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Production 1

ADPB6001

Reflective Essay – The
World Goes Round

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of drafts, notes and any other resources I have used before and after the use of AI tools, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Introduction

This reflective essay will explore my experience working on the musical song cycle 'The World Goes 'Round' by Kander and Ebb. This production challenged and developed my skills as both a performer and collaborator. I was really excited to start rehearsals on this production, as we were working with external creatives, Director being Matt Holmquist, Musical Director, David Laugharne and Stage Manager Emily Howard. Our choreographer for this production was one of our tutors, Victoria (Tori) Johns. This essay will delve into my struggles throughout the production, what went well for me and research I undertook to help me throughout the production rehearsals.

To start the process, we had to take part in an audition so that we were given a song that showed our strengths. For this audition we had to prepare a song that we believed suited the genre of 'The World Goes 'Round'. For my song choice, I decided to sing 'Funny Honey' from the musical 'Chicago' as it was a song composed by Kander & Ebb. I believe that this was a strong choice for me and I think my audition went really well.

For the show, I was given the song 'Isn't This Better' from 'Funny Girl', which was originally sung by Barbra Streisand. My first steps to take was to listen to the song and pinpoint emotional shifts and vocal styles and techniques that were used during this song. From listening to the song, I found that it had some speech quality, with a mixed belt and forward placement of the voice. Forward vocal placement is often described through imagery such as "singing into the mask" or "feeling the voice behind the eyes", highlighting the importance of resonance in the front of the face (Dr Dan).

Our director provided a series of initial questions to support character development, which proved invaluable in helping me establish a foundational understanding of my role. However, to deepen this process further, I turned to Uta Hagen's "Nine Questions" as a structured framework for more rigorous exploration. Engaging with Hagen's methodology allowed me to interrogate my character's circumstances, objectives, and inner life with greater specificity, moving beyond surface-level interpretation into a more embodied and psychologically coherent performance. This approach reinforced the importance of fully inhabiting the character prior to performance; for the duration of the play, I am not simply portraying a role, but actively living an alternative reality. Hagen's emphasis on imaginative identification particularly through the use of

substitution and the “magic if” was instrumental in this process. By asking “What would I do if I were in these circumstances?”, I was able to construct a believable and continuous life for my character leading up to the events of the play. As Hagen asserts, the actor must “construct a new life up to the time when the play begins” through a careful synthesis of textual evidence and imaginative engagement (Hagen, p. 154). This process ultimately enabled me to develop a more authentic, nuanced, and internally motivated performance.

One of the primary challenges I encountered during the rehearsal process was the ensemble number “*The Money Song*,” which demanded a high level of vocal stamina due to its fast-paced, fragmented vocal lines combined with sustained, high-energy movement. Initially, I found it difficult to maintain vocal control and consistency while meeting the physical demands of the choreography. In response, our choreographer advised a strategy of repeating the number twice before each rehearsal, encouraging us to gradually build both physical and vocal endurance. This repetitive practice proved effective, as it not only strengthened my stamina but also increased my confidence in sustaining performance quality under pressure. Further insight into this process was reinforced by Garcia (2024), who argues that developing endurance for musical theatre requires treating the voice as a muscle: this involves consistent warm-ups and cool-downs, maintaining hydration and nutrition, and adapting techniques to suit individual vocal needs. Reflecting on this, I recognised that my initial struggles were partly due to neglecting these practices.

Another thing I struggled with was my facial expressions and emotions during the ensemble number ‘All That Jazz’. Originally, ‘All That Jazz’ was set to the jazzy and energetic soundtrack and is a choreographic spectacle that seamlessly blends Fosse’s signature style with elements of jazz and musical theatre. The choreography is characterized by intricate isolations, precise hand movements, and a distinct fusion of sensuality and sophistication. (Levina. 2023) However, due to the context of the show and ‘All That Jazz’ being the finale, the context of the song was different to how I knew it. Because of this, I originally took the choreography seductively and used sensual facial expressions and I really struggled to adapt my energy and facial expressions to be more celebrated and happy. It was vital that I was able to adapt to this change as facial expressions are the connection between the performer and the audience. When a dancers expresses joy, the audience feels it, when they express pain, the audience empathizes. The connection is what makes the performance unforgettable. (White. 2024) To help me with this emotion through the number, I took some independent learning time, and performed the choreography close to a mirror so I could pinpoint the moments I slipped out of the celebratory emotions and drill that section with the correct feelings.

Overall, this process has been both highly rewarding and developmental, and I believe I performed to a strong standard across all performances. Reflecting on my rehearsal process, I have gained valuable insights into effective preparation, adaptability, and the importance of sustained focus skills that I will carry forward into future productions and my professional career. I am particularly proud of my ability to engage constructively with critical feedback, demonstrating a willingness to reflect, refine, and elevate my work. By actively applying this feedback, I was able to enhance the depth and consistency of my performance, evidencing clear progression over time. This experience has not only strengthened my practical abilities but also deepened my understanding of reflective practice as an essential tool for continuous improvement at a professional level.

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