the economic survival rite of passage

an integrated media performance

by andruid kerne

script/score
In most societies, rites of passage are named as such, and marked explicitly. Here, students are prepared to get absorbed by the economy, but the implications of what we give up are not discussed. No logic is presented, other than, "that is the way the world is." Why is the world that way? The purpose of this piece is to give us a space in which to collectively think and feel about this. Since no one else has given us one, we can make our own rite of passage.

**Cast of Characters**

- the student
- mom
- the representative from j.p. morgan
- the diviner -- shaman of the oracle of the 16 cowries
- Oshun -- the goddess of the river / the goddess of love

**Environmental Zones**

- the vision pit
  - a green scaffolding downstage right, with painted tree suspended on top. inside here, the student is sheltered.

- the graduation area
  - we reserve a corridor house left for performance. at the top of that area -- in the back of the house -- are 2 seats, for mom and the student.

- the game show torture chamber
  - 3 purple stools and a green chair, stage right, mid. where the student is tempted and tortured.

- the ancestral ground
  - a shrine of purple scaffolding, upstage left. the skeleton sits here., 12 feet up, behind the window.

- the musicians' performance square
  - (offset by 45 degrees) in the center of the circle

- the musicians' waiting area
  - when they are not performing, the musicians sit on the floor at the periphery, downstage left. the musicians, as shamans, are always present, part of the action, even when not playing music.
Act 1

graduation (pompous circumstance)

mom and student, seated on an elevated platform
bassist, drummer, cellist and 1 violinist in musicians' square; other musicians seated in musician's waiting area.
crowd sounds - looped samples
strings, snare & kick drums: distended segments of pomp and circumstance
lights on musician's square only

as the music fades out, the lights
crossfade, illuminating mom and the
student on the graduation platform,
and darkening the musicians' square

mom: its time for you be responsible
and choose a career now.
Something stable and responsible,
a profession.
Your father and i have worked
so hard to give you opportunities.
What are you going to do
with your future?

The student turns toward Mom; she wants to answer the question.
They exchange glances, then Mom pushes the student, who rolls to the vision pit.

The musicians exit from the rear faces of their square. They move clockwise to the musicians' waiting area, where they sit on the floor.

going out into the bush

student in vision pit, arms hugging knees, rocking from fetal position.

voice: You are out in the bush all alone. You sit in the
vision pit, a hole dug into the side of a hill. Only
twenty, you still have your child's name. The nearest
human being is many miles away. Out in the bush all
alone, each moment may feel like a long, long time.
See your visions, find your path; only then will you
return to your people. When you return, you will no
longer be a child, but an adult.1

The vocalists move from the musician's waiting area to the musicians' square, cycling clockwise.
When they pass near the student, they do not interact.

---
1 The impetus for this line comes from Lame Deer of the Sioux, as transcribed by Joan Halifax in
Shamanic Voices. 1978. New York, Dutton. The notion of a sacred space where the initiate goes alone for
visioning may also be found in other cultures.
haa aa uh (1) -- simple statement
<<invocation of primal interconnectedness -- first stage: finding connection with self.>>

- student explores themes of fear and strength within the confines of the vision pit. She climbs the scaffolding, feeling the prison of her own mind. Explore:
  - a time when you felt afraid, maybe paralyzed by fear.
  - a time when you felt secure on your own.
  - a time when you were lost. You needed to get some place. No one was accessible to give directions.
  - a time when you knew your place, happily.
  - a time when you stood up for yourself.
  - a time when you wanted to stand up for yourself, but were afraid.

This process continues until the student is satisfied that she has found herself in this place.

- student arrives in front of her chair and freezes in preparation for raise hands
- lights on student cut as she arrives.
  Oshun emerges from musicians' square.
  Other vocalists move clockwise to musician's waiting area.

Oshun's soliloquy

Oshun is emerging from the river and preparing to go out.
Congo player accompanies with solo.

Oshun:
From my home in the river
from the sweet swirls of clear warm water and
sienna silt streaked with sunlight,
from the thick, flowing braid of currents and eddies,
I will go . . . out . . . in style of course -- that is
my way. Give them a taste of my beauty and charm.
Oshun. I am Oshun, Orisha of the river.
Consort of Chango and Elegua, still I am my own woman.
I am Oshun, the desirable. They will want me. I will

Oshun returns to the musician's waiting area
Cellist, violinist, drummer and rainstick player move from the musician's waiting area to the musicians' square.

statement of breath/decision
Soft light re-discovers the student, still standing in front of her chair.

