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WALES INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND ART

FROM IMAGINATION TO PRODUCTION: AN EXPLORATION ON DIRECTING

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Academic year: 2024-2025

BA Acting Level 6

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Acknowledgements

Huge thank you to Heather Hawkins, Jules Claes, and Shalynn Buys for acting in Median Man. Huge thank you to Olivia Brand for letting me explore her script Median Man Thank you to Karen Hyomoto, Tommi Hewitt, Chloe Fowler, Lee Williams, Ella Routledge, Tim Benning, Henry Nordquist, Elahe Ghamat, Eduardo Matheus, Ieuan Evans, Rosie Truman, Reuben Buechler. For coming to my table read. Thank you to Karen Hyomoto, Eduardo Matheus, Shalynn Buys, Heather Hawkins, Henry Nordquist, and Olivia Brand for attending my Auditions. Thank you to Dionne James, Seren Vickers, Ella Routledge, Elahe Ghamat for helping me during tech week. I appreciate all your help throughout this process.

Introduction:

This dissertation is about an exploration on directing. I want to use this project to help me in the future. My future goals are to go into the industry as an actor, I've always wanted to become a teacher since I was a little girl, and I want to follow this dream in the end. I want to teach but also direct. I haven't decided where I want to direct yet whether its film or theatre but as of right now. I'm leaning towards more theatre directing. I've had lots of experience as an actor in the theatre and watching my directors, how they handle different situations, and work with the crew. I've attended a few design meetings in the past as well and it interests me to see that creative side and brings up my creative side. Since I have more experience with theatre, I can see myself basically living in a theatre and directing in one. Filling the stage and space with a set, sound, lights, great acting, and love just brings me so much joy. Maybe when I have more experience with film, I'll change my mind. I love being collaborative so working with a team who can help my imagination come to life is a dream. I can see myself working in my old high school or college back home in Canada, and I have the connections to get in which is always useful. I'm from Vancouver British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver is very well known as Hollywood North for film and television. If you want to make the big bucks, you will most likely have to go into the film industry since theatre doesn't pay well. Most theatre companies are community theatre only. It's hard to find work in the theatre industry, which is why I also want to opt for teaching, this way it comes with the territory. I can teach, connect with students, help them learn, get the proud moments of directing and showing off my accomplishments. Over these past few months, I've been researching different acting methods and practitioners, such as, Stanislavski Method, Laban Movement Analysis, Viewpoints, Mike Alfreds and Katie Mitchell. I mainly focused on Katie Mitchell because she uses many other practitioners' techniques within her own work. I interviewed William Kingshott on his experience directing and got some very helpful advice. Experimenting with a script called Median Man which was written by my friend Olivia Brand. This is a ten-minute play about a homeless father and a Mormon daughter reuniting after many years, who learn they can resolve old conflicts and move on in life together. I held a table read and got feedback and had an idea session. I held auditions and taught the actors a few games and exercises I learned back home. I casted the show, I had a whole rehearsal process which lasted a few weeks. I put on the play for two nights and had an amazing audience. I got to see the production side of things and be a one-man show for some of it. I had some help from my peers and collaborators, which was very helpful since things got stressful closer to the show dates. I learned a lot and I still have so much more to work on. For my first time directing I am very proud of how everything turned out and now I know what I need to work towards. As a director you are always learning, you never stop. You may not know what you're doing but that's okay, surround yourself with people who can help you, make those connections because you are not alone. It may feel like it sometimes, but just remember you will have good days, and you will have bad days. It all comes with the job.

Research/ first getting the script:

I've been focusing on reading two books, *The Directors Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* by: Katie Mitchell and *Different Every Night: Freeing the Actor* by: Mike Alfred's. In my process I'm focusing on what a director does before we meet actors and do auditions and rehearsals. As well as what goes into casting, the rehearsal process, the production process, the final result, and the show process. There is so much that goes into the preparation period. As an actor you do the same research but as the director you must have all the answers to questions an actor may have. The research a director does is on a much deeper level than what the actor would do. What I've learned is there is different steps when researching a script. The first step is to read the script and get a general sense of what the play is about, you will be reading this script multiple times to fully understand what's happening. You may also watch a film version if you are having trouble understanding. As an actor it's not recommended to watch the play version on YouTube as it may influence your acting choices and the same goes for a director, but I found it not as frowned upon. You can get an idea of the era and what the vibe of the show is and make it your own. It can help you and inspire your creative brain. Honestly, it's such a great tool to have and reference. In "Oh What a Lovely War" our directors watched the film and got the carousel idea from that film, and we ended up making that the main set piece. Our show surrounded that idea, and it all came from the first scene of "Oh What a Lovely War Film." You can grasp so much from barely watching a film, just getting an idea, exploring that idea and then making it your own. In "The Directors Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre by Katie Mitchell" she references that the first step when exploring a new script is to organize your first thoughts and ideas in response to what the text is saying. The simplest way to organizing your thoughts is to turn it into a question. Firstly, what I would do is make a list of all your discoveries, then with that list make two lists. One of the lists is a facts list, things like time, place, character names, etc. would be in this list. Any little, tiny fact about the script you must add into the facts list every detail matters when directing a play. The second list is a questions list, in this list there will be any questions you have even if you are confused or have a question about the little detail, that in the long run won't matter, write it down, because it will bring more clarity to what you want to produce, and this little question could be a huge factor. When asking and answering questions the main questions that will serve you the most will be 1: Who? Who are these characters, who is in each scene, who says this/that, etc. 2: What? What is the relationship between these characters, what is happening, what is this character doing, what is the time, what will happen if the character does this, what era is it, etc. 3: Where? Where is this taking place, where is this character going, where is home to the character, etc. 4: When? When did this take place, when did the character do this, when do we see the character next, when is the character doing that, etc. 5: Why? Why is the character doing this, why does the character wear this, why does this happen, why are they acting like this, etc. and lastly 6: How? How did this happen, how does the character treat another character, how do they know each other, how did this situation happen, etc. The main questions are simply what your teachers have been grinding into your head since primary school, the 5 W's and an H. Who, What, Where, When, why, and How. When dissecting a script, you need to understand what the playwright wants from it. What the playwrights style is, what the message of the story is. Know the background. Research what you find on the background to gain better knowledge. The Stanislavski method is founded by a Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski. His method encouraged actors to explore their character and the inner life to pursue a truthful and realistic performance. The Laban acting method was created by Rudolf Laban, this emphasizes movement and physical expression during a performance. It

