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Professional practice for performance

During this module we took on the tasks of creating a workshop, finding placement and working as a company for a production (Rocky Horror Show). Throughout this time, I cultivated lots of knowledge and experience for future use in my career. This included working with a variety of people of all ages and backgrounds. Following on from this I also shadowed a business owner of a dance company, giving me a wider view on all aspects of the current work industry.

Our first task consisted of planning and running a workshop for primary school children. Fin, Maisie and I (my cohorts) devised together our workshop. Following this we discussed what we wanted to teach the children and what we wanted them to gain from this experience. We researched the best and easiest way a child picks up choreography before anything else, this would give us a good base line to see what style would work best for the children. (Ma, J. (2024). *4 Tips For Improving Choreography Pick-Up | STEEZY Blog*. [online] www.steezy.co). We settled on teaching a relaxed introduction to a variety of hip hop and commercial so the children wouldn't feel frustrated if they struggled with certain choreography. This also allowed for more fun interpretation from the kids, allowing them to make decisions for themselves, eg: beginning & end poses in choreography.

As a group we felt it was important to do a warmup that correlated with the choreography in the dance so the kids could have more time to learn the 'hip hop' moves. A challenge we faced was preventing the moves from overwhelming the children and reducing their enjoyment. For the warmup we originally had six moves they had to copy when shouted out. After a discussion we decided that four moves would be more engaging and memorable for the children as they may not have dance backgrounds. I feel that it was greatly beneficial to the children as none of them became frustrated with the amount of choreography and they all had fun while doing it.

One aspect we could have improved on was the structure of the workshop and our placements in the room. For example, we had planned that our group would be spread out throughout the class, so the visual learning was easier for the children. However, this didn't happen due to room space, meaning we had to change our places at the last minute. We should have discussed this beforehand as it changed our structure plan for the whole

class, and it may have hindered the children's full potential. To compensate for that we decided to give each instructor a section of the room they could focus on, this is to help different children with the choreography when it is being taught by one of the instructors. We found that this method created a less intimidating setting for the children, creating space for questions to be asked about the choreography.

In my reflection I feel that our outcome was very positive, leaving the children with a curiosity for dance in their potential future. We found this out at the end of our session by asking for a thumbs up, down and middle from each child. With no thumbs down I feel we delivered what we needed and more. We created a fun environment that teaches listening skills, coordination and memorization for all children.

For my placement I got in touch with Geo Rose to gain experience of how an active business is run and also to see how she molds her business to appeal to dancers and non-dancers. To do this I shadowed her private, open and workshop classes along with business meetings. This regarded all the behind the scenes of owning a business, how she keeps herself mentally and physically fit for lots of different responsibilities, and extra jobs she does that gives to the community.

To start the week, I shadowed her private classes with multiple clients. Each person differed in dance levels, giving me a chance to see how Geo tweaks her choreography to fit certain clients. This includes warm up, Stretch, choreography, technique and memorization. She does this by getting to know her clients' backgrounds in dance and also them personally to see what type of learner they are. For example, Geo has a client that is a Musical Theater performer on cruise ships. To keep up her technique musically and physically when using music or choreography geo uses counts for this specific client. For other clients who use dance as a hobby she will use the lyrics of songs.

Another technique Geo uses is listening to what that client wants out of the sessions or a potential end goal. She would check in with her clients at the beginning of each session to see what they wanted for that day. For example, on Monday and Tuesday she had a client that wanted to work on flexibility and get her splits. Geo personalized the session by doing deep stretches, using blocks and partner stretches. I helped with partner stretches and even picked up new moves I can use in the future. This gave the client positions she could work on at home as well to reach her goal. I found this was an amazing aspect to Geos business as it takes away the pressure of a 'class' and gives the client freedom to choose what they want.

In the evenings of Mon, Tue, Wed and Thu, I got to see a variety of different open classes, beginner classes and workshops. I felt that I saw the biggest difference in the workshops compared to open classes. This consisted of a deeper learning process in the workshops as it is spread over a few weeks giving you lots of time to learn the choreography. There also was more time for questions, technique and walking through more difficult moves.

Following on from this I went to Barry with Geo to look at how she runs her dance sessions for adults with Special Educational Needs. This type of session is all about fun, confidence and letting them make choices for themselves. Geo does this by doing the session seated for easier mobility and less overstimulation. (mnourse (2024). *The Joy and Benefits of In-Chair Dancing - VIVA Mutual*. [online] VIVA Mutual). She then introduces a choice to be made by everyone which was choosing a song each. This helps everyone feel included in the session. The movements are kept simple, lighthearted and fun creating a feel-good environment for all participants. I found that Geo was very engaging and welcoming to all participants, making her an obvious choice for this job; communication and understanding are crucial when working with people of all backgrounds. I believe I have learnt a lot from my placement and how to run a successful business that is an inclusive and a safe space for all people.

For my performance module we were a part of Rocky Horror Show working closely with the second year MT students, director Richard Tunley and stage manager Amy Ashwell. We were assigned our parts as phantoms and started the process with a read through as a company. Following on from this we started the rehearsal process by learning the ensemble parts and harmonies of the songs. I feel I was very productive and engaged when learning new material of songs and dances. I was put on the alto line which was perfect for me as I am more of an alto than soprano, however if somebody needed someone on a different line, I would happily offer to change to help the group.

When learning choreography, the first two weeks I did not struggle with the material so I would help some of the MTs with any parts they felt they struggled with. However, during the second week I developed a concussion at my job outside of university. This put me out of rehearsals for a week and I felt I would fall behind in my work. To help this during my time off I would watch the rehearsal videos to pick up choreography that had been made while I was gone. I also researched the breakdown of my character and did a mood board so I could understand my presents on the stage during the show. (Casting Information and Character Description CASTING INFORMATION. (n.d.) [online]). I continued to

practice the harmonies I had been given so when I returned, I only had to learn the new harmonies.

Upon my return I found it a struggle to keep track of which scene was which due to my absence. However, due to an amazing cast, people would help me with material I had missed or was unsure about. Following this I felt heavily supported by Richard and Amy, they always checked in with me and made sure I didn't push myself too far.

During this experience we were allowed creative freedom in certain parts of the production, e.g.; the overture. During the opening we were spread out over the building to create an atmosphere of 'another world'. I decided I would sit in the audience filing my middle finger while staring at different audience members. I did this to make the audience feel 'awkward' and 'uncomfortable'. I chose to file my middle finger as the setting of rocky is sexual, crude humor.

Overall, I feel the shows went well, however we did experience a show stop on the first show. As a cast we were all very confused but knew the best way to get through it was to remain calm and wait for help from technicians. Once the lights had been fixed, we picked up from 'Frankenstein's place'. As a group we smoothly fell right back into the world of rocky horror as we all wanted to give the audience the show they had come to see.

I had the best time working alongside all the Musical Theatre cohort and doing a type of production we had not experienced in this degree. This has opened my mind to taking on similar roles once I graduate, my experience was overall positive and beneficial to my career path.

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