The student performs "raise hands" from Tai Chi as as slowly as possible.
- malleted cymbal rolls flutter like birds in a Chinese painting
- cello and violin sustain a 5th
- rain stick
- leave lots of silence
to end the 5 minutes, concluding the scene

student: when making a decision i try to slow down.
no, i dont try, i let myself
let go
become aware of my breathing
being filled and emptied,
filled and emptied
emptied and filled
i try the possibilities on, like robes.
Silk or polyester?
i breathe to sense which feels lighter

blackout
then light immediately returns to cowries
String players return to musician's waiting area.
Vocalists, conga and 3rd shaker player move to the
musicians' square.

casting of oracle with traditional afro-cuban guiro

student is still in front of chair.
enter diviner,
who alluringly convinces the student to have her fortune told by the oracle of the 16 cowries.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1/2/8 Ewe bell pattern</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gankogui bell:</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>voice 1:</td>
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2 The 16 cowries divination is a traditional Yoruba divination form associated with the Orisha Crula. It is related to the more popular Ifa divination. The story which follows is adapted from a tale told by a Nigerian diviner, then transcribed and translated in William Bascom. Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1980.

3 Guiro means gourd in Spanish. This traditional Afro-Cuban form accompanies songs of praise to and invocation of the Orishas. Orisha is the Yoruba word for deity. The Yoruba people are based in Nigeria. Many of them were taken by force to slavery in the New World in the 17th - 19 centuries. In spite of intense persecution, some of these people held onto their spiritual practices. In Cuba, their religion is called Santeria; in Brazil it is called Candomble. Directly traceable elements can also be found in the Afro-Haitian form, Voudon.

An even more sacred form of Afro-Cuban Orisha music is played on Bata drums at a ceremony called bembe or toke. The guiro, which we play, is less holy, but still spiritual. We use the traditional guiro ensemble here, with 3 guiro's, or as they are also called when dressed in a net of beads for shaking, shekerees.
When the student assents to having her fortune told, 
the diviner pushes her into her chair.

Enter congo with burning lead (1 minute, while diviner shakes, casts, and reads cowries)
Diviner takes basket of cowries, 
shakes them, 
casts them and 
peers to interpret them.

Congo cools off and composes rhythm part which will support Oshun dance, when Oshun enters

Diviner: 5 cowries. 5 cowries face up.
Ose. Ose. This outcome, 5 cowries, this Odu -- Ose.
Student, I read your future.
The cowries conjure Oshun.
5 is her number. 5 for Oshun.
Sweet Oshun. Goddess of the River.
Orisha Oshun, with the honeyed breast.
Orisha Oshun. Goddess of Love.

Voice 2: Long ago,
our people,
the ones who cast the oracle and invoked the Orishas, 
they were making war on the Other, 
an unsuccessful war that they could not win.
The king called upon the Sixteen Orishas, 
He said, "Orishas, go and capture the Other for me."
Chango, orisha of lightening, went, he failed; 
Babaluaye, orisha of sickness and healing, went, he failed; 
Ogun, the blacksmith -- spirit of iron molten in the forge -- Ogun went, he failed.
<<Oshun enters from the musicians' square.>>
Oshun: Perhaps I may be of some assistance?
voice 2: Ha! A woman? Never!
Oshun: Well, Chango moves me, but perhaps we need an approach
more ... powerful ... than lightening.
voice 2: Oshun, they are dangerous.
Oshun: I am dangerous, too. I am not afraid of the Other.
I will go.
to diviner
This war that I am going to, what should I do to win it?
diviner: Oshun
Oshun, offer
10,000 cowries on the right side;
Offer 10,000 cowries on the left side;
Offer a pigeon and a cock;
Offer a caba;calabash;
Offer a coil of thread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>conga lead 40 seconds</th>
<th>Oshun collects and offers sacrifice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd &amp; 3rd shekeres enter</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>shekeres intensity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

diviner: Oshun has appeased the gods.
Oshun: Now, I am ready to enter the town of the Other.
Oshun: bima Oshun ba ilele
ochu-o ache bo le ure
bima Oshun ba ilele
ochu-o ache bo le ure
diviner starts coro, which is then thickened at each iteration of the full coro part by
the student (who rises from her chair)
vocalists & shekere players
coro: bima Oshun ba ilele
ochu-o ache bo le ure
bima Oshun ba ilele
Shekere players, Diviner and Oshun process singing around space, and exit
The student starts to join them, then hesitates, and is left behind.
Act 2

