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Task 3. Looking back, evaluate how has your touring theatre production realised in practice elements of Tasks 1 & 2?

With the conclusion of the touring production, I have been given the opportunity to reflect upon the process, its foundational composition and the resulting performance's relation therein to the intent and purpose of the composition. Beginning with research week, the opportunity was presented for a concentrated adaptation of the performance preparation process. Where in script work, you have a more focused and specific lens for research, often historical context, location and cultural information that informs a character's view and similarly informative data that can be used to craft a subjective apparatus for the honest depiction of given circumstances, the method of devised performance presented a wider and perhaps more difficult challenge of self education. Without an explicit context for the play's relevance to the information, it became imperative to dive into the issue with a more broad method for collection of research, in a more academic environment than usual. I found myself deep in the texts of papers on the environmental impact of the highly-salted water run off from biologically based polypropylene production, global emission percentages in nationalized energy industries and similarly 'esoteric' topics. This process, when multiplied across a full cast, becomes a communal construction of, simultaneously, a wide top-down understanding of the issue and individual instances of specific, nuanced information on a variety of matters, though it clearly does not come naturally to all. Phoebe Yuk-Lan Chan observes this in her paper on theatre in times of socio-political change:

"In issue-based theatre, the need for [Theatre in Education] actors to digest social themes is essential. Some of the actors in the two TIE works who came from an actor training background found the task particularly difficult. They explained that their previous training in acting was predominantly focused on technical theatre skills and insufficiently developed their intellectual capacity for understanding broader social and political concepts."

The central focus then became the condensation of these complex topics into a medium that is palatable for younger audiences. This led to several adaptations, visual engagement became an important tool to engage the audience, therein came the evolution to a highly mobile set and diverse aspects of performance, from puppetry to shadow play to projection, which allowed us to keep younger audiences focused on the varied occurrences on stage. This focus can then be the primary method of engagement through which we can then communicate more complicated and admittedly less dramatically interesting concepts by framing it through a visually diverse array of theatrical devices, in achieving a platform that allows the facilitation of Dennis Eluyefa's observations of theatre for young children:

"Children can learn about social and ethical issues and develop some social skills through the medium of theatre, either by watching or taking part in it. Moreover, moral lessons are often part of almost every fairytale. In the same vein, moral lessons can be embedded in children's theatre in the context of entertainment."

With this decision to visually occupy and therein divulge the informative portion of the play, the barometer for success does come down to the actual performance. In many of the schools where we performed, it was clear that this sort of theatrical performance was a new occurrence. Children responded to it with reactions such as "I don't learn a lot in an hour, but that was the most I've ever learned in an hour!" or "That was my favourite show!" which was a fulfilling response that validated

the accessibility of theatrical performances coming to these schools allowing a new medium of education than was typically available. This exposure to the arts can be a multifunctional tool, as Nalita James notes:

“Theatre as education has a number of important functions for [young students with little access to the arts], positively contributing to the transmission of their skills development, influencing and supporting intellectual development, as well as empowering them to affect change in their own lives by opening up [further education] opportunities.”

The goal of the focused research was to allow an informed expertise capable not only of understanding complex issues, but of teaching and spreading a practical knowledge base to young audiences. Through both the increased accessibility, audience response and theatrical devices employed, I would consider the practical element of the theatrical goals accomplished, whereas the effect remains a question of long term behavioral change.

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