

Production 1 (ADPB6001)

Holly Roberts (2318676)

Reflective essay

This journal reflects my experiences and thoughts throughout the rehearsal and performance process of The Rocky Horror Show, where I played the role of Janet Weiss. Portraying Janet was both exciting and challenging, as her character undergoes a significant transformation. From a reserved, innocent woman to someone who embraces the strange and unexpected. In this journal, I will discuss the methods I used to prepare for the role, the obstacles I encountered, and how the overall production experience shaped my growth as an actor. I will also connect my journey to relevant acting theories and research, examining how these influenced my performance and helped me approach the character. This process was not only about refining my acting technique but also about personal development as I worked through the emotional and physical aspects of the role and the show.

At the start of the rehearsal process, I felt apprehensive about taking on the role of Janet Weiss. Janet begins as a reserved and innocent woman, but over the course of the show, she grows in confidence and embraces new aspects of herself. As an actor, this transformation was both an exciting challenge and a source of personal anxiety, especially since I've struggled with my own confidence. The idea of portraying a character whose growth is based on self-assurance felt daunting. (Adler, S., 1990. *The Art of Acting*. 1st ed. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications. [online] Available at: <https://www.pajpub.com/>)

Throughout rehearsals, I often questioned whether I could convincingly portray Janet's transformation. There were moments when it was difficult to tap into the level of confidence Janet needed, particularly in the more empowered scenes in the second half of the show. My own insecurities made it hard to fully embrace her boldness. However, I realized that Janet's journey wasn't just about becoming confident; it was about uncovering parts of herself that had been hidden, much like I had to trust and uncover my own abilities as an actor.

As the process went on, I learned to take more risks and challenge myself. Working through scenes where Janet's confidence grew helped me overcome my self-doubt and allowed me to make bolder choices. A key moment of growth for me was during scenes like "Touch Me" and the bed scenes, where our director, Richard Tunley, encouraged us to have fun and fully embrace the playful, liberated energy of the songs. His guidance made it easier to let go of my reservations and explore Janet's transformation with more freedom.

The biggest breakthrough for me came in the final scenes of the show, when Janet fully embraces her newfound power. I realized that portraying her confidence wasn't about pretending, but about finding my own voice in those moments and allowing myself to experience a sense of freedom, even for just a few minutes on stage. By embracing my own vulnerability and allowing room for uncertainty as an actor, I was able to make Janet's growth feel more authentic.

Ultimately, this process taught me that confidence isn't something that can be faked—it grows with practice, vulnerability, and self-trust. Through this role, I not only developed a deeper understanding of Janet's character but also grew as an actor, learning to appreciate my own abilities and the importance of having fun with the work. To help me with my journey and characterization of Janet, I found this source which helped me: (Neel, J., 2015. *The Actor's Toolkit: How to Build a Character*. Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. Available at: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/actors-toolkit-9781408104921/>)

Another challenge I faced was working with a new group of people. This production involved collaborating with the BA Commercial Dancers, and at first, I felt nervous about working with people I hadn't interacted with before. I was unsure how well we would connect and whether our different backgrounds and training styles would create any tension. However, as rehearsals progressed, I began to realize how valuable this collaboration was. The dancers brought a level of energy and professionalism to the production that pushed me to improve my own performance. While it was intimidating initially, I learned to embrace the different strengths of the group and trust in the process of building chemistry onstage.

When I first got the role of Janet Weiss, I was anxious about the singing elements. Although I had experience in large scale productions before, the pressure felt different with *The Rocky Horror Show*. Janet is such a well-known character, and I worried I wouldn't be able to pull her off in a way that stayed true to the iconic portrayal while also making her my own. The challenge of finding a balance between honoring the character's traditional traits and adding my personal style to the role felt daunting. (Meyer, A. and Curtis, M., 2011. *The Complete Actor's Guide to Performance*. 2nd ed. New York: Actor's Publishing House, p. 45. <https://www.abebooks.co.uk/book-search/isbn/9781581157635/>)

The vocal demands of Janet's songs also added to my nerves. I wasn't sure if I could handle the technical challenges while still maintaining the character's emotional journey. Fortunately, our musical director, Chloe Clayton, was incredibly supportive throughout the process. She guided us through each song with care and patience, helping me to feel more confident in my singing ability. One specific example was during the "Make You a Man

(Reprise)," where Janet sings "I'm a muscle fan." I initially struggled with delivering the line with the right mix of humour and confidence, and Chloe worked closely with me to refine my vocal technique and emotional delivery. Her guidance allowed me to find a more natural connection to the character through the music, and it helped me feel more comfortable with each performance.

Chloe's support ultimately gave me the confidence to not only tackle the vocal challenges but also to make Janet my own. She helped me realize that I didn't have to imitate past portrayals of the character; instead, I could embrace her evolution and focus on making her personal journey resonate with my own unique interpretation.