game show

<<reverse game show format, 3 interrogators -- Mom, the rep from J.P. Morgan, and the diviner. The student is interrogated about career plans, goals, possibilities & compromises>>
lights to suggest hollywood glitz

no music  all musicians except the drummer sit in the musician's waiting area

Game show blocking. Realism/surrealism.
The 3 interrogators stand on their stools, stage right, perhaps outside.
The student sits in the interrogation chair, at 1st base.

rep from JP: Hello, and welcome to, What are you doing?, the game show with the biggest prizes and the rudest questions. I'm the representative from J.P. Morgan, and with me today in our studio to interrogate our contestant are Mom and the diviner.

<<applause>>
Now, joining us today, from Mainstream, USA, on What are you doing? is our contestant, the student.

<<applause>>
Student, before we get started, tell our audience, do you have any hobbies?

student: Well, I like to take walks.

rep from JP: Walks?! Very nice. We'll return with today's first question on What are you doing? after this commercial message.

<<corporate icon din segment -- 20 seconds>>

rep from JP: Welcome back. Now, the format is simple. Mom, the diviner and I ask the questions. Answer correctly for big money and prizes. Answer, incorrectly, ... and face the consequences. O.K., student. For $100, what is your major concern, as you graduate?

student: A secure future.

<<applause>>

Mom: That's my girl/boy.

diviner: For 200 remote plant species, what happens when you think of your future and the future of the earth at the same time?

student: Sometimes, I get overwhelmed. I just wanna think of me.

rep from JP: That's good for $200!

<<applause>>
For 300 dollars, what is most important about a career path?
student: Work that will make me happy, that will give me a feeling of satisfaction.

rep from JP: That's o.k. so far. We'll give 50 dollars, partial credit. For 400 dollars, now, what will make you feel happy?.

student: Well, that could include many factors. . .
<<buzzer sound>>
rep from JP: No, I'm sorry, the correct answer is, financial security. You just lost a job offer.
<<ohhh>>
student: Oh, I see.

rep from JP: Now, the daily double.
<<applause>>

Tell us Mom, what special prize do we have for the student if s/he can answer this next question?

Mom: From Transworld Airlines and American Express tours, you'll be flying to Europe for that post-graduation summer trip you've always dreamed of. Five days in Rome, 5 days in Paris, 5 days in London. 5 days in Prague, the city of Vaclav Havel. You'll be exposed to new diverse cultures!

rep from JP: Now, here's the big question. Suppose the boss asks you to minimize the costs of relocating Natives whose homes will be flooded by the firm's Amazon hydroelectric project? What's your initial response?

student: Yes, of course. Factors analysis to minimize relocation costs? Sure, boss, I can do that. Very interesting.

<<applause>>
rep from JP: Right on, student! We'll be right back.

corporate icon din
an assembly of samples from the commercials of very large corporations

the student remains seated in the interrogation chair. she stares blankly out the window, as if watching a normal sequence of television commercials.

DON'T WALK  WALK

visual: cycling of walk and don't walk

All the musicians move together to their places in the musicians' square.
voice 1: The objective of a resume is to present your qualifications clearly and succinctly so that prospective employers will want to interview you.

voice 2: The objective of the cover letter is to impress the employer with your qualifications, motivation and interest in the job so that he will want to interview you.

voice 3: Dear Student:
Thank-you for your interest in the position of administrative assistant. You were among many qualified applicants, We will keep your resume on file for consideration in the event of future openings.

the student rolls out of the chair and back to the vision pit.

haa aa uh (2) -- intermediate statement
student, in vision pit again continues to develop her theme.
dancers enter other zones and, in parallel, explore the same themes
cello and violin with sustained vocals
then add electric bass
call and response
<<call and response>>
J.P. rep: london bridge is falling down,
falling down, falling down
student: london bridge is falling down,
my fair lady
mom: you must pay the rent
student: i cant pay the rent
J.P. rep: you must sign ze papers
student: i will not sign ze papers

the musicians return to the ancestral grounds.

sign ze papers
funky with all dancers expressing conflict. the student finds different alignments.

