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Acting for Musical Theatre APDA5023

Written Evaluation

The purpose of this essay is to critically reflect on the key experiences that have shaped my progression as an actor over the course of this module. I will display a clear insight into my use of techniques by famous practitioners, some being, Stanislavski and Meisner, and how they helped me throughout my rehearsal processes and performances, applying the techniques during duets and scenes for the first part of the module, and our end of term show, 'I love you you're perfect now change'.

During this module we were tasked with getting into pairs and choosing a musical theatre duet and scene of our choice to work on and perform to improve on our understanding of poetic structures and poetic devices employed by the lyricist. I collaborated with my peer, Liv, and together, we chose to develop on the song, 'My own best friend' from the musical, 'Chicago'. We chose this piece partly because we both have an alto vocal range, but mainly because of the witty relationship and dynamic between the characters. I had not heard this song previously, so I approached it without a full understanding of the story or characters. However, this gave me the opportunity to develop my research skills while also allowing me to make my own organic character choices. We also found a short scene that occurs before the song to work through. One task we undertook was finding out the objectives and motivations of our characters. It is necessary to understand your character's motivation because it gives you a context and a history and can help you comprehend the psychological and emotional reasons for a character's behaviour (Dal Vera & Deer, 2015 p.26). To do so, we were provided personal questions about our characters by our tutor. These questions ranged from the characters education, beliefs, relationships etc. Knowing certain facts about my character allowed me to understand the motivation behind her actions and dialogue. This then made it easier to figure out what my scene objectives were. A scene objective is what a character wants and is trying to obtain from the other characters throughout a specific portion of text (Mike Alfreds, 2007, p.40) Doing this preparation allowed me to understand my character further in both my scene and duet, allowing for a more raw and truthful performance.

In preparation for our I love you you're perfect now change audition, we each worked through a scene from the show during our classes in pairs. When working on these

scenes, we looked at using Meisner ending in improv to connect with our scene partners further and grasp the relationship between the characters. We specifically worked on Meisner's repetition exercise quite a bit during these lessons. This exercise involves actors observing and repeating each other's behaviour and statements to promote spontaneous and authentic reactions. It is designed to help actors remain present and responsive, enhancing their ability to connect with their scene partners in a truthful and immediate way. (SessionLab2025) This is a technique that I have explored previously, however I never seemed to find much benefit in it, whereas this time around, I felt like it allowed me to react in the moment and connect to my own character. As my character is an older man, I had been finding it difficult trying to figure out how I think he would react to others, as it did not feel natural to me. I found myself thinking too much instead of just doing what my body told me to do. Doing the Meisner into improvisation allowed me to trust in myself, and create my own version of my character, being truthful towards my scene partner, creating a deeper connection. It also allowed me to break out of the old man stereotype, as I feel like I was playing too much into it, resulting in it taking away any depth to my character. I believe I carried on developing my character using Meisner going into the rehearsal process and performance, not only for my older man character but for all my others.

One technique I found especially useful when we began our two weeklong rehearsal process for the show, was uniting the script. A Unit is simply a piece of text lasting anything from about six lines to maybe a page. A typical 3-page piece of dialogue may consist of between two and five BITS of action depending on what is going on in the scene and what kind of tactics each character is using. (Bella Merlin, 2014, p.103). Using units in my scenes was helpful as I knew exactly where the shifts in energy were, which enabled me to be able to drive the scene forward when needed. The units allowed for an emotional journey throughout the scene. They helped me track where the rise and falls of emotions and tension were located, which allowed the climactic moments to feel more effective for us and the audience.

Overall, I feel that this module has significantly contributed to my development as an actor, not only on stage, but in the rehearsal room too. Through applying Stanislavski and Meisner techniques, I have been able to approach my work with truthfulness and confidence. These techniques allowed me to create a more authentic and truthful performance in both the duet, and final show. The techniques I used during this process

will be carried through my career with me, as I now know how to utilise them to any projects I may work on in future. I feel I have grown in confidence as an actor, in not only my ability but being able to utilise the teachings I have received in a correct and useful way. If I were to do this module again, I would prioritise trusting myself sooner in the process as well as my instincts as an actor, as I feel like at times, not doing so held me back.

Merlin, B (2014) *The Complete Stanislavski Toolkit*. Nick Hern Books.

Dal Vera & Deer (2015) *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course*. Nick Hern Books.

Alfreds, M (2007) *Different Every Night : Freeing the actor*. Nick Hern Books.

Marx, E (2024) Repetition Exercise (Meisner Technique) [Online] Available at:
<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/repetition-exercise-meisner-technique>
[Accessed 16th December]