focuses on a connection between your body, intentions, and emotions. This method includes elements of space, weight, time, and flow. This can help the actors explore different ways of movement and expand their character body. Anne Bogart and Tina Landau created the Viewpoints method. This is a physical and improvisational way of acting that includes space, time, and movement. This method explores gesture, architecture, tempo, duration, topography, repetition, shape, spatial awareness and kinesthetic response. This method helps actors collaborate and be spontaneous while learning different character body movement that heightens their awareness of surroundings. Katie Mitchell is known for 7 main approaches to theatre. She uses Stanislavski techniques which is to make the performance feel truthful, emotional, and psychologically grounded. Using this method the goal is to explore your character's motivations, what emotions they go through throughout the play, what their background is. Using this method will make the performance more intense and realistic. Personally, Stanislavski is my favorite method to use, it helps me connect with my character and emerge myself in the circumstance. Mitchell is a big fan of naturalism and realism. She loves to create stage productions that represent lifelike environments. She uses the production side to achieve this as well as physicality and real-world emotion, making sure that their actions are realistic to what a human would normally do. Katie's attention to space and time in each scene can bring heightened emotion in the audience's reaction as well as in the actor's body. Detail to slowing a scene or action down helps the actor feel the circumstance. Every action, gesture and movement need to have purpose. Katie's practice includes major attention to detail, from physical actions. She will create a specific gesture and rhythm which adds to the performance's authenticity, and the style of theatre she wants to achieve. Technology plays a huge role in Katie's work. Using prerecorded sound and learning how to work with timing. This brings another layer to her plays and adds more reaction for the actor to play with. This will have the audience in different emotional states. In *Attempts on Her Life* by Martin Crimp we are exploring using prerecorded sound and having different moves and gestures. Exploring these techniques as an actor is helping me develop how I can use this in the future with my actors in plays I direct. Mitchell is a collaborative director and works closely with the actors, she deep dives into their characters inner world and will help them explore different emotions. She's very hands on and does this six-step method which includes character biography, place, time, immediate circumstances, events, and intentions. Doing this method brings the actor through detailed emotional journeys. Overall Katie's methods bring light to an actor's emotional journey this will have the performance be intimate and powerful. It shows reality and psychological depth. Mike Alfreds book *Different Every Night* is a guide to show the art of acting. It emphasizes that a performance should feel unique and fresh. He focuses on the fact that you need to be spontaneous and responsive, each performance is a new opportunity to explore and discover something new. This book introduces techniques to maintain a dynamic and authentic presence on stage, including how to break free from a routine, connect with other actors, and respond to a great active audience and the energy they bring. He talks about rehearsal process, character development, and the collaboration between directors and actors. He challenges actors to explore and discover new things in each performance which makes it "different every night" we had a zoom meeting earlier this year with Mike Alfreds and like his book he talked about always being open to new ideas and discoveries. He encouraged us to attend as many workshops as possible and test new things out. Research and discover new techniques so you always have new things to pull out of your tool belt during rehearsal. "A good actor is a genuinely good human being and being open to change" don't talk down to yourself. Face your fears, you will have a lot of fears but don't let those fears get in the way of you becoming your best self. Mike gave very good

advice that I want to bring into my rehearsal room and pass the advice onto more actors so they can learn as well.