pre-sequenced rhythm tracks with live vocals
samples include whip crack, and various convolutions of a baby's sounds

i just wanna
think of me
i just wanna
think of me
in turn
alize
the pressure is squeezing
the pressure is squeezing my brain
you must sign ze papers
i will break both of your arms
i will break both of your legs

break break break
hold on let go
break break break
as sign ze papers is ending, the drummer returns to the musicians' square

transition with battering
whip crack solo

the vocalists return to the musicians' square
Mom and the dancers exit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>j.p. morgan presentation</th>
<th>voice 1: (7 beat cycle)</th>
<th>voice 2: (9 beats)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rep from JP is presenting to the student.</td>
<td>see through the eyes.</td>
<td>the bank is looking for someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>a tightly structured improvisation, with well-defined time structures.</td>
<td>see through the eyes</td>
<td>with analytical skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>instruments: percussionist, the 3 vocalists, and the rep. from J.P.</td>
<td>see through the eyes of analysts</td>
<td>communication skills are</td>
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<tr>
<td>timbres: triggered samples of telephone, office, kick drum.</td>
<td>see through the eyes of analysts</td>
<td>essential.</td>
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<td>see through the eyes of analysts</td>
<td>strong decision-making abilities</td>
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<td>see through the eyes of analysts</td>
<td>must be project-oriented.</td>
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<td>see a wide range of functional areas</td>
<td>must want to be a team player.</td>
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<td>see how these units function together</td>
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<td>your strengths and the strengths of</td>
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<td>the firm have been identified.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>voice 3: (off beat phrasing)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>corporate finance</td>
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<td>masters in accounting</td>
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<td>address strategic</td>
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<tr>
<td>management issues</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
the string players return to the musicians' square
the rep from J.P., by starting these lines, signals the musicians to end.

musicians decresendo, preparing to finish

rep from J.P.: At J.P. Morgan, constant on-going training never ends. Diverse opportunities for personal growth.

all layers finish except the rep from J.P., who then flows naturally out of time structure into game show lines.

Analysts use a statistical behavioral model to determine your behavioral classification. Using this information, work with peers, managers and subordinates to form better relationships.

---

**job interview torture chamber**

2:30

Student in job interview chair (1st base, stage right). Mom and the rep J.P. on the side ledge.

loosely structured improv
discord. drummer plays angular rolls.
strings play squeaks and grunts.
Make the time as odd as hell.
Leave a lot of space at first and let density build very gradually.

Throughout this scene, movement intensifies. Consider repeated job interview gestures, and torture. Build into a constrained frenzy.

with accelerating pace. Except for the one question which is repeated from the previous game show, the student creates her/his own answers.

**rep J.P.:** Welcome back to America's favorite game show, What are you doing? For $100, can you master a technical subject?

**student:** <<___________________>>

**rep J.P.:** You're getting your masters degree at night and on weekends while you're working full time. For $200, what about your time management skills.

**student:** <<___________________>>

**Mom:** To avoid repossession, how are you going to make payments on your car 6 months from now?

**student:** <<___________________>>

**rep J.P.:** What personal strengths can you offer the J.P. Morgan investment bank?

**student:** <<___________________>>
Mom and the rep from J.P. morgan loop on movements which close-in on the student, and threaten her.

rep J.P.: what is your major concern, as you graduate?

student: A secure future.

Mom: What about your future?

rep J.P.: Are you ready to take the urine test?

Mom: How are you going to make payments on your car?

Mom: Yes, sign here.

rep J.P: Now sign here.

The student reaches the breaking point.
In the midst of the voices, student starts to sing coro for Oshun's song. She sings tentatively at first, but with growing power.

student: bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o ache bo le ure
bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o ache bo le ure

bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o ache bo le ure
bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o ache bo le ure

Oshun leaves musicians square, dances in waiting downstage left, unseen by the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student: ochu-o ache bo le ure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coro: bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o ache bo le ure</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Anu, Amy, Monica, David, Andru)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everyone must be sensitive to the student, for when s/he starts to sing, transformation commences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A wave which moves all emanates from her gesture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The bell player joins, broadcasting the time base.</td>
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<tr>
<td>as the student's song grows full and strong, she finds support (make her assert it)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oshun, flanked by 2 entering shokere players, meets the student.</td>
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</table>

The vocalists sustain a primal moan/wail/scream/sob that starts very quiet, and builds in intensity. The other musicians continue to build.
**traditional afro-cuban guiro (2) with song for oshun**

5:00

Oshun and the student take refuge in the student's power spot, the vision pit, where they embrace. The diviner enters and climbs the vision pit scaffolding.

diviner: The place of the Other was at the bottom of a hill. Far away, they saw Oshun.

