

Learning In The Digital Era

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Reflective essay

For this essay I am going to be reflecting on an acting class which took part on the third of October 2022. This was one of my first classes here at university and I believe I have progressed a lot since then, with different acting technique exercises becoming easier and more helpful in professional practice.

Once started we played some games to help us with teamwork and progression. For this game we were put into pairs, with one person having their eyes shut and the other directing them around the room only by their hands on the other person's shoulders. This exercise showed trust and being able to be directed without any knowledge of where you were going next. At the start I was very conscious, as I didn't like not knowing where I was in the room and putting all my trust in someone to direct me. I found this very difficult to manage and it took some time for me to trust my partner. As time went on I saw myself progressing, as by the end of the exercise I was able to trust my partner and their instincts. I felt a lot safer and remained calm walking with my eyes closed. If I was to do this exercise today I would be able to trust my partner, which would enable me to do the exercise more effectively. This will help me in my professional career as I will be able to work better in a group and not be as nervous to try new things.

Another exercise we did was a muscle memory game, (where everyone stood in a circle and were given a number where each person had to move from the number before them to the number after them) one person had to walk to the other person and once arrived the other person had to start walking to the next. This helped train our brains to constantly be aware of our surroundings and be engaged throughout the exercise. This exercise helped with multi-tasking, as we were constantly thinking about what the next move would be, while also

doing a movement at the same time. At the beginning, our group was very slow and stuttering on who would be the next person to move. By the end of the exercise we were all able to move smoothly and efficiently without making any mistakes. In the future this exercise will help me as this is something that constantly happens on stage and if anything were to go wrong, I would be able to multi- task to prevent more distress. I can also use this in my professional practice when it comes to auditions as you are constantly asked to multi- task to see how you cope under pressure.

We then went onto an improvisation circle where we all got to create scenarios without speaking. This was an interesting exercise because anything could've happened. For example, we started off with an imaginary ball and ended up in a zombie apocalypse. This exercise helped a lot with my improvisation skills as I tended to not let myself go usually. Whilst doing this exercise it allowed me to overcome my fear of what people think about me and let me not care. Throughout the entire exercise the group worked very well as a team as we all listened and went on with the next idea someone had. This exercise helped a lot with teamwork and I believe it brought us closer as a group as we all included each other and had fun with it. The entire class worked together and made different scenarios within the game to let everyone have a chance at creating a different approach as to what the next scenario would be. Personally, I enjoyed this exercise as it let me be free with my ideas and I believe this could help me in the future with my creative ambition in theater.

I recently looked into the benefits of improvisation classes. I carried out research on the website 'Backstage' with the title "Does improv help acting?" by Carolyn Barry. "Most acting techniques are focused on emotional connection, character work, truthful expression, and script interpretation, while improv is about freeing up the mind so as to be more creative with choices and instincts." I believe this is true and a helpful way of looking at it. Improvisation is all about creating and taking your own initiative of a scenario instead of being told how to portray it. Improv can also be used to help on stage if anything were to go wrong. For example, for a queue not going off you would be able to improvise quickly to cover a mistake or to move the story along without people noticing. Carolyn Barry states that improvisation classes help a lot when it comes to auditioning with being confident and thrown into situations that you aren't prepared for. This can help with my practice as the more improvisation I do, the more comfortable I can be in these situations and which will ultimately benefit me in the industry.

Another source I used was the book 'The improv handbook' by Tom Salinski. As stated "This book acts as a comprehensive guide to the world of improv and covers a variety of topics ranging from the basics of scene work, to performing in public". This book was very useful to read as it had many exercises and reasonings behind them which make improvisation much easier for an actor. One example of this is the "yes and" method where you open up a new door to the conversation and never close off the conversation by saying no. This will help as by saying "yes and" the conversation then has somewhere to go and therefore will create a longer improvisational performance. This book was very interesting to read as it had many different exercises and tips on how to improvise which I feel I can use in the future for my professional practice.

To conclude this class was very helpful as each exercise had a meaning and I can now see my progression from then! I will be able to use each exercise in my future career and progress even further. Personally my favorite exercise was the improvisation circle as I believe I progressed a lot during this exercise and I feel that this would be very helpful with my career in the future. Another reason why I preferred this exercise is because it helped me work well under pressure and I can use this in the future, for example in an audition room. I have seen myself progress a lot since this class as I have become more confident within myself and am now able to share my ideas very easily. I plan on expanding further with these skills by working more out of my comfort zone to enhance my ability further.