Interview with William:

As a part of my main research, I wanted to have an interview with a professional director who is working in the industry. I decided to interview William Kingshott as he is currently my director on *Attempts on her life* written by Martin Crimp. Within the first week we've built a connection, and I found out he went to this school and graduated from the same program BA Acting, as well as the MA in Directing UWTSD used to have. William did his Independent Project in directing as well, so I figured he'd be the perfect person to interview. I asked him 17 questions about how he is as a director and his answers were very informative for my research. While working with him I love his style of directing, and how collaborative he is. He wants to create a safe space for everyone and make them feel welcomed, and their ideas to be welcomed. In my opinion as an actor and future director I like when my voice is heard and not shut down immediately. I like when I feel safe to share my ideas, and that it's made clear that no idea is a bad idea. As a director I want my company to feel safe, involved and have freedom in their work. Having a safe and comfortable space to work in makes the work more enjoyable and helps turn on your creative brain. It gives you permission to want to learn and express yourself. I've created a chart that can be found in appendix I with the questions I asked William and the answers I received from him. The biggest thing I took from this interview were, its hard work, create a safe space, don't treat the actors as if you're their high school teacher, connect with them on the same level. "When directing evidently the pressure is all on you so use the people around you, it doesn't have to be such a lonely journey" "I'm too blessed to be stressed" keep connections and use those connections.

Preplanning Median Man:

When I first received the script, I reread it 5 times, first was for fun, second was to pay closer attention to the location, third was to understand the relationship between Roberta and median man. Fourth to analyze and write any questions I had, and fifth putting everything together and gather the meaning of this scripture and what story I can share and play with. When analyzing I had seven different copies of the script. First for me over all vision. I wanted the message of this play to be, don't judge a book by its cover, don't be scared to reach out to loved ones. Median Man is about a father and son, where the father is homeless, and the son is a Mormon. They lost touch when Tammy kicked median man out. Tammy is Robert's mother. The characters go through a rail of emotions and heartaches but in the end decide to grow their relationship and reconnect. I felt that this script needed moments of failure that resolved into a happy ending. The original script was based in Oregon where the play write is from. Median Man's character is based off a real man who sits on a median in the busy part of town, Olivia has been studying him and making up scenarios about him then turned it into this play. Because I casted Welsh actors, I decided to do a few rewrites with the permission of Olivia. We changed a few words and places throughout the script that were either hard for the actors to pronounce or would be more

relatable for the audience as the audience would be Welsh based. For this script I wanted to have a dinner theatre vibe. Since the play was only ten minutes, I had the idea that we should have pre-show activities, including popcorn and juice and a waiter. As well as median man begging for money and harassing the audience in an appropriate way. I wanted the audience to be in a diner as if they were watching from inside sitting next to the big window diners have. So, for my set I wanted a huge "window" which would be made from cardboard, and I wanted the seating arrangement to be European style where the tables and chairs are on the sidewalk. so small round table and two chairs, then that all over to fill the space, but also where you could still see the stage. I wanted to add layers to the show as the script was wonderful but very straight forward. I get many unique ideas that are very extravagant and I'm hardheaded so when I put my mind to something I must achieve it. Another version of the script I have is blocking notes, this section is very simple blocking just a base layer and during the rehearsal process I would add to this page just to keep track of what we did and when it happens. This version helped me visualize what I want to see physically happen. There wasn't too much opportunity for movement, so it was a challenge trying to create space for it. In the end in my opinion, we did a wonderful job of adding in movement where we could, whether it was subtle, or moving away from the main stage. The next copy I had was for questions and answers. This was very useful for me to write out all the questions I had a highlight them in yellow then when I came up with an answer, I wrote it next to the question and highlighted it red, so I knew I had found a solution for this question. Some answers were not in the script so I would have to get creative and make them up based on the facts I had previously written. General notes were another script I had; this was for all the tech notes I had about music, set and props. I would write where everything fit within the script. My favourite version was the units and beats. This helped me organize what each scene would represent and what I received emotionally from the script. It broke up the scenes and gave the actors a better understanding of what I was looking for and it also gave them freedom to work with my ideas and form it into their own. My last two versions were the audition cuts which were just where I was going to split off the scenes to make sense for the actors, and the preshow blocking. Pre-show blocking gave me an idea of how the night will start and how we can smoothly transition into the show. I liked all thoughts organized and clearly written so I can understand them. I found it also helped to show my actors the different scripts to help them understand as well.

Handwritten notes on a script page for the character Median Man. The notes are written in various colors (blue, purple, yellow) and include character analysis, dialogue suggestions, and stage directions. Key notes include: "Median Man is walking along the median at a busy intersection. He holds a sign that reads 'Help. on the bus stop'", "It's to assume the cars all ignore him as he walks beside them, hoping not to make eye contact. A missionary, Robert, in a classic 'Mormon Boy' button up, slacks, tie, and winter coat. He sees the man, takes off his name tag and puts it in his pocket, then approaches.", and "Directors Choice: Consider having Median Man panhandle to the audience directly if applicable."

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The Table read:

Before I started anything I decided I wanted to hold a table read as one of my collaborations. I invited members of the company to attend a week from when I asked them, and I ran it all day in diverse groups. I invited Tommi Hewitt, Chloe Fowler, Lee Williams, Ella Routledge, Tim Benning, Henry Nordquist, Karen Hyomoto, Elahe Ghamat, Eduardo Matheus, Ieuan Evans, Rosie Truman, Reuben Buechler. This to be a workshop for my project as I knew most of the people who came would be too busy to help as well as be in the show, but it still involved them, and it helped me because I achieved so many new ideas for the script that I brought with me into rehearsals. I invited the playwright Olivia Brand, and she came to three out of four sessions.