Meanwhile, Mom and J.P., change their angle as they continue their threatening gestures.

Amy takes over lead singing. 3 shekere, bell and singing continue.

singing pauses when diviner reaches her highest point.

rep from JP: Ha! This one is a woman! This one does not come to fight. She is moving sweetly.

Oshun, angry at being trivialized, emerges from embrace and vision pit, to focus point at front of musician's square. When she is ready, she suddenly looks JP in the eyes and begins to sing lead.

Oshun seduces J.P. Morgan representative, from afar. He is drawn into her dance and song. He comes forward to join her. He tosses his jacket onto the student's chair.

Mom is seduced, analogously.

Oshun turns and calls diviner: They dropped their weapons on the ground.

conga and bass line enter

**Oshun:**

bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o' ache bo le ure
bima Oshun ba ilele ochu-o' ache bo le ure

Amy and Anu join coro.

diviner stops singing, climbs down from scaffolding, and says

All of the Other, all of the others, all of the Other, they moved with Oshun. With Oshun.

All dance. Actors join the coro.

singing continues a bit quieter, without diviner.
They moved with Oshun.
It was Oshun who moved them.

Student emerges from back of vision pit to lead clockwise procession of dance Actors around the musicians square, followed by Oshun, Mom, J.P., & Oshun. The diviner waits at the bottom of the scaffolding.

Oshun arrives at her place in the musicians' square to sing the transition.
Procession continues. Dancers simultaneously enter from all 4 corners, joining the circle.
Bell pattern holds time, shifting to cymbals as drum set enters.
Dance Actors drop out of coro.

paths that have a heart (12/8)
all dancers use the big space
the 3 vocalists
2 violins and cello
electric bass
trumpet

trombone
have a heart have a heart have a heart
have a heart paths that
have a heart have a heart have a heart
have a heart following paths that you will find, you will find visions
you will find them you will find, you will find visions
you will find i cannot give them to you

make it new make it new

cast a spell
you will find what you need in yourself
stir the cauldron
draw from the well
you will find the trust you need in yourself

do not stray from paths that have a heart
do not stray from paths that have a heart
diviner:
elegua, the trickster, stands at the crossroads.
ask him with respect, he may show you the way.
which way will he show you, anyway?
**Statement of breath/decision**

Drummer plays signal. Other musicians drop out. Drummer shifts to **haa** groove.

Bass, then cello & violin join **haa aa uh** holding pattern.

**Lights on full cast**

Student raises hands three times very slowly, as in first statement of breath; circle of dancers and dance Actors raise hands with her, in unison, all raise hands a fourth time; now before lowering, turn them over and outstretch them.

Student: I don't know the way but I have glimpsed the feeling.

I need your help. Let me carry what we make here through the turbulence ahead.

**Vocals and instruments kick hard into root, giving impetus and motivation**

**Ha a a u h (3)**

Complete statement

**Musician form scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Dancers jam, flooding the audience space and the musicians square. Mayhem breaks loose. Cast moves into audience and invites them to floor to dance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holding pattern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bass and drums duet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Ensemble of dancers circle in simple, basic movement around musicians square and front dance space. Solo's or duets take turns in the center.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocalist 1 solo (other vocalists comp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cello solo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocalist 2 solo (other vocalists comp)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violin solo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocalist 3 solo (other vocalists comp)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**House lights up**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>root</th>
<th>the student returns to the vision pit and climbs around within its confines, echoing haa aa uh 1 choreography. Other dancers echo haa 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>holding pattern (8 bars only)</td>
<td>The other dancers exit. After they exit, the student climbs the vision pit scaffolding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lull</td>
<td>student: i am called the student. because my orientation is toward learning. i hope i am always the student that i never close my mind. i hope you are the student, too, always.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musicians conclude</td>
<td>lights change to illuminate only the musicians' square, as in the opening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**graduation**

(boomous circumstance as before)

mom and the student move to the graduation platform vocalists and 2nd violinist return to musicians chairs.

light crossfades, darkening musician's square and discovering mom and student, back in their seats.

mom: i'm asking you a question. what are you going to do with your future?

freeze in suspended moment blackout

2:00