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BA Musical Theatre

Final Production

ADPA6003

In this essay, I will be reflecting on my rehearsal process of my final production, *Alice by Heart*, where I played the characters of The Duchess and Dodgy. I will also be touching on my final performances, elaborating on the positives and negatives of my performances.

To begin our rehearsal process, we looked closely at further understanding the musical, looking deeper into our characters and their personal storylines, both in the real world and in wonderland. This was very helpful to me, as I struggled quite a lot connecting with my real-world character, as she is so different to my wonderland character, The Duchess. I have had experience playing over the top characters like the Duchess before but have never had the chance to play a 'mean girl'. This is where I looked at the given circumstances within the script, picking out sentences or actions that may indicate things such as age, personality, relationships and past. When looking at the given circumstances of a text, you are you are thinking and doing as the character, imagining actively with a free body and a walked through before time (O'Brien, 2024). I found that doing so helped a lot when it came to putting the scenes up on their feet, as I felt a lot more comfortable within my character, and how she would react due to her personal attributes. I then went and repeated the same process for my other character, The Duchess, as I knew that it worked for me, and would further connect me to my role.

During the first two weeks, we worked a lot on choreographed movements for some of our numbers, as well as character physicality. Our production leaned heavily into physical theatre rather than dance, which intrigued me, as it is something I haven't worked on much before. As my character The Duchess is an older, upper-class woman, I wanted to play around with showing her age and status in her physicality, whether that be through the way I hold my arms, or the way I hold my posture as the more specific the physicality is to *that* character, the more the performance feels real (Woltmann, 2024). This was helpful for me, and allowed me to get into character quickly during scenes, however when it came to choreographed movements during song numbers, I feel as though my physical work began to drop as there was a lot more to think about. To overcome this, I picked out numbers where I needed to turn on my Duchess

physicality, and numbers where I could let loose more and focus on the movements, depending on what the focus was within the number.

Before working through my Duchess scene in rehearsal with our director, I wanted to try and get it up on its feet, so that I felt more prepared. When doing so, I found myself feeling quite self-conscious, as I felt as though the way I was playing the scene and my character seemed unfunny and overly chaotic. I felt unsure about where to move, which in turn, caused me to become awkward and tense. To help with this, I sat down and added actioning to the text, as suggested by our director, as well as objectives, as they have helped me in the past. Mike Alfreds states in his novel, 'Different Every Night' that actors who commit to embodying objectives and playing actions lose all self-consciousness (Alfreds, 2007). Actioning and finding objectives gave my character a purpose, which overall allowed me to drive the scene forward and connect further with my scene partner. This made me feel at ease, as I felt confident that the choices that I was making made sense and had an intention. I knew that when it came to developing my scene further in the future, that I would be able to change these actions and objectives if needed, as they function as tendencies that are open to spontaneous variation or change depending on the way a scene develops during a performance (Alfreds, 2007). When it then came to working through my scene with our director, I felt a lot more at ease with my scene than I would have if I hadn't added actions and objectives, which overall allowed me to take on his suggestions and critiques without prior stress.

Once we had completed most of our scenes, songs and choreographed numbers, we began running the whole show. I felt quite nervous during our run throughs as I wanted to do a good job. When doing the run throughs, I would stress myself out a lot still when it came to my scene, in fear that I would forget my lines, or planned moments. This would then cause me to actually forget some of my lines and movements, which would knock my confidence. To overcome this, I would move around when reciting my lines before starting the run, to put me more at ease and allow me to focus on my body and just let the words come naturally. Moving around the room while making your blocking crosses also keeps you active and more awake, which boosts your ability to remember the lines (Langford, 2019).

When reflecting on the final performances, I believe I achieved some successful moments, as well as some that I could've improved on. For example, I think that my Duchess scene went successfully for the most part, as I remained in character throughout, and made a conscious effort to connect to my scene partner, which allowed for a fun scene. However, I do wish that I made some bolder choices as both of my characters, as I believe that at times, I would fall into a comfortable rhythm and not push myself out of my comfort zone in fear that my choices wouldn't pay off. To overcome this, it would have been a good idea for me to use the techniques of Meisner,

allowing me to act truthfully and spontaneously. Meisner's aim was to enable actors to shed insulating layers of habit and what, for example, might be termed unnecessarily oppressive perceived narrative demands, and instead work principally from whatever was being offered moment-to-moment by partner actors in a scene (Mosely, 2015).

Overall, this experience has helped build my confidence and allowed me to step out of my comfort zone within my acting, movement, and vocals. I am now able to action my text and successfully find objectives within my scenes, further allowing me to connect with my character. I am very grateful to have been able to work on this production in an environment similar to one in the industry, and I feel as though it has prepared me for my future.

Reference List

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