I started each session by welcoming them and doing a check in, then explained what I would be doing for my independent project and why I was doing it. I had Olivia give a little context on her script and what it meant to her. After a short introduction we started the read through. For our first read through, we went around the table each taking a line. I was taking notes of vocal tones and styles which they were read in. After the first round I asked what they thought of the script and took notes of how they interpreted the script. Then we read it again, but I assigned who to read for each character. After that I explained my vision and what I wanted to do with this show and how the rehearsal process will work. I ended the sessions by answering any questions they had then did a quick check out. I got so much advice on how to get access to props, costumes, and sets as well as more ideas on how to portray my ideas in a realistic way.

The Audition:

For the auditions I sent out a form to see who can attend and what day works best for everyone. Once I got the results I picked a day then invited the entire company. We had a decent size group which included Karen Hyomoto, Eduardo Matheus, Shalynn Buys, Heather Hawkins, Henry Nordquist, and Olivia Brand. At the start I explained what my project was and why I'm doing it, we did a grounding check in which is three words for how you are feeling that day and one beyond, for example "happy, tired, excited and beyond I feel like a cloud" and then I gave time for them to do a physical and vocal warmup which I ended up leading. We ended the warmup with a dance party to get the energy in the room up. After I introduced a couple of games such as grandmas' footsteps this is where you set up a room, we have one grandma if she sees you moving, you must go back to the start. The goal is to tag grandma, you must go through different obstacles to get to grandma. After that we played bus stop, I thought it would be fun to bring in some improv to get the actors brain stimulated. After that I introduced the group to labyrinth which is my favorite acting exercise to do because you learn so much about how each actor handles stress and how they communicate with each other. For this we started with names, then sound, then action, then numbers, then fruit, then places. With each layer it took time to get use to and perfect and it was never perfect, but the effort and motivation was there.

Watching this exercise showed me traits about each actor and I pointed out to one actor that they are acting as if it is a competition when it's not it's a team effort, I advised them to try not overthinking the exercise to breathe and connect with their peers. And once I said that their whole perspective changed, and it helped them with the exercise. It made me happy knowing I helped them discover something new about their actor personality. We would stop when the exercise got messy and I said what went well and what went wrong, how can we fix what went wrong? They all had a discussion together and they tried

again until they got it, then we would add another layer and repeat the process. The main goal for this exercise is connection, breath, focus, and trust. Its team effort you need to be one with another.

Next, I put them into partners and paired them based off who I wanted to see play the characters together. I introduced them to polarities this exercise is 5 movements each to create a story together. This helps build a relationship between characters and helps with character development. I had them perform and explain why they chose that story. I enjoy working on this and doing it before going on stage to connect with my character and remind myself of the circumstance I'm in. it's a great tool for every actor to have and can pull out at any time. I then handed out the audition sides and gave them time to create a scene with the script. When they performed their scenes, I asked how it felt got feedback then made them do it twice more once bigger and once smaller. For my last group I got creative and made them do it as farm animals, they said it was fun and gave them more to explore within their character and made them view their character in a unique way. After the entire process I ended the auditions with a check out and hunker. A hunker is go down in an uncomfortable position and ask yourself these three things, what about the work you did made you proud today, what are two things you want to do differently next time, out of those two things choose one that you want to focus on more and think what can I change for next time. After this thought just leave that process in the room, get up and shake it off. You should only do it for no more than two mins max it's a quick way to move into your life with no regrets. I then casted the show with Heather Hawkins as Roberta and Jules Claes as Median Man. Unfortunately, Jules couldn't attend the auditions, but I've seen his work before, and I knew he'd be perfect for the role.



Photos By: Kyra Mantas

Rehearsals:

The rehearsal process was the main collaboration and event for my project as this puts everything to test. I started with making a schedule, how I did this is I asked the cast when they are available and then I made it work around our professional practice schedule. We did mostly evening rehearsals except for independent project days then we did them in the afternoon. I made the whole rehearsal schedule, and we originally had the show date to be a week after showcase but later decided that it's too soon and we did it a week later than we initially intended. I would make the weekly schedule and send it out every Sunday and then a day before the rehearsal I sent the schedule of the day so the actors knew what to expect and could prepare.

