

Public Performances (HPCB70010)

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MIRACLE

Miracle was our first Ensemble project, written and directed by our co-directors and developers, Elen Bowman and Luke Hereford, and our music director, David Laurghne. The story played with love, obligation, guilt, pressure, risk-taking, belief and self-belief. Instead of telling a story, Miracle showed its meaning and themes through its Ensemble of characters. One of the most critical functions that Miracle served for us was a trial run to learn a little about how we work as an ensemble, find our pace and rhythm collectively, and see our capacity for our final project.

I was initially uneasy and unsure of my place in the project. Due to my busy schedule, I could only spend 25 to 30 minutes in class, so I had to rely on my classmates to put up the time I lost. As the project continued, I found it more difficult to contribute effectively due to time constraints, especially since scene talks had already started without me. My script suggestions seemed overlooked because I needed to understand the tasks. However, I consciously chose to let go of such negative feelings and concentrate on getting things done. I committed to improving my abilities and helping my peers because I knew that having a positive outlook would contribute to both my development and the overall success of others in the project. As mentioned, We did not adhere to a particular character. Instead, we had chorus lines which were said, and these felt like lines a character would not particularly say but a narrator would say. As complicated as it may sound, it felt better to say the lines how they were, as I was the character I had to play. There would be some aspects where I had to play a certain way, such as being drunk at the end of "Wild, Wild, Wild Party", but otherwise, there was not much I could have done. Nevertheless, I enjoyed playing the narrator sections, especially during scenes where other characters' relationships were being built, such as the first scene where I could enjoy the moment with the different narrators, which helped me feel at ease and less nervous to tell a story. However, I could have done more because of this, especially in the scenes where I stood still. I could have contributed more as an ensemble member, and this also contributed to the character I was playing, which was about the relationship of a young adult with someone he saw as the mother of his child. When exploring this character initially, I was finding it overly easy, as I kept playing him as myself because of a habit of doing the narrating bits in the script, so I tried to explore more on Why he was saying these things, What affected him to say these things, Where is he at this point in the script, Essentially looking at it with the 6 Fundamental Questions Technique, This technique helped me a lot during Rent and has become a habit of becoming a must when exploring into characters and, in my opinion, helped massively with connecting with the other character when they finally put an end to their "situation-ship". With the scenes of the show, as mentioned in the Introduction, during the read-throughs, I felt as though none of this made sense. In my mind, everything was not processing, and I started to lose motivation within the work. Still, once I began to ask for help from my classmates, it slowly started to make more sense, so when we started working on the scenes on their feet, I was able to contribute ideas and help other classmates when they also needed help understanding particular views of what is happening during the scene, even though I

suggested numerous amounts of ideas of what we could do to the Ensemble, at some points of the rehearsal process. Some would always react to my suggestions in a negative way, which is why, initially, I never really suggest ideas as they are always overlooked. So, instead of viewing their reaction negatively. I decided to give all my ideas to the director to see where they wanted to go with the scene, view it in their eyes and then provide suggestions that would fit their description. This gave me a significant boost in confidence with my imaginative skills, as I started to see the show for what it was, especially with understanding where each theme comes in and how it is perceived. Working on choreography was my favourite thing to do in the entire show. I am a very energetic character on stage, and movement scenes always boost my confidence, as I am confident in my dancing abilities. Even though the choreography was not very technical, in “Therapy”, you would need a good understanding of timing and rhythm to do the movements. One of the challenges I think I had was when most of the Ensemble did not want to do some things choreography-wise. I was confident we could nail it on the head after a few rehearsals, but then, as an ensemble, we decided to change the timing of some areas of the choreography, which is understandable. I initially realised that I do not deal well with not being listened to and when people do not understand my suggestions, and I think this is a psychological battle I need to overcome as soon as possible before we start working on the next project. The main challenge we faced during the rehearsal process was when one of the directors could not continue to help with the show. Luckily, That is when Luke Hereford stepped in. Even though both directors had different views of portraying the scenes, We were able to find a middle ground that would help us as performers who already have done research and a small amount of blocking, and Luke’s new views of some scenes made an impact on how our particular characters continue their journey.

