politics. There is also a fatal flaw in Florida charter school legislation, putting the fox (local school district) in charge of the hen house (local groups seeking autonomous schools and in competition with the district for public financing). The Broward County Public School System serves over 250,000 students. With an impenetrable bloated bureaucracy at the top and overcrowded classrooms, crumbling schools, and underpaid teachers on the bottom, the local school district had the reputation of actively ignoring or discouraging creative or innovative educational ideas that threatened the superintendent's political agenda.

The summer of 1998 saw the dawn of a wonderful new partnership for Lovewell Institute. The YMCA of Broward County wanted to get involved in the arts and decided to cosponsor the first Lovewell Summer Workshop in Florida. Focus had now moved from Kansas to the Ft. Lauderdale area, and our first production was *On The Blink* (Lovewell Institute, 1998b), a look at how the media affects politics and the private acts of public officials. It was a powerful statement by students voicing their concerns on the issues of privacy and morality in public office. The critical thinking surrounding that project was equal to any formal academic challenge involving students from 13 through 19 years of age. I had selected the staff for that program from outstanding young artists who had started out as Lovewell students in their early teens in Kansas. They had been involved in the program as students and interns and were now ready to achieve the status of full staff. Nathan Tysen (stage director), Ryan McCall (music director), and Joel Bicknell (script director) had grown up with the Lovewell Method. They told me that their college professors had noticed a difference in their training and attitude. These *home grown* staffers became an integral part of the evolution of the Lovewell process.

The autumn of 1998 was a flurry of creative activity with writing several songs for *Chapter Zero* (Mendelsohn, 1998), a movie being shot in the Ft. Lauderdale area and recording demos of some new songs for *Surviving the Moonlight* (Spangler et al., 1996). The Florida State Department of Cultural Affairs asked me to serve as an on-site evaluator for state cultural grants. I paid on-site visits to four cultural institutions and interviewed board members and staff of the Palm Beach Opera, the Ft. Lauderdale Film Festival, The Caldwell Theatre Company in Palm Beach County, and the Actors Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre in Miami. This was an education in itself and led to being appointed as a State Theatre Grant Panelist the following summer in Tallahassee. I loved being a part of rewarding cultural organizations for years of good work and service to the community. The experience gave me more understanding of public support for the arts and how that system works. I learned that there was more support for the arts than I had realized, one just needed to know where to look. As a Lovewell board member, this information became vital to me, as I was now able to more clearly comprehend the system that could eventually help make Lovewell Institute more financially stable.

The year of 1999 was a busy year for Lovewell and for me as an independent artist. It started with a workshop I conducted at the Kansas State Thespian Conference in early January. One of the participants of my workshop was a young Korean student attending Kansas State University in Manhattan. Yoon heard about the Lovewell Method and wanted to make it the subject of his doctoral dissertation. He and I had many conversations and e-mails relating to his work. Yoon's (2000) dissertation, *Perceived Contributions of Educational Drama and Theatre: A Case Study of Lovewell Institute for the Creative Arts* was a traditional case study containing the results of numerous interviews held with students, staff, and board members concerning the structure and

operating procedures of the Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method. Yoon's dissertation on the Lovewell Process is one of the most valuable documents in the Lovewell archive. It is examined further in chapter 12.

By February of 1999, Lovewell Institute had two afterschool programs up and running: the sixth annual Lovewell/Boys & Girls Clubs program and another afterschool program at an exclusive local private prep school, Pine Crest School.

The contrast between these two diverse groups of students taught me many lessons. I learned that socioeconomic status has nothing to do with potential, motivation, or attitude. It does, however, affect content, subject matter, and style. The thrill of accomplishment and the paralysis of insecurity know no boundaries. It was further proof to me that the Lovewell Method was effective in a wide variety of applications. In May, our Boys & Girls Clubs program presented *Up In Lights--An Original Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 1999i) and our Pine Crest School program presented *Getting Away With Murder--An Original Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 1999c). These were two full-length musicals conceived and written by young artists in two vastly different styles, but both honestly represented commonly shared themes of hope and triumph over adversity.

During this same period, Rick Gore and I put together a reading of our musical *Surviving The Moonlight* (Spangler et al., 1996) at the MCC Theatre in New York City. The MCC had recently produced the first New York production of the Pulitzer Prize winning *Wit* (Edson, 1998), and it was a privilege to direct some fine New York actors in this reading. Friends, old business associates, Lovewell alumni currently studying in New York City and Lovewell Institute board members attended the event. It felt like a family--the core of my cultural community.

Lovewell Institute produced three more original musicals during the summer of 1999: *Operation Generation--A Musical on the Rocks* (Lovewell Institute, 1999e), directed by Gary Wayne at the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center in Key West; *Union High* (Lovewell Institute, 1999h), directed by Katy Hawley at the Marathon Community Theatre (also in the Keys, Monroe County); and *Chance of a Lifetime: A Musical*

Experiment (Lovewell Institute, 1999a), directed by Nathan Tysen in Ft. Lauderdale at the Parker Playhouse. The concept of selecting staff from a pool of exceptional former Lovewell students worked so well the previous year that I hired even more alumni to fill out the summer programs. Katy Hawley, Carrie Gilchrist, Shermika Baynham, Michelle Rivers, Adam Hocke, and Leroy Lake had all been extraordinary student artists and had displayed mastership of their craft. They had also exhibited compassion and varying degrees of comprehension of crucial aspects of the Lovewell methodology. In addition, their leadership qualities made them good candidates for Lovewell staff. Florida Keys Community College received the grant that financed our two programs in Monroe County. The Educational Coalition for Monroe County took notice of our program and also offered support.