I tried to set up each day similarly by leading a physical and vocal warm up, then check in with a grounding check in. We sit on the floor I say "close your eyes and feel your sit bones connect with the ground underneath you, release all tension into the ground and let the ground support you. Now I want you to take breaths in and out on your own time and focus into the space, leave everything at the door. When you feel ready open your eyes, go into soft focus and connect, take a breath with each person in the company. Feel the support within each other." After we are focused in I would say "to check in give me three words on how you're feeling today and beyond, for example happy, tired, excited, and beyond like a cloud." After this we would do Laban and Polarities, at the beginning of the process I wanted to focus on character work and have the actor work how they work best to discover their character. A lot of the character was done outside of rehearsal as well. Halfway through the rehearsal process I had Seren Vickers come in and watch over my rehearsal as a professional director. She gave me a fresh perspective on how I could modify certain moments and told me what was working and what wasn't and had ideas on how I could change it. The main ones were the end moment with them having a brain freeze to represent like father like daughter. As well as filming my action moment and playing it on the television. Two weeks before opening I started my pre-show directing, and the actor I had in mind ended up not working out since we were very different creatively, so I had to let them go. Luckily, I had another actress in mind who fulfilled my vision and was a joy to work with. Near the end of rehearsals, I had Dionne James come in and help the cast get into character by leading a guided meditation. Overall, the rehearsal process taught me how I deal with stress and every day I learned more about myself.



Photos By: Kyra Mantas

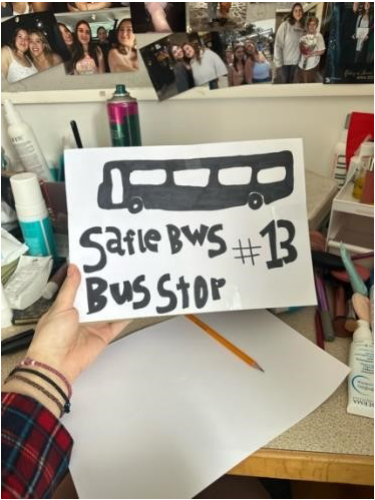


Production:

Production is a big part of theatre. Making the props, set, program, tickets page, poster, advertising the show. A great deal goes into theatre and creating a world for the audience to immerse themselves in. In Median Man we had an action scene which was filmed and played on a screen during the show, I had Dionne James and her beloved car Cilla as well as Ieuan Evans and his car Claire. Dionne James also helped me film a couple shots with the cast. For the set I had such a fond idea of having this window to represent that the audience was in a diner as well as having a literal fourth wall for the actors to play with. I was planning to build it myself with cardboard then asked my DP friend for help which they agreed, and we went to measure the space and get realistic dimensions. I went to Lidl and grabbed a ton of cardboard for this project. Unfortunately, time passed by too fast, and we couldn't finish the window, I had to accept that my vision was unrealistic, which was a tough pill to swallow. I believe that everything happens for a reason, and this just happened to be a blessing in disguise, because it looked better without the window. In a way I'm glad we ran out of time. I had to make a program for the show which I had some help on design by Ella Routledge, I used most of the information from the program for professional practise as I was advised to do so. I got to write a directors Biography for the first time which was fun to just talk about myself and my intentions with directing. I made an Eventbrite page for tickets, this system worked well as I got a notification whenever someone RSVPed for a ticket and it helped me keep count for how many patrons were attending each show. I got to write the trigger warnings and synopsis for the show. I then emailed staff and got the link sent out to students as advertisement. I also got my friends to post the poster on their Instagram stories. The word got out and we had a great turn out. The poster for the show was designed and made by Ella Routledge. Eduardo Matheus filmed opening night and edited the video for me, it turned out great and it was a great collaboration for both his and my project. I got to make all the props which was fun but challenging for I was making a Welsh bus stop, and I tried to make it identical and translate it to Welsh. Everything looked great from an audience perspective. Elahe Ghamat helped me with music, she came to a rehearsal and took notes on when songs should play. We then had a meeting, and she gave me all her song suggestions and where they should go in the show.



Photos By: Ella Routledge and Kyra Mantas



The Show:

The show overall went well. I got to play the role of a DP which was fun but incredibly stressful. After practise hitting the cues wasn't bad it was just communicating with Shalynn on the volume the music needed to be while she was acting. On opening night, we had twenty-two patrons attend which I wasn't expecting at all, and on closing we had about ten patrons. The turnout was amazing for it being a ten-minute play, you could say I advertised the show well. The video for the action scene played well but on the first night it got cut off as the screen switched back to the poster with the sound still playing. Luckily, that was the only thing that went wrong. The audience reaction was good they were engaged and loved the little moments that showed their relationship. The dinner theatre was also a hit. After the show we did a get out which took thirty minutes great timing if you ask me. after the process I asked the cast a series of questions on how they liked my directing style. You can find the results of this form in appendix II.



Photos By: Kyra Mantas



Photos By: Kyra Mantas



My over all experience:

My experience was great I enjoyed learning the trivial things you don't see and getting to experience and learn how I take on those roles. I learned so much about how I work, and I see what I need to work on. For the pre planning of Median Mand I could have done some more research. I focused more on my vision then on the techniques I wanted to use and in rehearsals which it should have been a combination of both. I based it off my acting point of view and what worked for me like Laban and grounding. I used a considerable amount of grounding in my rehearsal process because at Douglas we focused a lot on connection and second circle. I found it helps me a lot, but I know it worked well for one actor but not for everyone. so next time I need to find tactics that work for everyone to get them fully engaged. I wish I had more time to bring out more detail, but I am immensely proud of how the show turned out I think we could have worked more on character development and physical movements. It helped having people come in and give advice and add notes. as William said use the people around you, they are there to help and see things you don't. I wish I put my foot down more. I am a people pleaser and don't like to offend anyone, but there were many times where I wished I told the cast to stop talking about things that weren't relevant to the rehearsal. When some people had ideas, I didn't know how to communicate, that's not what I was looking for, but good idea, so I would add their ideas into the show and later change it. When I could have just said thank you for the great idea, I'll put a pin in that. Because it delayed the process a bit trying to add it in. I liked to be collaborative because that's the kind of directors I like to work with who give me creative freedom and I want to create that safe space for my actors. all the feedback and self-reflection has helped me develop an idea on how I want to continue in the future main points being: being stricter and taking ownership, research more and ask the actors how they like to work, then research that method so I can support them, reaching out isn't a bad thing, I'm not alone, and don't underestimate myself. I tend to think that I'm not as "smart" as others which is not true. I have difficulty communicating my ideas, which is why I need to practice in advanced. Articulate my ideas and write them down in a way I know others will understand. There is always a solution for everything. As William would say "I'm too blessed to be stressed" so I just got to trust in myself. Overall, I really enjoyed taking this project on and I feel I discovered so much about myself and how I take on directing. This will be super helpful in the future. My goal is to get my Masters in Directing so doing this project was a great first step.

Conclusion:

This journey has taken me through a plethora of learning, emotions, and success. In the beginning I felt I didn't know where to start but then everyone was advising me to research Katie Mitchell, so I read her book and did more research of hers and watching videos of her directing and working with actors. Researching her helped me begin my process of Median Man and working with my script. It gave me intel in what's needed in preplanning a script and how to work with my actors using different methods. My interview with William Kingshott was invaluable and gave me advice I needed to hear. Doing the table read and audition were great ways of communication and was a fountain of ideas that were helpful through the entire process. It gave me the opportunity to teach exercises that I personally enjoy and that help me as an actor. It felt good when I helped the actors discover new things about themselves because it gave me reassurance, I was doing something right. During the rehearsal process I endeavoured many challenges but always came up with a solution that worked out better than my original plan. I had to put my passionate and hardheaded personality away and look at the reality. Sometimes not everything goes your way, and you need to learn how to adapt to what you have. Learning to take ownership and put my foot down brought a new level of perseverance that I still need to work on, realizing I need to communicate my ideas better has helped me think of new ways to introduce my thoughts. Learning how to do all the behind the scenes and doing the DPs jobs gave me a new perspective and form of respect I have for everyone who takes on those roles. After the show I feel immensely proud of all the challenging work that has been put into this project. Taking time to self-reflect is helping me produce and plan what I need to take with me next time I direct a play.

The End

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Appendix

I. Interview with William Kingshott

I asked William seventeen questions about his experience as a director. Below is each question and answer.

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Answers</u>
"After university or at the beginning of your career, how did you get into the industry?"	"Most of my connections grew during my training, but it wasn't in the training. I started facilitating which is in-between an actor and director, there are traits of acting and traits of directing. I started working at a drama club and I was the leader of the drama club. Through that I started to make connections, and I started to get little jobs here and there. I worked for BBC radio, I worked as an actor for Carmarthen police station, doing roleplay acting. It's the little jobs that got me into the industry because it's all about connections. Once you work for one company, they recommend you to someone else, it's all based on connections" Will is a freelance director who works for himself, he doesn't have an agent but there are some agents who take on directors. Will says he's still in an early phase of his career as two years ago he graduated with his masters in directing.
"When you first get on a project what are your very first steps?"	"Just get to know the play, reread it, get to know what the play write wants from it. Preplan it" he referenced Katie Mitchell and how she breaks down every step on how to attack a script and make a show. "a lot of the things I do is by Katie Mitchell, really dissecting it. Understanding each scene."
"When rehearsals first begin what were your next steps?"	"understand my company, exploration work, it helps me pick up on how people work. How some people are more reserved and some that open up. It gives me an understanding of each person. So, then I can tailor the process to be around them by understanding their wants and needs so I can help them. I often ask what the group finds useful and beneficial and what the group enjoyed so I can take that with me forward. It's about getting the preplanning work I did into the space without

	giving the actor too much, because you want them to build their own process, you want them to create their own narrative, you want them to have their own input. Especially me I am very much a director who loves to collaborate. If after when people come up to me and say “oh I loved your play” I can then say no its our play. It’s important that everyone has ownership of their script, and everyone can say they had part of the leadership as a whole.”
“What do you do to stay calm when a project is not going as planned?”	“Back to the drawing board, the preplanning work. Often everything you need will be in there. Just reflect and try to understand why something isn’t going as planned. Say if the chemistry between actors is off then it’s my role to work towards that more and that being a priority rather than the story telling at that point. It’s just knowing what takes priority. Also its easier said than done but if I have a moment I’ll go away and be like alright I’m too blessed to be stressed. In a sense of we are so lucky to be creating together and creating art, to be putting on a piece of theatre. There is a lot of people that want to be doing what were doing. Take a step back, go to the drawing board and appreciate what you’ve got, say okay let’s just give it another go, don’t let it constantly beat you down. Also, I talk to my other director friends, it’s a form of collaboration, when you are stuck it’s nice to have other opinions on it because they can help you get out of that stand still by suggesting something you may not have thought of. Use your director friends because they’ve been where you are they’ve probably been through mental block as well and when they need help, they can reach out to you. Going back to making connections keep those connections because they can blossom into friendships and be useful when you are in need.”
“What draws you to a specific production or script?”	“if the script has a message. I like to use theatre as a platform to showcase what the world is going through, to highlight what we need to change in the world. Some people may question why a man is directing a play about women. Yes, I am a man, but I am very much a feminist. If there is anytime where I