One thing I wanted to research was an accidental pregnancy, as my character accidentally got another character pregnant, and I wanted to learn more about it. An article called “A growing number of British women are falling pregnant after a one-night stand”, which was published in 2007, says that in January of that year, 13% more women had an abortion than the previous year^[1], so I wanted to learn more about abortion, and by looking at some statistics I found out that In England and Wales, 209,519 abortions were reported, with 207,384 to residents. The age-standardised abortion rate for women aged 15-44 is 18.0 per 1,000, which is an increase from 2018 and the highest recorded rate. The previous highest rate was in 2007^[2]. With that done, I started to look more into the themes of the play and mainly on the religious terms of the script, such as the story of “Wild, Wild, Wild Party”, which, in short, The song “A Wild, Wild Party” uses biblical stories such as Adam and Eve, Sodom and Gomorrah, and The Golden Calf to argue that having fun is not necessarily immoral. ^[4]

As an individual, I found the experience of participating in Miracle, our first ensemble project, to be both challenging and rewarding. The unconventional approach to storytelling challenged me to adapt to a new mode of performance that emphasised collective storytelling over individual character development. However, despite the initial time constraints, I overcame my apprehensions. I focused on improving my skills and supporting my peers, which resulted in my confidence growing in character exploration and choreography.

Throughout the production, my research into accidental pregnancy and religious symbolism increased my understanding of the production’s themes and characters. As a result, I could better interpret the narrative and thematic elements of the production.

Despite facing challenges such as a leadership transition during the rehearsal process, the Ensemble overcame these obstacles through open communication and a willingness to explore new perspectives. The collective vision for the production was refined, and the final result was a testament to our collaboration and hard work.

Overall, my experience with Miracle was transformative. It taught me the importance of resilience, collaboration, and embracing new challenges to achieve artistic excellence. Each difficulty presented an opportunity for learning and growth, and I emerged from this experience with a newfound appreciation for the value of collective storytelling and collaboration.

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Fugitives Song Cycle

Our Second public performance was Fugitives Song Cycle, directed by Matthew Holmquist and our Music Director Barnaby Southgate. Fugitive Songs is a collection of songs that tells several linked storylines. Every character sets off on an adventure that delves into themes of love, grief, and the pursuit of selfhood. The song cycle Fugitive Songs features a variety of fugitives, each with an individual reason for running or pursuing a new start in life.

When we were given our songs for the Song Cycle, my initial impression was that I was excited to learn more about Acting Through Song, as I still have many areas I need to improve. However, the song that got me insecure was “Wilson”, as we were told we would be doing it as four characters telling a story about another person called Wilson. Initially, I was not too fond of the idea as it would cause much more complications in the song, and we would have to have many more rehearsals with the song. The song I was given to work on was “Getting There”. Initially, I did not choose this song in my auditions, so I had no clue what the song was telling, so I started to listen and imagine what I could do with the scene to tell the story of the character. Moreover, This song linked me to a specific character called “Gavin”, so with this, I decided to do more research into the character.

While working with the director, Mathew, We did many workshops to help us delve into the World of the Play; one of the workshops that helped me was when we walked

