

Production 1- Reflection Essay

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In this essay, I will reflect on my process during our project for ‘The World Goes Round.’ This is a musical revue showcasing iconic Liza Minnelli songs written by Kander and Ebb. The director’s aim was to transform the revue into a daring, theatrical reflection of a safe performance space during the Second World War. “Even the most obscure Kander/Ebb creations contain something worth salvaging; and The World Goes Round was where they put them”. (Hickling 2016).

At the beginning of the process, we were required to prepare a two-minute cut of a song relevant to the musical. I prepared ‘Wherever He Ain’t’ from ‘Mack & Mabel’ because this reflects the revue’s vaudevillian influence and style. “They settled on the idea of presenting each theme as a Vaudeville act, with Vaudeville-style songs” (Viertel 2020). I had previously worked on this song, so I was confident in bringing it to the audition. “Preparation, preparation and preparation. Remember? You have to work through and know all your songs thoroughly before you use them in an audition scenario” (Rutherford 2012). This book explains how to prepare the preparation required for an audition. I introduced myself to the panel and communicated with the pianist effectively about the song’s tempo. When performing the song, I referred to the technique from my rehearsals and my approach to the story. “When on stage you must listen to the audience. You need to be aware of every laugh, gasp and intake of breath that comes from the auditorium. When you do this, the audience will tell you if need to accelerate the pace of your delivery or slow it down, when you should pause or move on, whether you might be louder or gentler.” (Havard 2013) The panel’s response was positive; they seemed to be engaged, and this encouraged me to deliver the story with greater emphasis. I was then asked which song I would like to be given when performing the production, I chose ‘Coloured Lights.’ I was also asked what would challenge me most within the performance; I stated that Pitter Patter songs were my greatest challenge. Upon reflection, I feel that I should have considered my responses more thoroughly, as I now feel that they are not a true representation of how I felt; however, due to pressure, I gave the answers I believed they wanted to hear. For the next audition I attend, I will ensure to commit wholeheartedly to my performance and to respond with vulnerability.

When we started the development of the musical, we were asked to experiment with gestures and ensemble work. I found it challenging to understand what the director was asking us to do. I did find it useful to explore the intention behind a gesture and how it could change how you perceive it. We had a workshop session where we were asked to develop our characters using the given/chosen songs allowing this to inspire our character development. Forming a character from my song, 'Coloured Lights,' raised difficulty as the lyrics of the song lack depth with the story being relatively simple. The song initially felt brief in information, simply telling me the location. I attended my first creative team meeting with an open mind due to my limited understanding of the character, as she used her memories as an escape from the real world. After consideration, I should have explored my character more prior to this meeting by becoming more familiar with my song, the lyrics, the meaning, the visuals, and being more curious about my character's intentions and storyline. Further along in the process, my character began to develop, with assistance from my director's suggestion that I make her French/American. This allowed me to explore and attach a culture to my character. I utilised my characters' American stereotypical geographical ignorance to help me develop the storyline and her personality, referring to parts of her ancestry. "The actor who plays Salieri should create not only the fragment of the character's life the writer has provided, which we see on stage, but also its entire past, that is merely hinted at by a word here and there." Going forward, I will reflect on what influenced my previous character development to create a more coherent and structured process for myself. In future, during the developmental stage of my character, I will consider making bolder choices.

The creative team presented their desire for us to have a smooth rehearsal process by learning our material at the 'perfect time.' They believed that learning the material too early would mean our performances would run tired, and learning the material too late would leave too little time to build confidence in the performance. I recognised that I would learn at a different pace due to the fact that I have ADHD, and so I began learning my material earlier on in the process to engrave it properly. The musical director informed me that it was unnecessary, causing me to believe I could slow down. However, the song was still difficult for me to retain. This presented challenges, notably when I forgot most of my lyrics during a rehearsal. I felt a responsibility to not let the cast and creative team down, and so I communicated with the director about my incident and how I could develop myself going further, expressing confidence that it would not happen again. Making this error highlighted the importance of retaining material alongside character development to express the character to its greatest potential. I learned to overcome the pressure that I was experiencing by using it as a fuel throughout my following performances. I was advised to use a method called 'seeing in pictures', a method which helps one visualise their

intentions. This technique supported my personal connection to the character, allowing me to embody her character fully. “Stanislavski believed that building strong images through imagination allows inner life to be expressed truthfully through performance” (Merlin, 2014). In my next project, I will ensure that I retain material more effectively by using learning methods that assist my ADHD. “Students with ADHD do better when presented with more short term goals than long term goals... For these students it would be wise to learn pieces in smaller units.” (Swanson 2007). I found that seeing in pictures, using Stanislavsky’s method, helped me memorise more easily, as I find it easier to retain images rather than words. I will commit more independent rehearsal time outside of the rehearsal space to put this method into action.

The director’s vision for this musical was for it to be set inside a bar in the 1940’s. He wanted us to be sitting in the audience, interacting and with them as our characters. I am quite comfortable with improvisation and have enjoyed audience interaction in my previous performance experience. I displayed my ability to think and react quickly and showed my work from past projects on Meisner’s Techniques. However, there were times when audience members did not want to participate and attempted to get me to break out of character. I also had to use an American accent due to my character’s background, which was a challenge for me to sustain throughout all performances. I could have stayed in character and relied more on Meisner’s techniques for improvisation, such as repetition.

To conclude, I have learnt a vast amount from this project. From retaining material and the timeline to working in a professional environment

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