	can stand up for my female friends through theatre I will. You don't know who's going to come watch the show and sometimes me being a male and having male friends will make them come see the show, and it can be an eye opener for them and take action to change society. I used theatre as a platform to say this is what is going on in the world now, open your eyes because otherwise it's just a never-ending circle."
"How do you balance staying true to the play writes vision while adding in your own vision?"	"it all comes back to why I'm doing the certain play I'm working on, that pushes my performance and then the pre planning and researching the play write will allow me to balance it without overthinking it too much."
"How do you approach working with actors to bring out their best performances?"	"Try to understand how they cope with each other and with direction, for Attempts on her life once we have a first draft of each scene, I will then really hammer in the detail. I always have my chair on the side of the table so I can just get up and go and not have to waste time going around the table. It's just taking time and, maintain the support in the room, and reiterate the importance of support in the company. Yes, it's about the different techniques I use with the actors but its also about having a safe space for the actor to be able to be the best. It's a bit of everything. One practitioner been liking lately is Ken Rea. He has so many different exercises and explorations of how an actor can bring performances to life, his techniques cater to neo-typical and neo-divergent. He's an overall really useful practitioner to use."
"How do you handle creative differences with your with your cast and crew?"	"Emphasize collaboration, teamwork and scene work, that way they will all learn their creative methods and differences, I think as an actor its always useful to learn from other actors. And it's about the same with any sort of creative job. It's interesting to see how differently people work in the same department. If it was a big issue id do one to ones and really try to understand the issue. Generally, people in the industry are supportive and they embrace the differences. Also going back to asking my director friends for help on how to resolve and issue. Overall

	emphasize the support in the room and utilize the support outside the room.”
“What quality’s do you look for in an actor at an audition?”	“How they work with someone else, personally that outweighs talent. If they are hard to work with it will slow down the process and be unenjoyable for the other actors as well. It will create an unsafe space, and that will take effect on the creative ideas and collaboration. What I look for is, how they work with each other, personality, warmth, do I feel a connection with this person straight away. How they take redirection is so important it gives a tester of how you and that actor will work together. Talent does go into it but it’s more of what the play needs. What the play wants and what I want as a director.”
“How do you help actors build chemistry with one another?”	“it all goes back to the story telling, the research of the story, what we get from the story. Making web charts with traits of their story helps so we always have something to go back on but also continue to grow. When you talk to actors like they are normal human beings, once that foundation is cleared it goes back to the safe space, it allows actors to feel comfortable with each other, allows them the space to talk, and making sure that support network is there from the start because then you don’t really need to do much chemistry building because it’ll happen naturally, and they will respect each other but also have trust in each other. Little things like movement exploration helps because it’s all about connections and being one.
“What are some techniques you use to help actors understand their characters more deeply?”	“Once we build character background, I will ask them what character work they’ve done in the past for example Uta Hagen or Stanislavski because those processes are different, and people will often gravitate towards one and use that for multiple years and not try another. It’s good to know what they’ve worked with in the past so you can help them in the best way for them. I use different practitioners, and I love to ask them, if your character were right in front of you right now what would you ask your character? A lot of people like to emphasize with their characters and that shows what

	the character needs from other people and what their motivations are in their scenes and what they want to know themselves. Think of reflection and knowing what methods and practitioners they've followed in the past and knowing what works for them. if I can I want to introduce them to new ones. Just know it's a work in progress and keeping update with their progress so I can tailor it. Keeping with the time."
"How do you keep rehearsals engaging and productive?"	"Breaking down the day for example have movement in the morning break for foursquare, continuing movement, doing scene work, having independent time, so when you do different chunks throughout the day, the days go faster. Giving actors snippets of different stuff will keep them active and not drain them. giving them something to work on and implement little things daily that will encourage actors and make them work towards something. I will always ask the audience for feedback, so they are engaged with what they are watching. The more they are engaged the more productive they will become. It come from tat support system and safe space so people want to keep on working because they know they are valued, and they want to continue sharing which comes from the actors."
"How do you handle a situation where an actor is struggling with their role?"	"Be patient, remind them what our company motivations are, and what we're trying to say with the play. Sometimes you need to take them and remind them about all the work we did in the first few days of rehearsals, because that's when the discoveries happen. It will depend on what the struggle is. Again, going to my director friends asking for advice and doing some extra research on how to help. As a director I'm not going to know everything in the world, its being willing to help that person, being patient, and rewarding them without being obvious. A simple "nice" or "well-done" because someone might really want to hear that and you might not be aware of it but they will gain comforting their work and know they are correct and doing what they are supposed to be doing, because actors often get in their own head, so praise them but not every two