Operation Generation--A Musical-on-the-Rocks (Lovewell Institute, 1999e) had special significance for me because it was the first time one of my own children was old enough to participate fully in a Lovewell program. I now had the opportunity to experience Lovewell as a parent and through the eyes of my highly perceptive and articulate 12-year-old daughter. Although I was not directing the production, I did have a chance to work with Margie on a scene and a song, and I can honestly say that it bonded us closer than anything ever had. I was now deeply grateful to Lovewell Institute for a whole new reason. My perspective as a parent was now integrated into my other perspectives on the Lovewell process.

This is when I first met Duncan Mathewson and Tina Belotti, both officers of the Educational Coalition for Monroe County and community activists. I expressed to Duncan my desire to earn a Ph.D. so I could take my career and ideas to the next level. Being on the faculty of Union Institute & University, Dr. Mathewson told me of the opportunity for lifelong learners like myself to achieve educational goals in a nurturing and flexible academic environment. I had been searching without success for a situation at area universities that would offer the kind of graduate work in which I was interested. This is when I got serious about applying to Union Institute & University.

In August of 1999, I went to Nashville to work on an elaborate staged reading of *Play It By Heart* (Spangler et al., 1999). The cast consisted of an illustrious assortment of Broadway actors, Grand Ole Opry stars, local talent, and even a U.S. Senator (Fred Thompson of Tennessee). Jerry Taylor, Randy Hugill, and I continued to rework the story, the songs, and the dialogue. The event was cosponsored by Belmont University, Sony/ATV Music, the Country Music Hall of Fame, BMI, and the Country Music Association. Once again, friends and family rallied around the event. The staged reading provided the forum for a warm reunion for my wife and children with the Spangler Clan of Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri. Lovewell board members Harriet Mathis and Susan Dvorak came from Ft. Lauderdale to lend their support. Harriet was the treasurer of the board and had been taking on more duties as business manager. She prepared the contracts, budgets, and payroll in addition to constantly lending me sound advice on all my decisions concerning Lovewell Institute. It was very good to work with a person so committed to personal spiritual growth and at the same time so familiar with the inner workings of Lovewell Institute. Harriet continues as a board member to be very instrumental in shaping our policies and progress.

In September, I attended a 4-day intensive workshop in Dallas sponsored by the Spiritual School of Ascension. I studied the material on their Web site for well over a year and it was time for me to meet some of the people who ran the organization. Spiritual seekers came from all over the world to attend this workshop. It was comforting to see that they were a group of serious healers, teachers, and thinkers, honestly looking for answers to some very profound questions.

Spiritual development has always been an important factor in my life and is one of the essential components built into the Lovewell Method. I have found the Internet to be a new and bountiful source of inspiration and information concerning the expansion of spiritual awareness. The integration of spiritual concepts into social, educational and artistic paradigms is not a simple task. Differentiating between what is spiritual (in a personal sense) and what is religious (in a theological sense) has helped me navigate these dangerous waters.

There are certain spiritual values regarding human decency and compassionate behavior that transcend any religious labeling. Here are some of those values that I find conducive to establishing a nurturing creative environment: open mindedness, trust, tolerance, patience, gentleness, and defenselessness (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1981).

In October, the Educational Coalition for Monroe County sponsored a tour of our Lovewell summer production of *Union High--A Clique-ing Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 1999h). The show was written only a few months after the deadly school shootings at Columbine High School and dealt with in-school social cliques and how the conflicts between them lead to either violence or resolution. The young student writers tackled controversial issues like labeling and judgment of stereotypes, teenage isolation and rejection, violence, and sexual identity. On tour, we performed the show for 2,200 middle school and high school students in Monroe County. The response was overwhelming and many of the young audience members could not believe their peers had actually written the show. Monroe County teachers took the issues in this show back to their classrooms, requiring their students to write responses to what they had seen and heard in the production. The outcome of witnessing their peers acting out solutions to familiar problems on stage allowed students to examine nonviolent conflict resolution. Now the students could explore difficult issues in the classroom guided by teachers who shared the learning experience. *Union High* successfully opened a forum for previously unapproachable subjects in an academic setting.

The last months of 1999 were spent administering a Lovewell afterschool partnership program at Donna Klein Jewish Academy (Palm Beach County, Florida) and two Lovewell productions in partnership with The Family Resource Center (Miami Dade County, Florida) and First Night Miami Beach. The show at Donna Klein Jewish Academy was titled *Differences at Galahad Academy* (Lovewell Institute, 1999b). It was

directed by Shermika Baynham (a former Lovewell/Boys & Girls Clubs student and intern) and David Cohen, a local professional musician, was the musical director. The plot revolved around two lonely teachers and how their students managed to “fix them up” with each other and eliminate a jealous and evil headmaster who had been oppressing the academy.

The Family Resource Center received a grant to create a production incorporating two diverse communities that consistently contribute to the social fabric of Miami Beach. The selected participants were the Haitian Community and the Gay and Lesbian Community. We produced *Haitian Days* (Lovewell Institute, 1999d), directed by Lorna Lesperance, and *Pridelines* (Lovewell Institute, 1999f), directed by George Contini with performances on New Year’s Eve as part of the First Night Miami Beach Project. There were threats of millennium meltdown and terrorism but the shows went on and more cultural communities were formed.

In January of 2000, my former agent, Fifi Osgard, received a signed contract from the Village Theatre in Issaquah (suburb of Seattle), Washington, to mount a production of *Play It By Heart* (Spangler et al., 1999) during the summer. Fifi is a highly respected New York talent and literary agent who had been an honorary board member of Lovewell for many years. She was instrumental in securing several scholarships for New York students to participate in Lovewell programs. Now, she was finally negotiating a deal for me as a professional writer.