around the room and felt the emotions that the character would feel and what subtle movements would define this character. While working on this, I was transforming myself into a completely new character, but the character was my own. So with this in the Development Process i wanted to do some own research on finding out why he is the way he is, such as using a pintrest board to help me map out his place of birth, his school, where does he work, etc. and this is what helped me the most as i could finally find exactly what i wanted with the character, but as we moved onto rehearsal process, some slight changes were made to my character but not enough to effect my characters storyline which was very beneficial for me which i could work even harder on what i already have, and i did almost every rehearsal add new elements of how my character would react to different scenarios to help find what was more natural for my character to do, with ensemble acts, some were better to do in a natural state, so i had to find a shift from my character to different character as some pieces didn't feel right for my character to be involved in, with this i decided to lose one item of clothing, which was my jacket, as i initially made my jacket an item that held all the burden that i carry around me. When it came to the actual performance, I felt as though my performance was enhanced in many different ways; in some areas, I felt as though I lost character, especially since I lost a part of the lyrics in my song, but I remembered that a particular line of the song could enhance what I did before and, at first, it made me feel ashamed, but I pushed through to drive the character's story ahead.

While working on my song, "Getting There", I decided that the journey of my character would be to want to move away from my hometown and visit places around the world instead of staying at the store I work at and seeing other people bring their pictures for me to see. With Matthew's help, I felt he pushed me out of my comfort zone to help me get my performance to life. He made me realise many things that I could do more of, such as connecting with the audience around me to bring them into my world and properly envision which destination I want to reach. The help of Chris Fosse and Barnaby helped me think about each emotion that each line of lyric makes me feel; personally, I feel like I can do this a lot more in the future to push through the possibilities of my performances. Also, I initially started choreography with Wilson for the song "Shine", but I decided to swap with another classmate as they could not concentrate because of stress. Hence, I decided to take over as I wanted to work on this song. When working on "Wilson", I wanted it to seem as though none of us is actually 'Wilson', but we are telling a story that we heard, so in essence, I worked on this scene to make it seem as comedic as it could be, but also making sure that we understand what was happening in the scene, as it is disconcerting. When I was involved in different scenes, such as "Annie's Party", I felt as though in this scene, as much as I was the one being pushed around and, in essence, being bullied by the other character, I had to take the initiative to make it seem as though she is being rough towards me, it took a while to get this to work effectively, but in the end, we both worked together to create a scene that worked for her story.

I did some research on this, such as self-work research and research online; when I did my research, it was mainly to develop the character's backstory and to help me find out the truth behind the character. However, I also looked online at many different articles and facts, and one that intrigued me the most was that "4.2 million young people, ages 13 to 25, experience a form of homelessness each year in the United States" ^[1], and in U. Inre were 184 Crisis Calls. This was interesting as my character was born in Utah, so I decided that the factors mentioned on the site could be an underlying reason why he wanted to leave home and not just visit other places ^[2]. Something else that helped me was that even when I had completed prepping my song and finding out the stakes, leaving room for discovery and

imagination was vital ^[3]. This helped me a lot with my whole process as, every day when I came in, I always tried to bring something new and inspiring into my performance as I never wanted my work to be a painting set in stone.

The rehearsal process for the Fugitive Song Cycle was a transformative journey marked by challenges, discoveries, and personal growth. Under the guidance of director Matthew Holmquist and music director Barnaby Southgate, I navigated through initial uncertainties to discover the depths of character and narrative interpretation.

Through collaborative workshops and diligent research, I unearthed the nuances of my character's journey and motivations, infusing my performance with authenticity and depth. Embracing opportunities for experimentation and creative exploration, I honed my skills and delved into the complexities of storytelling through song.

As scenes evolved, I embraced the collaborative spirit of ensemble work, contributing to the collective vision while refining my performance. Research into homelessness and identity provided invaluable insights, enriching my portrayal with authenticity and emotional resonance.

Ultimately, the rehearsal process became a journey of self-discovery and artistic evolution. Each rehearsal was an opportunity for growth and exploration, leaving me with a deeper understanding of character, narrative, and the transformative power of performance art.

Reflecting on this journey, I am grateful for the challenges, discoveries, and moments of inspiration that have shaped my artistic expression. Moving forward, I carry the lessons learned and the passion ignited, ready to embark on new creative endeavours with confidence and conviction.

Bibliography:

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