

ADPA 6008

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Essay

Learning outcomes,
Development of the character and experience at the WAVD'Air
Departure Lounge.

“Remember to connect the words with actions!” - this was one of the many aims set by our stage director, Sarah Crisp. It may sound easy, but achieving this for an hour-long show required diligent individual practice. I found that solitary work allows one to internalise the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the character, which in turn helps to memorise actions and truly connect with the character's life. During our rehearsals with Sarah, I learned that it is not just about singing, reacting to someone, changing seats, or walking. Each movement must have a reason - where, when, how, and why you do it, which makes the acting far more believable because you are truly embodying the character.

In this essay, I will zoom in to the thinking processes, interactions and personality of my character and the learning tools acquired during this project.

When I was presented with the question of what sort of character I wanted to play in the WAVD'Air showcase, I had no hesitation in answering that I would like to be a smart, first-class passenger traveling to her new job. That was the moment I became hooked to this project. It was when things started to make sense and not just become interesting - I knew it would be fun too.

Over the course of the project I was listening to the audiobook "An Actor Prepares" by Constantin Stanislavski (Stanislavski, 2020) to enhance the quality of my preparation for the show and incorporate and make the character I was playing as real in my mind as possible. Early on I discovered that my character is starting a new business in Ireland in the creative industry named as "Modern Opera Projects". The Business established connections, would begin with two months in Dublin before expanding to the USA and Europe as it evolves. (Stanislavski, 4/ Imagination 2020) Initially, I did not have a name for the business; those ideas developed gradually as we staged the show, connecting acting with the text in music over the weeks and

incorporating costumes and props. These main props were - a magazine, a mobile phone, a suitcase and dress was a smart costume.. Props indeed helped my character connect to a real life situations.

With her high-life magazine in hand, I immersed myself further in developing this character's personality and her ambitious project, which by then she envisioned that this project should be renamed to "Modern Times & Opera Reborn". (Tannenbaum, 2021) With her entrepreneurial spirit and background in composition, she established herself as self-important and goal-oriented, viewing herself as above everyone else in the departure lounge due to her slight snobbishness. No one knew this or asked her, but her name was Elfa.

Little did Elfa know that her elegant encounter with a passenger called Dora, (who resembled a Dew Ferry), singing the gracious song "Belle nuit" would be the last elegant moment she would experience in the departure lounge.

Surrounded by people from all walks of life, the peace and quiet Elfa longed for became impossible. She was disturbed by a mad seller of old pies. While trying to buy a cold orange drink from her shop, Elfa was instead sold an outdated pie. Elfa could not believe what had just happened and could not wait to get away from that shop!

As her flight was delayed Elfa emailed everyone in her team to inform them she would be arriving later than planned to her first business meeting in Dublin. She also called Louis, her partner, several times, but there was no answer. This bothered her. Both crazy and fun atmosphere in the lounge distracted her from stressing about the new job meeting and Louis not answering her calls. So Elfa gave up stressing and fully immersed herself in everything happening around her. Dancing with a woman who expressed her feelings about the men she dated, rather publicly! She then danced with the flight attendants who were hosting a banquets and handing out snacks. There were also two ladies competing nonstop, by showing everyone

pictures of their boyfriends and what not. How bizarre, thought Elfa, she took a seat and read her magazine.

With the corner of her eyes Elfa saw someone approaching and taking a seat next to her. Elfa could not believe her eyes, when she saw that this actually was her favourite actress and influencer, Mindy Kaling herself! She could not wait to ask for a photo with her. Surprisingly, Mindy was very polite, took a photo with Elfa, and even checked if she was happy with the pictures or if she wanted them retaken. This kind of experience does not happen too often, does it? Elfa proudly posted the photos on her Instagram account to show off. She felt a warm hint of happiness at that moment. She could not quite put her finger on why she felt that way, being stuck in a departure lounge with crazy passengers - but that was the reality of that moment.

Soon after, Elfa finally received a long-awaited phone call from Louis. Excitedly talking to him she tried to set a date with him. During this conversation, Elfa overheard Louis flirting with the woman standing right next to her. In madness, Elfa hung up and interrogated the woman. She was so confused to why this was happening to her..

She was going to call Louis back to confront him when another passenger dressed in a style of a hippie with tattooed arms, suddenly grabbed her attention and not only, this person actually grabbed Elfa by the shoulders before Elfa even realised this, while complaining non-stop about her recent past in this one long "song". It was not long before Elfa reached her limits. Frustrated and angry Elfa left the hippie with her outrageous story to other passengers to listen to, and walked away to the furthest seat in the lounge to escape the chaos. Exhausted, she took a nap and dreamt of fairytale characters like Sandmen, Dew Ferries, and Beauty and the Beast. It was very unusual for Elfa, but she didn't mind it and ended up having the best nap ever.

When Elfa awoke, she wondered if the departure lounge was set up this way on purpose or if it was just a coincidence that all the passengers articulated their speech

and emotions through music. This thought was suddenly interrupted by someone very distressed standing right behind Elfa. It seemed to be a young lady who had never travelled solo before. Elfa thought she should help her out and did. The young lady was worried about the delayed flight, thinking she had to buy another ticket. Elfa reassured her that this was not the case and that she needed to keep her boarding pass and the passport safe and that this would have been sufficient. This calmed the young lady until she realised she could not find her boarding pass. At this point, Elfa had enough and let the flight attendant deal with it.

Finally, step by step, the passengers were getting closer to boarding their flight. Luckily, the young lady found her boarding pass and was allowed to board the flight to Dublin. Elfa joined the passengers with the final traveling numbers: one with (as if seemed to her) were choreographed movements, during which Elfa let go Louis altogether, thinking she will never call him after what he has done! And the other one being a good-bye song from Christopher Robin, then all the passengers marched to their plane.

Towards the end of these peculiar experiences, Elfa renamed her business plan to 'WAVD'Air Modern Opera'. She rewrote the entire plan and shifted the main points of focus, composing a comic opera in three acts by the same name. In her diary, she recorded her thoughts from the unforgettable departure lounge experience: 'Darling Elfa, you do not need to go far to create a musical experience - it is right there on your doorstep!'

I was delighted to come across a quote by Stanislavski, "The life of a character should be an unbroken line of events and emotions, but a play only gives us a few moments on that line - we must create the rest to portray a convincing life" (Chandler, 2023). This quote resonates deeply with the development of the character Elfa.

In conclusion, this experience helped me overcome Marina's false belief that "I am not a good actor." Stumbling upon these words "Doubt is the enemy of creativeness" (Webmaster, 2023) made one think and apply the learnt.. Through this project, I acquired that with the right tools and direction, one can develop a character to a high level with practice and experience. Having been given a creative 'seed' by our stage director, an actor can grow that seed, add layers of action, and eventually have fun with the role. This was possible because I had great guidance throughout the six weeks and therefore felt a genuine connection to the character.

The notes given by our stage director after each rehearsal and public performances were crucial for the success of our subsequent shows. Additionally, the guidance and notes from our singing teacher and the pianist ensured that we sang and sounded our best, enhancing the overall quality of the show. For example, a note about making eye contact with audience members in smaller venues during certain numbers not only boosted the stage presence of Elfa but also made the audience feel more engaged and part of the show. Applying this method in subsequent performances, I felt more connected to my role and confident on stage.

Overall, this experience has been invaluable in my growth as an actor and singer, demonstrating that continuous feedback and dedicated practice are essential in refining one's art and delivering an exciting performance.

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