In March of 2000, I conducted a workshop and served on a panel at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) in Norfolk, Virginia. Serendipity is the best word to describe what happened between that time and now as I write this manuscript. Prior to the conference, I had several exciting phone discussions concerning the panel and

my workshop proposal with Betsey Baun, the new Executive Director of SETC. She wanted to make a statement and set a new direction for her organization--the largest regional theatre conference in America consisting of professional, community, university, and high school artists and educators. The panel was titled "Theatre as a Tool for Transformation," and my workshop was "Creating Your Own Reality--Total Theatre." This was pretty cosmic stuff for thespians who basically only wanted tips on how to do a successful audition. But we found our audience. This was confirmation that there is a whole new grassroots movement advocating the cultural arts as a healing tool both personally and on a community level. There was a consensus at our gathering that art has the power to transform our society, our educational system, and our personal lives. I met several people at the conference who resonated deeply with my passions and interests: Gene Columbus, Walt Disney World Head of Entertainment Staffing; Dr. Richard Geer, Director of Community Performance (CPI); and Jules Corriere, playwright and staff member of CPI. We are all still connected and always looking for collaborative opportunities.

With fewer Lovewell programs operating in the spring of 2000, I had the chance to formulate some future personal goals and consider possible next steps for Lovewell Institute. I hoped I might have the chance to spend more time with my family. That is why it was particularly difficult for me to leave in May for 5 weeks in Seattle to get *Play It By Heart* (Spangler et al, 1999) rewritten and staged at the Village Theatre. This part of America was new to me. Jerry Taylor and Randy Hugill were also in residence for the full 5 weeks in Seattle as we nurtured this brainchild to the next level. The production was very promising. It was the first time in my 19 years of association with that project that I felt it was complete. In spite of some bitter disputes, my collaborators and I stayed

focused on the quality of the creation and did some of the best work of our lives. The audience evaluations were glowing and the theatre was delighted with the production. This was the longest time I had ever been away from my family.

Two days after arriving home from Seattle, I started staff training for our three Lovewell 2000 summer programs. On July 7, *Zooming In--A Picture Perfect Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2000c), directed by Katy Hawley, opened at the Marathon Community Theatre; on July 21, *In Good Company--A Wartime Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2000a), directed by Nathan Tysen, opened in Ft. Lauderdale; and on August 4, *Livewire--A Hot New Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2000b), directed by Carrie Gilchrist, opened at the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center in Key West. The workshops were all unique and benefited from the accumulation factor of a more confident creative staff and a more experienced administrative staff.

More Lovewell staff members graduated from college in 2000 and we started developing plans to produce a Lovewell All Star program (later known as the Lovewell Theatre Project [LTP]) wherein Lovewell staff and alumni create an original musical for the professional market. For 10 years, staff artists had been lending their talent and creativity to teenagers in the program (which they continue to do). But it became apparent in 2000 that the artistic staff regretted no longer having the opportunity to be the creators and to apply the skills and knowledge they had accumulated in college to new productions of their own. It would be liberating not to worry about subject matter, strong language, and other potentially controversial issues that are always present within academic programs focused on K-12 school-aged participants.

During 2001, I focused a considerable amount of energy on gathering additional resources and forming a Board of Directors for a creative arts charter school in Monroe

County, Florida. I attended meetings with charter school experts including Dr. Leo Cardona and Judith Smith, director of the Charter School Resource Center of South Florida. We hired a Lovewell staff member to help me run an afterschool program in partnership with Planned Parenthood that was geared toward pregnancy prevention. There were problems with this program because the staff of Planned Parenthood did not understand the mission of Lovewell and were not trained in how the missions of these two organizations could complement each other to design effective programming. I will examine some of these problems in later chapters dealing with specific conflicts and bureaucratic limitations. Despite the conflicts, Phyllis Jones, the Lovewell Director, was able to put on a rewarding show that played to a full house of pleased parents and students.

In January of 2001, I attended the Union Institute & University Entry Colloquium and officially began the process of earning my Ph.D. In February, I helped organize and manage a tour of the Lovewell summer production of *Zooming In--A Picture Perfect Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2000c) which played to over 2,500 Monroe County schoolchildren in seven different schools. The organization and logistics of the tour were challenging. The highlights of the next few months included doing my first creative consulting job for Walt Disney Entertainment, conducting another workshop for the SETC, continuing creative work on my musical theatre projects, and launching a recruitment campaign for the upcoming Lovewell Summer Theatre Programs.

The YMCA wanted us to develop a new program for preteens employing the Lovewell Method. We had experienced 3 years of a successful partnership conducting a program for teenagers and now it was time to reach out to children from ages 8 through 12. With very few marketing or advertising resources, we put together a staff, recruited

the kids, and conducted a successful Lovewell “Junior” (JR) program in addition to our two established teen programs (Broward and Monroe Counties). The Broward JR program produced *Always Take the Stairs--An Original Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2001a), the Broward teen program produced *Sidetracked--A New Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2001c), and the Monroe County teen program produced *Lost & Found--A Musical Recovery* (Lovewell Institute, 2001b).

Our 2001 summer programs employed 18 staff members, 8 interns, and over 100 students in three different locations. Lovewell Institute’s impressive teacher to student ratio (usually between 1:5 and 1:6) is one of the major reasons that our programs are so effective and successful. It is also a reason why our budgets are so difficult to balance.

