

Final Production (ADP6003)

Assassins - Tomos James Jones

Content:

- Introduction
- Impressions & Reflection
- Exploration of Ideas, Methods and Approaches
- Integration of Research and Sources
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

Introduction:

In this journal, I hope to investigate and reflect on my experiences during the rehearsal and performance process of Stephen Sondheim's musical "Assassins." I've been cast as Zangara, the famed Italian immigrant who attempted to assassinate Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"Assassins" digs into the murky and complicated realm of historical characters involved in successful or failed murder attempts on American presidents. The musical questions standard narratives by delving into these people's motivations and psychological states, encouraging the audience to consider the nature of power, celebrity, and the American Dream.

I shall explain the concepts, methods, and approaches encountered during the creation, both academically and personally, throughout this journal. I will present evidence of my study and analysis using a variety of trustworthy sources, such as academic publications, textbooks, and present-day stories.

My observations will include my character's development, creative decisions made during the rehearsal process, and the impact of these events on my growth as a performer. I hope to provide a complete exploration of my path in bringing Zangara to life on stage by combining academic insights with personal impressions.

I intend to obtain a better grasp of the complexity of the production and its significance within the greater framework of musical theatre and historical narratives through this reflective notebook.

Impressions & Reflections:

Throughout the rehearsal and performance process for "Assassins," I came across a variety of ways and approaches that greatly affected my portrayal of the character Zangara. When I reflected on my early impressions, I realised how profoundly these approaches influenced my comprehension and embodiment of the part.

The concept of the seven stages of tension was one significant strategy established by our Director. This technique concentrated on my character's physicality, emphasising Zangara's continual suffering. I was able to express Zangara's physical struggle and create a captivating presence on stage by adding this strategy into my performance. It was intriguing to see how this technique improved the realism and depth of my performance.

To expand my understanding of my character and improve my performance, I read Paul Harvard's book "Acting Through Song"[1]. This helpful book guided me through the characterisation process by providing practical insights and exercises. One piece on page 160 piqued my interest, as it discussed the significance of establishing three important criteria for a role. By following this guidance with Zangara, I was able to delve deeper into his motivations, concerns, and wants, which ultimately strengthened my portrayal. Harvard's book became an important resource during my journey, providing essential direction and support.

Reading the full script was originally challenging due to its nonlinear nature, which made it tough to grasp the overall narrative. The script began to make more sense as rehearsals continued and situations came to life. The interconnection of the characters and narratives led me to appreciate Stephen Sondheim's composition's creativity. Witnessing the

power of the script evolve on stage was a transforming experience that reinforced my commitment to completely inhabit my character within the larger context of the play.

To acquire a better knowledge of Zangara and his historical background, I resorted to the "Military-History Wiki - Giuseppe Zangara"[2]. This internet resource shed light on the character's origins and intentions. While researching Zangara's life, I discovered parallel experiences and emotions, allowing me to create stronger ties with the character. This research not only improved my performance, but it also instilled in me a sense of responsibility to depict Zangara in a true and respectful manner.

Overall, the "Assassins' " rehearsal and performance process offered me with a multitude of learning experiences and potential for improvement. The introduction of the seven stages of tension, the advice from "Acting Through Song," the examination of the script's complexities, and the research into Zangara's history all aided my growth as a performer. These methodologies and tactics, backed up by appropriate literature and personal observations, enabled me to immerse myself in Zangara's journey and bring a complex portrayal of the character to the stage.

Exploration of Ideas, Methods and Approaches

I had reservations about playing a character from a different background at first. However, I learnt to trust the process from my previous experience playing Tom Collins, who also had a wide background. Recognising prior strategies that had worked, I used them in my portrayal of Zangara. This enabled me to delve into universal human experiences that cut beyond cultural boundaries, allowing me to find sincerity in my performance.

The combination of the Musical Theatre (BAMT) and Perfformio (BAP) courses was a treat. Working in a huge ensemble, similar to our last production of "Edges," gave a sense of unity and safety in the rehearsal space. Although I was first self-conscious about my acting abilities in the presence of the BAP course, I was able to overcome my worries and perform confidently with time. This combination of classes not only enhanced the production but also generated a collaborative and supportive environment, which aided my development as a performer.

My understanding of the show's concepts grew deeper as the rehearsal process progressed. I came to understand the assassins' harsh indictment of the American Dream, their terrible sense of separation and isolation, and the critical role that media attention and image had in influencing their behaviour. These discoveries not only improved my performance of Zangara, but also increased my comprehension of the play's social satire. I recognised the value of challenging societal ideals and studying the psychological motivations of characters in the arena of musical theatre by connecting these personal views to scholarly topics.

Along the process, difficulties arose, necessitating adaptation and problem-solving. During the choreography for the song "National Anthem," there was a tiny snag in the transitions between scenes. I took the initiative and presented to the director a solution: regulating the movement of the table and assuring its stable placement for subsequent scenes. This change helped to the production's overall flow and seamless continuity, emphasising the necessity of collaboration and active participation in problem-solving within a creative team.

One such stumbling block emerged during the presentation of "How I Saved Roosevelt." I struggled at first to completely engage with my voice powers while seated.

