

Reflective essay

I've been studying the play 'Angels in America'. I've been given the role of Louis. Louis is a difficult character as he has many underlying issues that were needed to be understood to be able to play the character well. We all had to add songs to the play which at first was difficult because my knowledge of songs isn't that good. But I still managed to find some duets that would go with scenes but they weren't put in as there were solos that worked better with the scene and characters.

We used Meisner techniques throughout the learning process of the scenes. These really helped me get into character. There are three techniques to Meisner these three techniques are;

- Emotional preparation
- Repetition
- Improvisation

Emotional preparation is where you use an imagined scenario or personal one to actually get your emotions in the right place for the scene. This was tough for me to do as I struggle to allow my emotions to take over. But I got over it by using imagined real-life scenarios rather than trying to relate to the character.

Meisner used repetition drills to hone his students' observation and instinctive abilities. He thought that repetition helped performers to disengage from their thoughts and depend more on their natural instincts. Meisner asserted that these genuine instincts, sparked by a different individual in the present, accurately depict human behaviour.

With improvisation Meisner advocated waiting until something prompts an actor before making decisions in order to justify their behaviour. Actors need to be completely connected to one another in order to respond improvised to justified and natural stimuli and avoid missing out on important actions or reactions. As a result, every character in a scene has a rich inner life.

All of these techniques really helped me with getting into characters and getting my character's relationship and connections with other characters. It was really interesting to see how different my connections were with the different characters. My connection with Nico was so much different than my connection with Zak. My connection with Zak I was more fun, more enticing and just much more light hearted and cheeky with him. My connection with Nico was more challenging because of the two different scenes I've had with him. The first one was more caring, more romantically inclined. Whereas the second scene was more defensive and protective in the way I was protecting a secret from him even though he exploits that during the scene. The subtext between the two scenes was also a little bit challenging because both of the scenes were very emotionally contrasting for my character. But what helped with these issues was the emotional preparation as I know what it's like to care for someone as everyone does but it was a little challenging to do the one where I've cheated, so I just used the emotional preparation again but just in the imaginary scenario part instead.

I also used pictures to help me. The pictures I used in my head were the flat to actually help me with getting into the scene rather than focusing on people around me. I would envision Nico in the flat rather than him laying on the floor in our university building. It was also interesting that with Nico I was the 'weaker' gay but with Zak I was the more powerful one and initiated a lot with him especially in the bathroom scene.

My actor defaults we're self awareness and acting with my voice. Self awareness was a big issue with me as a performer as I just felt like I was being silly and it just took a toll on my self confidence. But to overcome this I used the misner practice of 'you and I' to just get my head out of that headspace. I also used to just imagine if I was actually in that scene what I would do and be thinking.

Acting through my voice is something I'd do if I lost connection with the person in the scene and from my character. This usually happens when I either forgot my line early on with learning the script or when my self confidence got the better of me. The way I'd get over this was to use

emotional preparation for example if nico was actually in that much pain how I would react.

I also struggled a little bit with 'moment by moment' because I knew the ending. I used to play with just getting there rather than actually having an emotional connection and letting the scene unfold and giving it all away. I also had to take into account given circumstances for example my character didn't know Nico knew I was cheating on him but I used to play that he knew so I used to act sad and upset rather than covering it up.

Tonight's show was interesting because it changed some things for my character. For example, because there was an audience there was a little pressure to get into character and to connect fully so that they would get the story line. Also because there was an audience it changed some choices I made for example my scene with nico I didn't look up I was looking more at him and just tried to get that first connection really strong. But the scene with Zak I was more playful than I usually am and more like flirty as a character which I think worked better for me as I used to usually play it down, but it's meant to be more flirty but intense. The last scene with nico I got more upset at the end and I realised I looked at him as I was walking away from him and I've never done that in rehearsal before, but I think because of the emotional preparation I'd done before that scene it made me more upset about leaving and just didn't want to leave.

Reference list :

<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/the-definitive-guide-to-the-meisner-technique-67712/>