	seconds because then it get a lot, just nice little praises here and there will go a long way."
"How do you work with designers to create a cohesive vision?"	"I go into any play with my own vision but ultimately, it's their job, yes, the director's vision is important, but the designers will often have better ideas than the director. As a director you're sharing yourself in all different departments where the designers just must focus on the design. I will always have my own ideas; I will always ask them to present me with their ideas and we will sort of try to meet in the middle or take bits of mine and bits of theirs to create a cohesive vision. It all comes back to the script and what the text has given us. Making sure your communication is active and always check in and have trust in the designers and create a safe space with them."
"What's the biggest challenge facing theatre directors today?"	"Funding and budget limitations."
"What advice would you give to an aspiring theatre director?"	"Go for it, research, read as many plays as you can, watch as many plays as you can because that will start to form what you enjoy in terms of storytelling. What you want to say as a director, visually what you enjoy. When you go see lots of stuff you can borrow stuff from people because that is how you learn. The more you go to see theatre the more you understand what it really can do. The more you research theatre styles it will teach you that you don't always have to be in a big theatre, and you learn to adapt to your space. Theatre comes in all different forms and sizes and shapes. Go for it, connect, talk, hold onto connections, research, be annoying. After a show stay behind and go network, talk to random people. When you have a bunch of creatives in one room make the most of it. Don't feel like you're too shy or not good enough, everyone starts from somewhere, you learn from other people go talk to them. directors are like actors everyone's different."
"Any other tips you have on directing?"	"Just knowing that all directors are different, your way of directing won't be every other director's cup of tea, but it's your way so embrace your individuality. Know it's going to

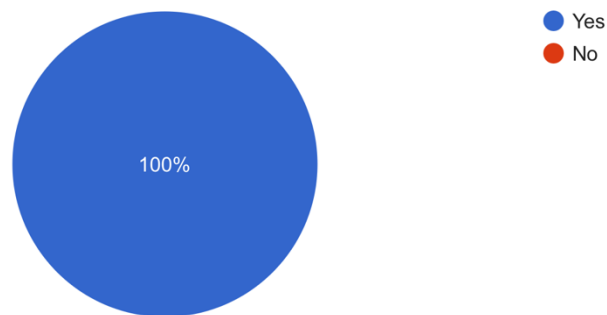
	be hard work with all the preplanning. Your mind is going a thousand miles per hour and that's fine it's the job you wanted so embrace it. It's okay to have bad days and good days, often directors beat themselves up when the day isn't as successful but at the end of the day it's a job just like any other job you have good days you have bad days. Just don't let the bad days outweigh the good. Take back, reflect, and connect always."
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II. Feedback Form

I asked the cast of Median Man to fill out a form to give their experience with me as a director.

Did you enjoy working on median man?

3 responses



Things about the process you enjoyed :

Jules: The character development

Shalynn: Interacting with audience, having food. I enjoyed the way the set was made; it was simple but so effective

Heather: I really enjoyed the fact that we have creative freedom, and we had the ability to collaborate.

Things about the process you didn't like:

Jules: How much it clashed with professional practice

Shalynn: That I joined so late

Heather: I liked it

Things I can do differently next time:

Jules: Don't be afraid to put your foot down sometimes in wanting your vision

Shalynn: Be more strict and better schedule

Heather: Maybe make the rehearsal process a little quicker? so maybe start a little later

Did you enjoy the activities we did? Explain what and why/ how it helped you as an actor:

Jules: I did enjoy the movement activity where I interacted with different people including animals were very helpful

Shalynn: Labyrinths it gave us a lot of focus, I enjoyed the structure of our check in and check outs, liked that you brought Dionne on to show ways to help with meditation

Heather: I really liked checking in everyday I think it was beneficial. To relax and leave other stuff behind before going into rehearsals.

Are there any activities you didn't like? Why?

Jules: The freeze frame activity at the start, for I felt I couldn't do much with the activity for how early it was in the process

Shalynn: N/A

Heather: The taster session for Jules for the beginning of the show? Especially the one with the Lights. It was really harsh on the eyes.

How can I work on my communication while directing. Was I clear in direction?

Jules: You were clear; however you need to put your foot down to work on your vision

Shalynn: You were clear in direction

Heather: Yes

How was the scheduling? Is there anything I can work on?

Jules: Alongside professional practice you did it well

Shalynn: Stricter schedule of what needs to be done each day so that it flows.

Heather: Maybe not having it so late? But only if you've had a busy day that day? But the morning to afternoon was good.

Any other feedback you think is important for me to know so I can learn and grow as a director!

Jules: You need to be clear with your vision with the company at the start, so the actors have something to work with.

Shalynn: N/A

Heather: Never apologize for being you. You're learning to be a director/ creative so never apologize to your actors.