One of the challenges I faced during the rehearsal process was picking up choreography, particularly in more intricate numbers. As Janet, I wasn't necessarily the most experienced dancer compared to other members of the cast, so I initially felt nervous about keeping up with more complex routines. A key moment where I faced this challenge was during the choreography for "The Sword of Damocles," which was choreographed by Richard Tunley. The routine required precise movements and timing, and it felt like a lot to take in at once. Richard's choreography was energetic, fun, and precise, but it was also fast-paced, and I found it difficult to keep up in the beginning. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to match the energy of the group or perform the moves fluidly in the context of the song. However, Richard's approach was incredibly supportive. He broke down the choreography into manageable sections, making sure we understood each move before moving on to the next. He was patient and encouraged us to embrace the fun and freedom of the movements, reminding us that the energy of the show was just as important as getting every step perfect. As rehearsals progressed, I started to gain more confidence with the steps. I worked hard to make the movements my own and bring the playful, lively spirit of the choreography into Janet's character. By the time we performed the number, I had overcome my initial hesitation and felt much more comfortable in the choreography. Richard's guidance and emphasis on enjoying the process helped me to let go of my fears and focus on having fun with the dance, which made a big difference in my overall performance.

Another key challenge in the production was working on the choreography for the "Floor Show," which was choreographed by Tori Johns. This number presented a significant hurdle for me, especially with the lifts and partner work involved. As Janet, I had to perform with a partner, and this included lifts and movements that required a great deal of trust and coordination. Initially, I felt nervous about the lifts, as I had never done partner work to this extent before. The thought of being lifted or needing to support my partner was intimidating, especially considering the physicality required to make these movements

smooth and safe. (Kassing, G. and Jay, D., 2003. *Dance Anatomy*. 1st ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.) This source provides explanations of body mechanics, the physicality of dance, and the importance of trust and technique in partner work, which would be relevant to the lifts and coordination you encountered in the "Floor Show." Tori was incredibly supportive and patient throughout this process. She made sure that I was paired with a partner I felt comfortable with, which helped ease my anxiety. By giving us time to rehearse the lifts slowly and ensuring I understood how to properly position myself for safety, I gained more confidence. Tori also emphasized the importance of trust, which helped me let go of my fears and focus on the performance rather than the potential risks of physical movements. The "Floor Show" was also a pivotal moment in Janet's journey, as it marks a point in her character development where she fully embraces her newfound confidence and sexual liberation. Richard Tunley consistently reminded us to stay true to Janet's state of mind in that given moment. For Janet, this was a time of transformation—she was no longer the shy, reserved woman she once was. Richard encouraged us to bring that mindset into the choreography, reminding us that every move in the "Floor Show" should reflect Janet's growing sense of empowerment and freedom. As the rehearsals went on, I began to understand how Janet's emotional journey tied into the physicality of the dance. The "Floor Show" was not just about performing the steps but it was about portraying Janet's release and newfound strength. Richard's direction helped me focus on channeling Janet's shift from vulnerability to confidence, allowing me to portray a more liberated version of the character through my movements and expressions. By the time we performed the number, I had overcome my initial fears surrounding partner work, lifts, and stamina. I felt more at ease with both the choreography and the emotional journey that Janet undergoes in the "Floor Show." The physical and emotional integration of the dance became an essential part of bringing Janet's growth to life on stage.

In addition to the lifts, stamina was a critical aspect of both the "Time Warp" and the "Floor Show." Both numbers demanded high energy, and the physical demands of maintaining that energy throughout such long routines were challenging. To ensure we were physically prepared, Chloe Clayton worked with us on exercises to improve both stamina and coordination. Exercises like jogging in place while singing allowed us to practice singing and dancing simultaneously, helping us build the endurance needed to perform these numbers with the intensity required. Through Chloe's guidance, I gradually became more comfortable with integrating both singing and dancing without feeling out of breath or losing focus. Her structured approach to combining vocal and physical training prepared me for the high-energy sequences, allowing me to perform with more confidence and

stamina. Here's an article I also found to help me work on my stamina when performing: Caplan, L., 2021. Singing and Dancing: How to Do Both Well. Dance Magazine. [online] Available at: <https://dancemagazine.com/liz-caplan-singing-dancing/#gsc.tab=0> [Accessed 20 March 2025].

Doing research on the show and its cultural context helped me understand the meaning behind Janet's words. By knowing the background, I could show how she is changing, both in her relationship with Brad and in her own personal journey. If I hadn't taken the time to understand the line, it would have been harder to make it clear to the audience why it was so important for Janet at that moment. One example is the line where Janet says, "This isn't the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Brad!" At first, it seems like just a quick comment, but it's an important moment where Janet shows her frustration with Brad and starts to stand up for herself. To deliver this line properly, I had to understand what it meant for Janet to be speaking out like this. Janet is changing, and this line is a sign of her growing confidence. Here is an article that helped me whilst researching: Kerr, R., 2007. The Rocky Horror Show: A Cultural History. Routledge. Available at: <https://www.routledge.com/The-Rocky-Horror-Show-A-Cultural-History/Kerr/p/book/9780415325979>

In conclusion, playing Janet Weiss in The Rocky Horror Show was a transformative experience that pushed me to grow both as an actor and as an individual. Overcoming my initial fears and insecurities, I embraced Janet's journey from a reserved woman to one who gains confidence and embraces her personal transformation. With the support of my directors, vocal coach, and fellow cast members, I gained confidence in my singing, dancing, and acting, while learning to trust my own abilities. Through challenges such as mastering complex choreography, navigating partner work, and finding my unique interpretation of Janet, I learned that confidence is built through practice, vulnerability, and self-trust. This process not only deepened my understanding of acting techniques but also allowed me to connect more authentically with Janet's character and my own journey, making this experience one of significant personal and professional growth.