

Musical Theatre Lab

Task 2 (Written)

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Due date: 30/03/24

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Our performance class was taught to us by David George Harrington, we covered many topics within his class, specifically harmony work, ensemble singing and learning straight from sheet music in our time. I decided to set myself personal goals, to assist with improving as a performer. Some of these goals included, building and developing confidence when it came to holding my harmonies, and figuring out how to familiarise myself with sheet music through trial and error. My last goal was to further benefit my weakest skill of acting through song.

For the first lab show we rehearsed and learnt a collection of songs, we began with the song 'Anything Goes', this song contained both female and male harmonies, both individually and together. I was based on the baritone line with all the other males. I found containing my harmonies in this song much easier than in some of others, however in the showcase I found trying to remember the choreography's timing and movement difficult.

Another one of our songs that we performed in our showcase was 'Kiss of the Spider Woman', I found learning the words and the harmonies for this song much more difficult especially when having to act and perform a large amount of movement. I also realised that I was put at a slight disadvantage due to being unable to attend lessons due to illness. However I found my acting throughout this song had presented David George Harrington's visions effectively.

Another song that we sang in our showcase was 'Coffee break'. I was given the challenge of learning the tenor harmony for this piece, i didn't find this harmony particularly difficult yet i found the timing of certain words and rhythms difficult. Overall, I believe I was able to show my character's emotions as well as the choreography.

As well as these songs, we also sang an arrangement of 'Nowadays', I was once again similar to 'Anything Goes' on the baritone harmony line, in a difference to 'Coffee Break'. I found this harmony much easier to memorise and to learn. However I struggled with how quickly the dynamics changed within this song and also thinking about which choreography matched to which parts vocally.

During the scene of 'Dressing them up', i had no parts to vocally sing and so found this scene easier than the rest. I also found being able to concentrate on how I portrayed my character assisted with giving a humouring and believable performance through bouncing off my scene partners and the rest of the ensemble.

Contrary to the rest of our songs in the showcase, I was challenged by the words in 'Make them hear you' and so I had to spend extra time rehearsing the song and harmonies even though I was placed on the baritone line where I am used to singing. On the other hand I found memorising the choreography much easier as it was much simpler than the other pieces.

Our first song in our second lab project was 'Seize the Day', seeing that I'm more comfortable with the style of pop/rock, I believe that my overall performance skill had massively improved from the previous showcase in term 1 because of my confidence with the genre of music. Throughout the first song I was placed on the tenor harmony line and had to adjust certain notes in order to put them in the correct placement. Although the choreography in 'Seize the Day' was one of the hardest we'd done so far as a group, we found it easier to perform this song whilst doing all the slightly more difficult choreography and harmonies together with ease.

For our second piece, David George Harrington made an arrangement of Disney villain songs including - 'Poor Unfortunate Souls', 'Be Prepared', and 'Mother Knows Best', throughout this arrangement I was placed yet again on the baritone line and even after spending time rehearsing in my own time, i found a certain few harmonies very difficult when singing in the ensemble. Throughout this piece the biggest challenge personally was performing vocally strong for a prolonged period of time whilst performing dynamic movements within the three different songs. Within these three songs David George Harrington required us to add dynamics to our voices when transitioning to the next song as the rhythms and the objectives of the characters changed.

David George Harrington required 'God Help the Outcasts' to be pulled back so that it was a vocal focused piece and so it gave us a chance to show our harmonies and singing work rather than showing how the piece looked. This meant that as an ensemble we could focus solely on standing and singing our piece rather than making a show of it. The little choreography we were given was to set the scene of the piece and to strengthen the meaning of the song.

Our next piece was another arrangement by David George Harrington and due to illness I was unable to attend the first few rehearsals for the scene and so was at a slight disadvantage compared to my fellow cast members. I found learning the lyrics in this piece difficult as I had to self teach and learn these in my own time. This was also one of the biggest pieces when it came to movement and choreography as there was a lot of movement relying on the song.

'Your song' was the last of our songs in the showcase and similarly to 'God Help the Outcasts' this piece was mainly focused on vocals as it was an emotional song for our final piece as a collective. The piece was mainly carried by the main soloists and we were required to follow their lead singing the baritone harmonies which caused no major difficulties for me.

Golden age:

Many people around the world have expressed that they feel as though the golden age era of music can be regarded as the largest period of growth for musical theatre, and many believe that the performers of the Golden Age are to "thank for the creation and development of musicals as we know them today."

Musicals as we know them weren't the first types of musicals to grace audiences - these existed long before the Golden Age, with operettas and vaudeville-style shows being some of the most popular forms of entertainment of the late 19th and early 20th centuries for audiences across the globe. The first show to come to life as a musical as we know them today was 'Show Boat', which broke the mold in 1927 when it introduced a more narrative style of storytelling, integrating its book with its musical elements. This was the first time, song and dance had been weaved into the plot, furthering the story and character development.

Even after this revolutionary change to stage shows - it took another decade for this 'book musical' revolution to fully catch on, ushering in the start of Broadway's Golden Age. During this period, musical theatre happily took centre stage in popular culture, rapidly gaining visibility worldwide and influence on television, film, and popular music.

Pop/rock era:

Rather differently to the world of Hollywood, while Hollywood were busy producing films such as 'Rock Around the Clock', 'Don't Knock the Rock', and 'Rock, Rock, Rock' the world of musical theatre took slightly longer adjusting and responding to the world of Rock and Roll. It wasn't until 1960 with a Elvis Presley musical with a spoof of rock and roll that the world of musical theatre welcomed rock and roll onto the Broadway stage.

In 1968, Hair, written by Gerome Ragni, James Rado and Galt MacDermot reached the Broadway stage with its rock and roll score supplying chart topping hits for the singers involved with the show, these included "Good Morning Starshine" for Oliver, "Hair" for the Coswills and "Easy to be Hard" for Three Dog Night.

In 1971, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock musical, 'Jesus Christ Superstar' was brought to and staged in the United States. This musical featured two songs that later became pop hits prior to the show opening, these were, "I Don't Know How to Love Him" and "Superstar". Within the same year Stephen Schwartz and John Michael Tebelak's rock musical with a religious theme, 'Godspell' opened its doors.

Estill:

Vocal dynamics can control your voice, vocal dynamics is where you control the belting, movement, muscle use, vowels/phonetics. This makes us realise that singing is more similar to science rather than a unique skill. Your voice has a kind of muscle memory and so remembers the things you've previously listened to and practised and so this is how your voice develops and strengthens.

Resonance chambers - There are seven areas that may be listed as possible vocal resonators. Following a sequence from the lowest within the body to the highest, these areas are: the chest, the tracheal tree, the larynx itself, the pharynx, the oral cavity, the nasal cavity, and the sinuses.

Conclusion:

After considering the whole essay and the process of performance class I believe that I was able to achieve my goals throughout my rehearsals and lessons with David George Harrington. I also trust that the skills I have picked up will massively benefit me in my professional career and when developing in the industry. I plan on executing future roles by applying the skills I picked up during these classes.

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