By the end of 2001, it was clear that Lovewell Institute was, with all its potential, not capable of providing me with enough financial stability to support my family of six. I had always given everything I had to Lovewell like any parent would give to their child. Many board meetings ended with me donating my salary to pay the operating expenses for Lovewell Institute. That system worked while I was receiving royalties from television shows. But it started to break down in 1999 when the royalties dried up and my Lovewell duties stretched me too thin trying to administer nine programs in 1 year (handling proposals; contract negotiations; budgets; recruiting; marketing; staffing; artistic direction; and, in some cases, stage directing and script writing). The creative part was working very well, but the business end was suffering. Harriet Mathis was Lovewell Institute’s only other employee and her pay did not even amount to that of a part-time job. My health was suffering and so was Lovewell Institute because the pressure was constantly on to expand the programming at any cost. This put a strain on our fragile infrastructure. Lovewell Institute had always been more about the quality than the

quantity. For now, the expansion would be better if I took my own needs out of the equation.

My family was settled into a nice little house, local schools, and a community of friends and artists in the south Florida area. I loved the ocean nearby and our lake in the back yard. There was no university in this region offering the kind of vision I had for interdisciplinary arts and creative arts training. It appeared as though I would have to get creative and design a vision so vivid and persuasive that it would manifest a job and a future for my family and for Lovewell Institute. Hopefully, this could occur without relocating or trying to fit into a preexisting academic situation unrelated to my interests and skills. I did have a vision, and there was a local university in need of an arts component. What followed was a testament to the spirit of Lovewell and the faith I nurtured in the creative process to provide solutions and new challenges just when I needed them most.

In November 2001, a month after the World Trade Center terrorist disaster, I proposed an idea to Dr. Abraham Fischler, President Emeritus of Nova Southeastern University and a Lovewell board member. It seemed that creative problem solving born out of compassion and social consciousness were more important now than ever before. Dr. Fischler is a world class educator and visionary who basically took a small storefront college and turned it into one of the top universities in the nation in his 22-year tenure as president of NSU. Dr. Fischler exudes passion for his vision of what education can be, and yet he exercises the pragmatism and patience that transform his vision into a reality. Observing him has been an education in itself.

Dr. Fischler asked me to draw up a proposal of my idea for an Interdisciplinary Art's Master's Degree Program (IAP). I designed a program based on the concepts I had

developed by observing artists and arts teachers (including music, drama, creative writing, communications, dance, and visual arts) as they emerged from undergraduate schools across the nation in search of a master's degree that would allow them to expand their talents to encompass a broader perspective of the arts (rather than a narrower or more specialized track). This perspective would encompass innovative and entrepreneurial conceptualizing within the professional arts domain, new approaches to education and the vast untapped potential of the arts as a delivery method for information (nonarts as well as arts related), and the arts as a healing and transformational system applied in personal and/or social and therapeutic contexts. There were no programs in higher education in Florida that filled this particular niche. I felt this offered a good match between my skills and the needs of NSU in providing a unique master's program in the Arts.

In February of 2002, and with Dr. Fischler's encouragement, I started my job as Program Administrator and Artistic Director of NSU's new Master's of Science Degree in Education with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Arts. Creating this program was one of the most exciting and fulfilling adventures of my life. It allowed me to reverse engineer the Lovewell Process and focus on developing a pedagogy for teacher training in the area of infusing the arts into the classroom. This was a synchronistic opportunity to further develop something Lovewell Institute had needed for some time, a systematic approach to training educators and artists in the Lovewell Method.

Meanwhile, Lovewell staff members and alumni got together and formed the LTP in 2002. This was the first attempt to adapt the Lovewell model to a professional arena. The staff and alumni had graduated from professional academic training programs in their respective disciplines and were ready to explore the possibilities of the Lovewell

Method as a viable means of creating new works for the theatrical industry. These Lovewell alumni had encountered the hostile and cutthroat nature of the theatrical marketplace and longed for the protective, supportive, and nurturing environment of the Lovewell they remembered as students. Could this be a reality and could quality products be created through the Lovewell Method that would be competitive with the financial successes in the industry?

I made cold calls to Joan Mazzone, Executive Director, and John Sparks, Artistic Director of the New Tuners Theatre in Chicago. I had received their newsletter for several years and knew that their mission and Lovewell's mission were in enough alignment that there was potential for an effective partnership. We needed a facility in which to research, write, and rehearse for 3 weeks and a venue in which to present a final product (reading or workshop presentation) of a new work created through the Lovewell Method. The project was designed with the able assistance of the Chicago and New York alumni under the leadership of Carrie Gilchrist. These founding members of LTP held a fund-raiser in Kansas and helped arrange all the logistics for the 12 of us getting together in Chicago for 3 weeks.

We wrote and produced a staged reading of *The Book of Phil--A Cynic's Love Story* (Lovewell Institute, 2002c) in March at the New Tuners Theatre in the Chicago Theatre Building Center. It was the first step in a process that is still unfolding. Some of my recommendations for restructuring the LTP will be discussed in chapter 13.

In 2002, the Broward JR program produced *Uh Oh !!!--A Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2002d), the Broward teen program produced *Drawn In--a Musical in Two Issues* (Lovewell Institute, 2002b), and a new teen program in cooperation with the Riverside California YMCA produced *Define It--A Normal Musical* (Lovewell Institute,

2002a). This was only the second year for the Lovewell JR program, and we learned much more about the application of the Lovewell Method to students between the ages of 8 and 12. We found that the intensity of the learning activities and the levels of sustained concentration employed in the teen program had to be adjusted for this younger age group. We became more aware of the developmental difference between these age groups as it related to creative process. The staff experimented with theatre games and experiential student participation in the design and construction of props, sets, and costumes.