Referencing for reflective essay

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Review on bugsy malone

On the 18th of January 2023 I recently went to The Millenium Centre in Cardiff for the showing of Bugsy Malone The Musical directed by Sean Holmes, based on Alan Parker's 1976 film 'Bugsy Malone'. Telling the story of a city full of mobsters, dreamers and showgirls. Rivals 'Dandy Dan' and 'Fat Sam' goes head to head to gain power while Bugsy Malone gets trapped between the two and ends up in trouble as Dandy Dan's gang have gotten a hold of 'the new fangled "splurge" gun where Bugsy then gets caught in the middle'.

Upon arrival The Millenium Centre's statement peace at the front of the building covered in lights definitely added to the entire experience of the theater. Once entered the foye the interior design was remarkable and eye-catching and created an exciting feel while entering. However the signage and welcoming of the theater was not so exciting, with unclear signage and no one there to help with directions of where to go. It made many people very confused on where to find their seats making the overall experience not so special.

Once I entered the theater I was taken away by the set onstage which was delightfully interesting, showing a simple yet effective set, the back entrance to a stage, and a bar which was shown as 'Fat Sams' speakeasy. This took all my attention and made everyone thrilled for the show to start.

When the show started it did come to my attention that most of the main characters were played by children and I found this quite an interesting way for this to be portrayed. I was shocked by the professionalism, after this came to my attention. With this being said the ensemble which were played by more experienced adults added a very cheerful feedback from the audience and brought the whole show together and created a very professional setting, which I didn't think was going to happen as the leads were so young. Personally I think this was a very clever way of showing the story as it gave a playful feel for the audience to bounce off of and a comedic side to the show as the young actors were bossing around grown adults and I think this is why the show got a good feel from the audience members.

The dazzling ensemble definitely stole the show with well choreographed dance numbers and in sync timings for different scenes. My personal favorite was the four back up men for 'Fat Sam' performing 'Bad Guys' where the four had very clever choreography by Drew McOnie, which was very comedic and perfect for these types of characters. The song itself was very catchy and made the audience interact with the performers onstage. All four actors created

their own perception in this song and all stayed in character very well which made a very appealing performance for the audience to watch. The performance was filled with outstanding harmonies and technique from all four performers and were all in time with each other making the entire performance enjoyable to watch.

I personally admired that Sean Holmes the director used the 'brechtian' technique called 'tableaux' where he used a freeze frame to draw attention to different scenes onstage. One example of this was the car scene at the end of Act 1 where they used a freeze frame to portray a very thrilling scene and also used flashing lights to make it more effective. This enabled the audience to concentrate on the scene, making it very exciting for the eye! Personally I noticed that the cast was very small and that several ensemble members were playing different roles which for me took away from the performance.

One performance which stood out for me was 'Tomorrow' by the character Fizzy played by Aiden Oti. The reason this stood out to me was because he struggled to hit higher notes. You could tell that he wasn't trained in singing in that way, which for me took away from the performance all together as all anyone could focus on was the notes not being hit. It is understandable that someone of that age would not be trained but overall it did not create a positive feedback from the audience.

One thing I did find quite odd was that in Act 1 we don't see Bugsy very often at all and this was very confusing as you would think you would see more of him as that is the name of the show after all, which did spike conversation in the interval. In Act 2 we do see more of him which I was glad about as the more thrilling scenes came ahead but you would think that he would be the main star of the show which was not the case in Act 1 .

The set design was simple yet worked very effectively as the transitions from scene to scene were seamless and an enjoyable experience with no mistakes by the ensemble members. The use of flashing lights was very effective by creating an eye opening view for the audience and kept them engaged throughout. The prop of a full sized car was very exciting and created a very realistic view which was a very clever way of creating a thrilling scene.

In conclusion, in agreement with Rosie Holmes' review on Bugsy Malone, the show has its strengths with enjoyable dance numbers, catchy songs and an overall comedic side to it. This show is family friendly and a fun musical. With audience members very engaged throughout and having a great time it made me realise how aspiring this show was for the audience. Personally, I would not go and see it again as it wasn't what I expected it to be as it was a hard plot to follow even though the storyline was simple. In my opinion I feel that this show felt like more of a play than a musical as there weren't many aspects that a musical would have such as backing tracks under scenes to create a more musical feel. From previous experiences of musicals I feel that the finale of this show did not correspond with the plot of the musical as it was very up tempo and didn't summarise the storyline. Having said that, I would recommend it to a family for their first trip to the theater as it is a fun and engaging show for the average audience member to follow.

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