However, after receiving criticism for the song's overly singing, I decided to include vocal speaking into specific parts of it. This change addressed the criticism while digging further into the emotional journey of my character. I embraced the concept of vocal variety, inspired by Paul Harvard's book "Acting Through Song," to improve the authenticity and impact of my performance. This event demonstrated the transforming power of adjusting and experimenting with new ideas, which led to artistic growth and a more nuanced portrayal.

The combination of personal thoughts, practical problem-solving, and scholarly insights enabled me to thoroughly immerse myself in the examination of concepts, methods, and approaches during the production of "Assassins." I gained a better knowledge of the artistic process and its importance in engaging with societal issues by deliberately connecting my experiences to bigger theoretical notions. This voyage not only increased my development as a performer, but it also gave me a deep understanding of the collaborative aspect of theatre productions.

Ultimately the rehearsal process for "Assassins" offered me excellent possibilities to experiment with various ways and approaches. I've noticed personal growth and development ranging from trust in the process and course integration to a greater understanding of the show's themes and adaptive problem-solving. I achieved this by combining personal reflections with scholarly notions.

Integration of Research & Sources:

In order to prepare for my role in "Assassins," I conducted significant study from a number of sources. These sources gave invaluable insights and information that aided my understanding and representation of Zangara, as well as the overall production.

I examined the Wikipedia article dedicated to Giuseppe Zangara[3], the historical figure I depicted, to learn more about his history and objectives. This article revealed a lot about Zangara's origins, objectives, and health difficulties. I was able to approach Zangara's character with more authenticity and empathy by diving into his past and acquiring a deeper knowledge of his physical problems, resulting in a more complex representation.

Continuing my investigation, I went to the Military-History Wiki's entry on Giuseppe Zangara[1]. This source went into greater detail on Zangara's medical maladies and speculated on the likelihood of underlying mental health issues. This realisation allowed me to approach Zangara's character with more depth, compassion, and authenticity, which added levels of complexity to my performance.

Understanding Stephen Sondheim's works, the composer of "Assassins," was critical to understanding the musical's spirit and intricacies. I obtained a better understanding of Sondheim's musical style and storytelling tactics after conducting a thorough research of his works on Wikipedia. Comparing "Assassins" to other well-known Sondheim plays, such as "Company," "West Side Story," and "Sweeney Todd," enabled me to contextualise the musical within Sondheim's larger body of work. This understanding informed my perspective and presentation of the characters greatly, since I was able to identify repeating themes and patterns in Sondheim's oeuvre.

I used YouTube instructions on acquiring an authentic Italian accent to authentically portray Zangara's Italian origin[4]. These lectures gave practical advice as well as linguistic nuances that enabled me to create a more accurate picture of Zangara's voice. The care I took in perfecting my accent provided an extra dimension of realism to my performance.

Knowing the historical backdrop and critical reception of "Assassins" was vital to completely comprehending the work. The musical's Wikipedia[5] entry gave a full overview, historical context, and critical review of the show. This insight broadened my understanding of the concepts discussed in the musical and enabled me to approach the production with a more informed perspective.

Conclusion:

During the rehearsal and performance of Stephen Sondheim's musical "Assassins," I went on a journey of self-discovery and artistic development. In this reflective journal, I have investigated numerous concepts, methods, and approaches that contributed to my understanding and portrayal of Zangara. I have gained a greater appreciation for the production's complexity and significance within the fields of musical theatre and historical narratives through the combination of academic study, personal thoughts, and practical problem-solving.

During rehearsals, one of the most important methods was the utilisation of the seven stages of tension, which concentrated on Zangara's body and ongoing pain. This technique enabled me to give the character a realistic and fascinating presence, improving the depth of my performance. In addition, Paul Harvard's book "Acting Through Song" proved essential in the characterization process. Harvard's observations and exercises assisted me in delving deeper into Zangara's motivations and worries, which strengthened my representation and added layers of realism.

I gained a better knowledge of Stephen Sondheim's composition as I delved deeper into the script's complexity and investigated the links of the characters and narratives. Seeing the script's power come to life on stage changed my vision of the play, strengthening my resolve to completely inhabit my role within the greater framework of the production.

The integration of information and sources was essential in my preparation for the part of Zangara. The information gleaned from credible sources, such as Wikipedia, the Military-History Wiki, and the New York Times Archive, provides vital insights on Zangara's background, goals, and historical context. This research not only improved the accuracy and authenticity of my portrayal, but it also instilled in me a sense of responsibility to portray Zangara in a respectful and true manner.

Overall, the practice and performance process for "Assassins" has been life-changing. It has given me the opportunity to investigate a variety of concepts, methods, and approaches, broadening my understanding of the artistic process and its importance in engaging with societal challenges. Personal observations, problem-solving, and intellectual insights have aided my development as a performer and deepened my respect for the collaborative aspect of theatre performances. I am happy for the chance to bring Zangara to life on stage and participate in the thought-provoking investigation of power, popularity, and the American Dream that "Assassins" provides.

Bibliography:

- Harvard, P. (2014). *Acting through song : techniques and exercises for the musical theatre actor*. Opus Books.

- Giuseppe Zangara. (n.d.). *Military Wiki*. [online] Available at: https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Giuseppe_Zangara
- Wikipedia. (2023). *Giuseppe Zangara*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Zangara
- www.youtube.com. (n.d.). *How to do an Italian accent: Tricks to sound more Italian*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eGTtP-XqZY&t=5s>
- Wikipedia. (2021). *Assassins (musical)*. [online] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassins_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassins_(musical)).