Our first program in California was an adventure that took our organization to new heights of artistic accomplishment and new lows of fear and confusion concerning the limitations of our program's effectiveness with emotionally disturbed youth. It involved some of our most dramatic discipline problems and the program came very close to being canceled after the first week. For the first time in the history of Lovewell, one student was expelled from the program for substance abuse and sent home to his parents. The remaining students, guided by a compassionate and talented staff (Carrie Gilchrist, Ryan McCall, Jaime Johnson, and Holly McLean), created a very touching and memorable show. I spent the afternoon before the opening performance in an emergency clinic with a student suffering from an anxiety attack he encountered during the final dress rehearsal. He gave a brilliant performance that evening and the show was a big success. Each one of these new outreach programs provided valuable lessons in how to improve the effectiveness and expand the scope of the Lovewell Method.

I spent the better part of 2003 administering the day-to-day duties of the new master's program at NSU and setting up a graduate-level study abroad course designed to run concurrently with the Lovewell international exchange program in Sweden. In

February, Lovewell Institute arranged for me to fly to Sweden to explore the possibilities of conducting another international workshop similar to the one in 1996 mentioned earlier. It seemed to me that the time was right to add the component of teacher training to the international cultural exchange component. I redesigned a Lovewell Arts Infusion recertification course I taught the previous summer at NSU's Fischler School of Education and Human Services and blended it with a new international cultural exchange course I was developing for the IAP. The Lovewell Workshop and the NSU graduate course in Sweden had a synergistic relationship and created a profound learning opportunity for the teenage artists as well as the graduate students who observed and participated in the workshop as mentors.

Since 1994, Alf Josefsson has been the driving force behind establishing Lovewell Institute in Sweden and once again he facilitated the 2003 Lovewell activities in Oskarshamns, his home town. He and I selected Ulf Waltersson as the "line producer" of the Sweden program. Ulf organized the program and handled the logistics in Sweden and recruited the Swedish students. I organized the American participation.

The 2003 Broward Lovewell JR production was *Cloudy With a Chance of Change* (Lovewell Institute, 2003a), and the teen production was *Peace of Mind--A Life-Altering Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2003b). The program in Sweden produced *Storm--A Musical Journey* (Lovewell Institute, 2003c). Last-minute staff changes due to demands for much deserved salary increases forced us to rethink the junior program. It is difficult to find qualified staff for Lovewell Workshops because of the high standards of excellence in artistic leadership as well as organizational leadership and counseling abilities. This is why we have continued to identify and invite certain students who have a talent and passion for the Lovewell process to become interns in future programs.

The teen program rose to new levels of sophisticated storytelling. *Peace of Mind--A Life-Altering Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2003b) went on 2 years later to win straight superior ratings at the Florida State Thespian Conference (2005) and has started to be performed by other high schools looking for fresh material based on student-written themes. Lovewell Sweden's production of *Storm--A Musical Journey* (Lovewell Institute, 2003c) opened doors for further expansion in Europe and solidified some international relationships that have been beneficial to our organization regarding learning theory, teacher training, and international cultural exchange.

In 2004, I was able to bring into balance certain aspects of my life that allowed me to achieve a more healthy perspective on Lovewell Institute and my relationship to it as founder and artistic director. Part of this new balance occurred because of my increasing financial stability brought on by steady employment at NSU. Another part was that there was renewed interest in several of my own creative works. The combination of these factors verified my theory that increased motivation and passion for teaching the arts is ignited by one's own participation in the creative process. Participating in the "art-making" process informs the teaching of art making and assists in the application of art making techniques to nonarts curricula.

This is the year that I became aware of how much the Lovewell philosophy was influencing every part of my professional and personal life. At NSU, I was able to literally "take Lovewell to college" and watch the IAP train teachers to bring the creative process into their classrooms and studios. I assembled a group of experienced high-quality adjunct professors who believed in the interdisciplinary arts vision and shared the mission of educating a new breed of artist/scholars. The mission of this master's program is to help artists and educators grow into an awareness of their own

power to affect social, intellectual, and personal transformation through the arts.

The master's candidates in the IAP are required to create a Capstone Event that is the culmination of their coursework and studies. Three graduate students decided to collaborate on a Capstone project that would examine the immigration situation as it related to Haitians and Cubans who were incarcerated at Krome Detention Center, near Miami. Patty Amaro is a Cuban dance teacher at a private high school in Miami, Shirley Julien is a Haitian dance teacher in the Miami-Dade Public School system, and Roxana Suarez is a Peruvian arts advocate who works at NSU and has experience in business and cultural exchange. Together, they created one of the most successful and moving theatrical events I have ever witnessed. *In Exile--Echoes From Haiti and Cuba* (Amaro, Julien, & Suarez, 2004) opened on April 3, 2004, and made a bit of history. It was primarily a dance piece but also contained elements of theatre (several scenes contained dialogue), visual arts (photos looming over the stage depicting the actual scenes of Haitians and Cubans arriving in boats and being washed ashore, music (authentic music from Haiti and Cuba), and amazing dramaturgy. It told the story of two women who came from very different cultures being forced into a situation at the immigration detention center that required sacrifices unlike any they had ever been asked to make. I had worked with the three students for months on the various aspects of their Capstone from artistic decisions to catering to marketing.

