

Production, Performance and Genre

Our group project for this module was to create a presentation based on something we had looked at in class. This was a very vague heading which meant that we could do whatever we wanted with it.

In our first meeting once we had been split into our groups (three actors and three set designers) we discussed what we were going to cover in our presentation. To begin this process, we made a mind map¹ noting all the different themes that appear in the six plays we looked at in class. While doing this, we noticed the same themes coming up: gender roles, family, sacrifice, double standards, expectations and oppression. We decided to base our presentation off these themes with a focus on how they are represented in *A Doll's House*, *Top Girls* and *Lovesong*. We chose these plays because they inspired particular group members. Then, we established who was going to research what. We split into pairs with one set designer and one actor to make sure we covered all bases. Next, we made a shared to do list, so we knew what each other were looking at.

Then, we moved onto individual work. I was looking at *Top Girls* and within that, chose to focus on the character of Patient Griselda from Act I and her costume. I started by making a mood board² summarising my ideas. I had a clear colour palette of red and gold with a focus on a dress with a fitted bodice and floor length skirt with gold detailing. Next, I read back through the play and my notes from class³ to note anything that was relevant to any of our six themes then colour coded them by theme⁴⁵ to help me make connections.

During our next meet-up as a group, we established a structure withing our presentation and script so everyone knew exactly what they were researching since this would be our last meet-up as a group before the Christmas break. Additionally, we created a playlist as background music during our presentation, with songs representing the themes of the plays⁶. I found a book in the library on how to research and design a costume which I found very useful during the planning stage of Patient Griselda's costume.

Over Christmas, I went to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to see their displays from the 13th and 14th centuries⁷. They showcased lace, tapestries and stone carvings which I then used as inspiration for my costumes where I tried to replicate the patterns and styles used. After that, I drew my initial design⁸ before I had gathered my materials, so I knew my design would change. Next, I went to charity shops to buy fabric, this came in the form of a long-sleeved dress, some gold napkins, a pair of curtains and a bag of old jewellery. Then, I drew my final design⁹ which was

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quite like the original but with less gold fabric. Now I could make the dress. I decided to make it in two parts so that it would fit better and so that I could wear the parts separately to increase its sustainability. I cut the skirt off the dress I bought, altered the top half to fit me and changed the round neck to a square neckline. The most difficult part about this was altering the sleeves because I could only do this one handed so it took a while to get right. Then I added the gold fabric detailing to the ends of the sleeves and in a v shape at the bottom to make the top longer since cutting the skirt off had made it shorter than anticipated. Unfortunately, the napkin fabric had no give in it which meant that the top no longer fit. To counteract this, I cut the back seam and left a gap. However, the fabric was poor quality and frayed so badly that the top started coming apart at the seams, so I used a lighter to seal all the edges. The last thing I did to the top was hand sew gold chain along the neckline and in the middle of the gold v to cover a small hole from where the fabric had frayed. After that, I made a circle skirt from one curtain and adding a hook and eye clasp¹⁰. I like this dress because I feel it is representative of Patient Griselda's character and how she was oppressed to conform to her life of royalty with no ability to make decisions for herself. She would have been dressed as an ornament and shown off rather than be respected for the person she was.

After Christmas, we met as a group to collect everyone's research and discuss how we were going to present it. Since we had all focused on such different things, we needed to make sure that the common themes flowed the whole way through. We did this first by redesigning the PowerPoint, so it had a consistent design and reflected what we were going to be showing our audience. Also, we had the idea to set up our presentation like the dinner party in Act I of *Top Girls* with wine glasses and plates from the props cupboard. I used the linings of the curtains as tablecloths since they were plain white. We decided to refer to the person changing the slides and controlling the music as the waiter. At the end of our presentation, we created a Kahoot to test the audience.

For the presentation, we had written individual scripts¹¹ to reduce paper waste but this meant that we weren't sure of our speaking order even after a full rehearsal. I feel my part of the presentation went smoothly as I said everything I needed to about my costume and its process and handed out my costume designs and fabric swatches¹² for the audience to have a closer look at. I didn't use my script for this section because I knew exactly what I was taking about but I wanted bullet points in case I got stuck. Everyone loved our Kahoot although the player limit got in the way.

In my opinion, we worked well as a group since we could trust each other to complete the work on time, to a high standard. I have enjoyed this module because it taught me how to read and analyse a script correctly. My favourite part was making the dress because it challenged my creativity since I don't have much experience with sewing clothes. I need to improve on my research skills since I could've looked at a lot more into historical context. We could've communicated

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more, especially over Christmas as there were moments of uncertainty where a group video call would have helped.

References

Seivewright, S. (2007). *Basic Fashion Design 01: Research and Design*. Switzerland: Ava.

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[Top Girls.docx](#) - play notes

 [PWB photo references.pub](#) - photos referenced in process workbook

[Production, Performance & Genre Presentation.pptx](#) - presentation PowerPoint