I sensed that something very special was coming together, but I never anticipated the extraordinary product they created nor the audience response that they received that evening. Those three artists pulled together all the resources they could--family, friends, students of their own, community leaders, and fellow artists--to create an enlightening celebration of diverse cultures and political reform. The 500-seat theatre was packed with

an audience of Haitians, Cubans, and other ethnicities all responding enthusiastically to this dramatic and honest depiction of a very real human condition and injustice. After the performance, there was a joyful reception in the courtyard in front of the theatre complete with Haitian and Cuban food and live music. The success of this Capstone was evidenced by the fact that it was subsequently produced at Miami-Dade College as a part of their arts festival and community outreach. Other groups have voiced interest in producing *In Exile--Echoes From Haiti and Cuba* (Amaro et al., 2004) at various venues interested in this kind of socially conscious interdisciplinary art. Money from ticket sales was donated to a Haitian not-for-profit organization in Miami.

Here is what Amaro (2004), one of the graduate students who created the project, wrote of this experience in her Capstone contextual essay *In Exile: Echoes From Haiti and Cuba: The Story of the Arrival of Illegal Haitian and Cubans to the Land of Justice for All*:

The arts remind us that human beings need time to experiment, explore, and be open-ended in approaches to solutions and answers. Artists, by nature, are creative thinkers. Often we cannot explain how we do what we do. Reason is too flat a dimension. There is more to life than we can understand and creativity is one of those aspects. Every single person or culture can be distinguished by its dance, music, design, literature, etc. When we speak about the arts we speak universally and it is something everyone can share, enjoy and learn from. Helping people become intimately acquainted with the act of creating does not really need justification, any more than art needs support. During the process, I referred back to Tolle's *The Power of Now* (1999) for inspiration. Unfortunately, many people still believe that the arts are just touchy feely things making no real contribution.

Consequently, we, the community of artists, know better and need to infuse the arts into the communities and infect people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts and bodies to generate a better people.

This capstone was created for that purpose: to do something about a social problem that is affecting our culture and home. We united because of the love and concern we have for our community and to show the value of using the arts to motivate and convince organizations, corporations, leaders and individuals in our community to partnership, sponsorship, and support our initiative. (p. 10)

Two weeks after that inspiring Capstone, a new production of my musical, *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore, & Gore, 2005) opened at Morton College's Jedlicka Performing Arts Center in Cicero, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. This was the first large production of that work since 1989, so it was exhilarating to dive back into the creative process of rewriting and rethinking the piece after all those years. A full production of *Play It By Heart* (Spangler et al., 1999) was also being planned as a result of the positive reaction to the 2000 workshop production at the Village Theatre near Seattle. This would also involve some rewriting, but I welcomed the opportunity to see a full-scale production of this piece I'd been working on for over 20 years.

There were other rewarding Capstones created and produced by IAP graduate students and many opportunities to advocate for the arts around the NSU campus and in the community. In March, I conducted a workshop for the Arts Extension Winter Institute for Arts Management Conference (Amherst College). When the officials contacted me to give the workshop, I inquired as to why they wanted a self-professed "creative" guy to give a workshop to management people. Their response was that arts management people understood the management component but need more information and experience

regarding the “arts” component. The workshop was very rewarding in that it gave me access to a contingency of administrators and arts advocates who were eager to learn more about the creative process and what really makes artists tick. I felt that I was able to give them some valuable information to take home that might facilitate deeper communication with artists working on their projects.

In May of 2004, my uncle died. He was the last Spangler male in our known family older than me. Ironically, he died on my brother’s birthday who had died in 2003. Families sometimes speak to each other in strange languages--my mother died on Mother’s Day. The reason I mention my Uncle Don’s death is that from an autoethnographic perspective, it had a significant impact on the way I perceived the events of 2004. He had always been very supportive of Lovewell and my involvement in the arts. His funeral made me more acutely aware of some of the responsibilities of being a patriarch. That was an identification I had not yet made. I realize that his death has, indeed, had an effect on how I view family issues, arts issues, business issues, and especially on the way I now regard the concept of “legacy.”

June and July of 2004 were full of the usual Lovewell activities, a teen program that produced *Banned Together--A Musical Taking Liberties* (Lovewell Institute, 2004b), a JR program that produced *Art Divided/Art United--A Musical Allusion* (Lovewell Institute, 2004a), and another triumphant international cultural exchange program that produced *360°--A Musical Connection* (Lovewell Institute, 2004c). The staff for all the programs performed extremely well, and the Lovewell Method once again proved effective in both the process and the product. I was able to interface with each program at will, knowing that I was on call when needed, or there to contribute when I felt I had something to offer. All four of my children were in the Lovewell programs (two in the JR program, one in the Florida teen program, and one in the Sweden teen program). I had the distinct advantage of getting a perspective on each program from the staff, the students, the parents, and each of my own children.

The biggest challenge with the Florida teen program in 2004 was a

misunderstanding by one set of parents as to the nature of the Lovewell process. They felt their two children who were in the program should have had larger roles in the play. This created some serious conflict with the staff instructors who try to assure all the participants some degree of equality in the amount of stage time they are given. The Lovewell process is not about playing the starring role--the biggest part with the most lines or songs. Parents who do not understand this can be very disappointed from unrealized expectations. I have observed that parents seem to hold onto these grudges longer than do their children. Parents who do not understand the Lovewell process can cause considerable ill feelings throughout the Lovewell community if their concerns are not addressed and processed through diplomacy and effective communication.

It is an unwritten policy within the Lovewell culture that the roles in the play are created by the participants in the program with two things in mind: to serve the story being told as it explores the selected themes and to showcase the unique and particular talent of the participants. Show-offs and class clowns who just want attention are tolerated for a while. Sooner or later the desperate attempts to get attention are tempered by an understanding staff and a process that gradually replaces unhealthy emotional neediness with real skills and confidence.

In watching the interactions between these parents who push, their children who crave attention, and the Lovewell staff who are trained to heal, I began to make new connections between the creative process, the Lovewell Method, and the untapped potential of arts education.

Another challenge presented this summer was the finances of the Sweden program. I had decided, after some financial uncertainties in our 1996 pilot program, that the best way to proceed with the international exchange initiative was to keep the finances totally separate between the American and Swedish students. American students would pay tuition, airfare, and room and board in Sweden. Out of that tuition, Lovewell USA would provide the American director of the program and pay the director's fee and expenses. Carrie Gilchrist agreed to direct the 2004 Sweden program. After a week in

Sweden, it became clear that this system of finance was not feasible. In fact, it was disclosed that the organizer of Lovewell in Sweden had mortgaged his house to pay the bills from the previous year in order to assure Lovewell of a 2004 program.

The remedy to this situation is a long story and is still being played out. But the positive outcome is that several board members have stepped forward to assist in securing the financial future of Lovewell in Sweden. Lori Faye Fischler is a Lovewell board member currently living in London. She is a lawyer and consummate business person who attended the Swedish performance of *360°--A Musical Connection* (Lovewell Institute, 2004c) and has remained very active in helping Lovewell USA and Lovewell Sweden define and implement a successful financial and contractual arrangement. The Lovewell community is not customarily litigious or mean spirited, so these challenges tend to get worked out in very civilized ways whether the issues are parents, finances, or facilities. The Lovewell staff developed a watch cry to get through difficult situations--“find a way to win.” I have noticed that they usually do.

Now that I was no longer financially dependent on Lovewell Institute, I could look at some of these issues as other board members did. It was very liberating to view Lovewell’s financial challenges without the emotions and vulnerability associated with financial dependency. This is the year the board became a functioning working board that met regularly and got things done. The single biggest boost to Lovewell’s expansion occurred after the 2004 summer programs when four experienced staff instructors living in Chicago moved to Ft. Lauderdale to pursue careers that would allow them to stay closely connected with the Lovewell organization and its activities.

Carrie Gilchrist Hagen and Joe Hagen, her husband, made the move after the end of the 2004 summer programs and were soon followed by Ryan McCall and his wife,

Jamie Johnson McCall. Carrie (program and stage director), Ryan (musical director), and Jamie (script director) were all from Salina, Kansas, and had been students in the Lovewell programs there before interning and becoming full staff instructors. Joe, also from Salina, became an integral member of the team and joined the staff in 2001 as a designer. No one could anticipate the impact that this new blood and inexhaustible energy would have on the organization.

The remainder of 2004 was spent administering the IAP at NSU, mentoring the IAP students on their capstone projects, preparing my two musicals for major productions in the spring of 2005, and completing all the coursework for my Ph.D. There was one ongoing project that seemed to have its own particular timeline no matter what one did to push it along. With the encouragement of Dr. Abraham Fischler, I had been preparing a proposal for Lovewell Institute to come under the umbrella of NSU through the Fischler School of Education and Human Services. This was a grand plan and we felt we needed to proceed with caution and impeccability, so the Lovewell Board of Directors became actively involved as we strategized on how best to accomplish this partnership. Meetings were held during the year, and it was determined that proper timing was critical to the success of this venture. Bill Shoemaker, a board member and financial expert, took on this project and the proposal continues to be developed.

The year 2005 was mostly exhilarating for Lovewell and for me personally. The artist in me spent many years waiting to see my large scale musicals mounted as large scale productions. *Play It By Heart* (Spangler, Taylor, Yorkey, & Robinson, 2005) opened on March 17, 2005, and *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore et al., 2005) opened on May 7, 2005, and both properties benefited from lavish productions with high-quality professional talent. Both shows had been originally written over 20 years ago and I

experienced real fears and insecurities about my own abilities as a composer, lyricist, and writer in a modern world of new styles, technologies, and sensibilities.

My attention and energy over the past 15 years had veered off in the direction of arts education and advocacy, and it had become essential to secure a job in those areas that would assure my family of some kind of financial stability. The rewriting and carefully crafted productions of these two major projects rekindled a sense of confidence in my creativity that I had not felt for many years. Within the span of a few months, my four children finally got to see what I had been doing all those years. My youngest child was cast in *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore et al., 2005) as one of Nefertiti's six daughters, and my wife played in the orchestra. Three of my NSU graduate students and two Lovewell staff members acquired professional experience working on the production, and I was reawakened to the reasons why artists have such a passion for doing their work. NSU was extremely supportive and hosted a preshow reception for about 400 employees who attended a performance of *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore et al., 2005). I do not know any other time when I have felt so fulfilled and balanced in my professional life.

The day before the opening preview of *Nefertiti*, the director, Robert Johanson, and my collaborator, Rick Gore, asked me to write a new song (based on a song that had been cut years ago) for a very specific dramaturgical function in the second act. I wondered if I still had it in me to write a quality piece under that kind of time pressure and scrutiny. Our piano is in the living room, which is constantly full of unavoidable distractions. I was so obsessed with the task at hand and possessed by the heat of creation that I had to ask my entire family to go to the neighbor's house for a few hours until I finished the song. I went into that state of creative "flow" described so eloquently by Csikszentmihaly (1990, 1997), and finished the song in time to get it orchestrated, rehearsed, and staged into the show by the following evening. It turned out to be a showstopper. I was more astounded than anyone at the reaction from the audience and the three leading women who sang the intricate trio. The confidence that I gained from that experience was invaluable.

The value of that experience was that my confidence as an artist, and my faith in the rewards of the creative process, have transferred to my classroom and the

students who look to me for guidance and inspiration.

Experiences like the one just described help me share the excitement and joy of creation with my students. It is the kind of enthusiasm one can sustain internally and transfer to any situation wherein artists are creating something out of nothing and exercising their creative muscles.

Having witnessed the production of *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore et al., 2005), some of my colleagues at NSU were able to catch a glimpse of what the IAP is about and what I did other than going to faculty meetings, filling out evaluations, and talking on the phone. It also had an effect on Lovewell Institute in that parents and teachers had the opportunity to see that I knew something about the subject I was teaching. Up until then, I felt that many people in the community saw me as merely a salesman or “front man” for Lovewell Institute. I had lived in Florida for 20 years and never had a show I had written actually produced in the Ft. Lauderdale area until now. Three young cast members of *Nefertiti* (Spangler, Gore et al., 2005) attended the Lovewell summer workshops starting the following month. It remains to be seen how commercially successful either *Nefertiti* (Spangler et al., 2005) or *Play It By Heart* (Spangler, Taylor et al., 2005) will be, but the productions were solid, the overall audience and critical reaction were good, and there is interest in future productions and development of both properties.

The experience and knowledge I gain by working with professional theatrical artists, general managers, lawyers, agents, accountants, ticketing agencies, marketing people, and producers is passed on to my students at Lovewell and NSU. With higher education’s new focus on career training and job placement, this kind of knowledge can be quite beneficial to the students. The IAP Capstone events are meant to be a leadership adventure into the realities of the professional world of entrepreneurship and applied arts and educational concepts. It is my hope to create more opportunities for NSU and Lovewell students and staff to participate in professional endeavors that will provide

them with useful hands-on experience and valuable knowledge.

During the summer of 2005, we decided to frame the Florida Lovewell workshops as a Festival of New Works by Young Artists by producing the teen production and JR production in the same theatre over the same weekend. Despite the technical and logistical challenges of this undertaking, the results were successful. The Florida teen production was *Taking Root--A Groundbreaking Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2005a), and the Lovewell JR production was *The Time It Takes--A Musical Adventure* (Lovewell Institute, 2005c). This is the year that Lovewell Sweden moved the international workshop from Oskarshamn, a small village on the Baltic Sea, to Linköping, a thriving college town only 2 hours from Stockholm. It was a bold move and echoed some of the rationale for the move in 1996 of Lovewell USA from Salina, Kansas, to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Linköping was larger than Oskarshamn and ultimately had more resources with which to nurture a future for Lovewell. The international students created a unique show that reflected the ethical dilemmas now being confronted by contemporary youth. *The Road to Eville--A Dead-End Musical* (Lovewell Institute, 2005b) is a gothic morality tale concerning the seven deadly sins. It required extensive research and was extremely well-received in Sweden. Personally, it was one of the most rewarding workshops I have ever experienced. Once again, the success of the process and product were largely due to the staff, the board of directors, and the maturing of the methodology. The “accumulation factor” was now positively affecting the Swedish program--more key people in the program knowing more about the creative process and the Lovewell Method.

There were 17 staff members for the two Florida 2005 programs including interns and administrators, and 8 staff members in Sweden, including the interns and NSU graduate students who participated in the workshop. As mentioned earlier, Carrie

Gilchrist Hagen, Joe Hagen, Ryan McCall, and Jamie Johnson McCall were once again the core staff instructors. As of this writing, these four extraordinary artists have lived at the epicenter of Lovewell activity for a little less than a year and have already had a profound impact on the substance and quality of Lovewell Institute and all of its programs and procedures. Their commitment and dedication to the Lovewell culture is astonishing. They transformed the summer workshops into a professional smooth-running machine that delivers top quality service and maintains a consistent balance between the process and the product. None of these four devoted staff members is yet on a full-time salary from Lovewell, but they all work tirelessly to keep the programs running, and they find the time and energy to explore new initiatives, maintain the Web site, generate communication and fund-raising materials, identify and apply for grants, and administer workshops whenever feasible. Their move to Florida in the fall of 2004 was the quantum leap that Lovewell needed to bring it to the next level as an organization and as a methodology.

Consequently, this is the year it became apparent that I would now have the freedom to move to the next level of my evolution with Lovewell Institute by finishing my Ph.D. and focusing more on teacher training, articulation of the Lovewell Method to new constituencies, and the infrastructure of the corporation. With the programmatic aspects so well in place, the board could now turn its attention to fund-raising, outreach, expansion, academic validation, product development, and advocacy. The social and organizational foundations of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method have become strong enough to build on. Exactly what will be built is yet to be determined.

This autoethnographic and historiographic portrait of Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method was intended to reveal the roots and evolution of the Lovewell idea

from the artist's perspective. It is the artist in me that taught the educator in me how and what to teach. It is the artist/educator who informs the social engineer about the transformative potential of the arts and education. In this respect, it was necessary to share some of my "ah ha" moments from an intensely personal and chronological point of view. The educational component has followed the authentic experiential activities in a natural empirical progression. As I was called upon to teach, I began deconstructing the method I had been using and, through this process, actually "learned" the methodology by teaching it. This portion of the metacognitive journey laid the groundwork for the development of the Lovewell Method. As I observed the effects of the Lovewell Method and struggled to place it within educational and organizational contexts, I began to explore the social and psychological applications of this type of holistic arts education approach. The methodology itself was clearly becoming effective as an agent of personal and social transformation as well as a valid educational tool.

Analyzing the development of Lovewell through this multilayered approach has given me the opportunity to view the whole phenomenon with a broader perspective. It has helped me discern where and how I now fit into the mix. I have now observed Lovewell Institute and the Lovewell Method from within *and* without. Lovewell has grown much larger than me, yet I feel that I still have contributions to make such as continuing to collect, examine and interpret data generated through the Lovewell process. The following chapters will reflect those efforts.