

Alexandra Sippola

Sarah Reynolds

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Performance Assessment

This module involved a project in which the class together as a group to organize an event to present our literary work. The group work and planning of this module was much different than any other module I had taken. From this, I learned what is involved in planning an event like this. Additionally, I further learned how to work with others. Not only in planning the event, but in how to better help people improve their literary work. As well, how to receive constructive criticism from others. I feel that I learned a lot about presenting and how to make literary work performance worthy. As well, this helped me reconsider my future in performing arts.

After some discussion in class, we considered where our performance should take place. I found myself taking charge of this aspect the most. Having missed the first two lectures, I was surprised that no one had begun considering or contacting venues. As I live with a member of the SU bar staff, I got the managers email from them. I recalled the SU hosting Karaoke and live bands previously. Because of this, I figured they would be open to a student-hosted event as well. I enquired about hosting our event at the SU and received approval from the manager soon after. They requested a risk analysis which Richard agreed to do. After this, we discussed a name for the event. Our theme was power, so planning a name for the event was an interesting prospect in and of itself. Since we were having it at a bar, I suggested the name “Drunk with Power”. After deliberating on the name of the performance, we settled on simply calling it

“Power”. We had discussed setting up an honesty box for donations to charity. Unfortunately, we did not go forward with setting up donations to charity. Although someone had emailed a charity, there was no follow-up regarding this. After all of this was done, the technical logistics were out of the way. Then, we had to focus on creating our pieces and improving them during the weeks to come. This included many revisions and offering constructive criticism for my classmates.

I had some mental block when considering what to write for my performance. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to do a sort of monologue or free verse poem. I felt that this would be the best type of piece to perform out loud for others. I had started with the idea of discoursing about how lesbian couples are asked “who is the man in the relationship?”. Although I thought this was a clever concept, I could not think of an interesting angle to take on the topic. Everything I considered seemed too blatant in its connection to power. Afterwards, I considered discussion sexual assault in some capacity. However, I did not feel like I could not tactfully perform anything like this in front of other. Aside from upsetting myself, I felt I risked upsetting others who had not expected this topics discussion. Because of this, I did not produce any sufficient ideas from this idea either.

After this mental block, I decided to consider previous feelings I have had in my life. I thought back to a time where I felt powerless. To me, not having any power is one of the worst concepts within the theme of power. One of the most poignant times I felt powerless happened years before. I had a five-year long friendship end just before covid started. The way it ended felt very senseless, and I did not feel like I had much choice or closure in the situation. I decided to channel that energy into my written work. While working on this piece, my girlfriend and I broke up. Once again, I was left with a lot of similar feelings to before. It left me feeling

detached from those I care about. Additionally, I felt hopeless. I felt that my life was out of my control. By considering this, I worked further on the piece. Being able to consider these feelings and express them in an artistic way helped me understand how I was dealing with them in a better light. Furthermore, I hoped presenting it would be helpful for others who might feel the same way sometimes. I decided to name the piece “discarded”. I named it this to summarize the overall feelings I experienced during these two upsetting events in my life.

After first drafting, I decided to practice my piece in front of my flat mates. They helped me shape the piece before workshopping. In my first draft, I had referred to myself as “you” instead of “I” when writing. I planned on doing “you” to symbolize how detached I felt from myself. However, my flat mates felt that it came across as me suggesting the audience was the discarded individual. Because of this, I decided to change each “you” into an “I”. Additionally, they suggested changing the sentence structure to flow better. Previously, I had many shorter sentences. They said this did not look as visually appealing. As well, it stunted the flow of the poem when I presented. I took this into consideration and edited accordingly.

After presenting my piece in class for workshopping, I got some additional constructive feedback as well as compliments. Jane told me that my poem was very impactful to her. The best critiques I got focused on the ordering and delivery of the poem itself. Lyra recommended switching the ordering of the last and second to last paragraph. She also recommended changing the line “They show me I am who they choose, until the same story plays out” into “they show me I am who they choose, until they don’t”. Along with this, other students recommended working on my delivery and tone. I took these critiques into consideration and tried to alter my piece accordingly. I also had some suggesting I add more or cut out certain parts. Someone suggested embellishing the music box metaphor. Although helpful, I decided against it for the

final piece. While my piece was short, I felt it was best left the length that it was. Regardless, all the comments I received were helpful in considering what I could do with my piece.

The day before the performance, we reorganized everyone's pieces in the schedules. Mine was scheduled in the middle of the event. Organizing the pieces was surprisingly time consuming. This involved pairing pieces based on similar themes. Additionally, we had to consider the lengths of each piece. This was done so that our audience did not feel overwhelmed by too many long or short pieces at once. It was a factor in planning I had not previously considered being very important. We decided on three sets of five pieces with fifteen-minute breaks in-between. This made the performance span over two hours.

During dress rehearsal, we ran through each piece and made additional comments on each piece. We also altered the schedule in which each of us would be performing once again. We arranged the SU tables to have a sufficient stage for ourselves. Having been to previous performances at the SU, I started setting up in the same spot. This spot was the highest area of the bar. That way, everyone would be able to see us regardless of their seating. We set up a podium for people to set their papers on. Lastly, we got a microphone from the SU and did mic checks. After my rehearsal, I was given additional advice on my poems flow. Taking this into consideration, I made a point of putting notes on my piece. This was to remind myself to take pauses and enunciate words specifically. I did this after the dress rehearsal in the time before the actual performance. Once back at my flat, I practiced performing my piece in front of my flat mates again. This was not for editing advice and instead for flow and time advice.

Once the event had started, many people came in attendance. I was surprised by the turnout. Choosing the SU had evidently been the best choice for housing all the attendees. Having seen how many people attended, I regretted not pressing the idea of the honesty box

further. The number of people would have potentially brought in a lot of donations for charity. This was a short site regarding our event planning to me. When I was finally on stage, I was very nervous. I do not typically have a problem with public speaking. However, I am usually presenting research essays. The idea of presenting something I had creatively produced made me uneasy. I felt vulnerable having people listen to me speak about personal feelings I had experienced. Of course, I still managed to perform it as I had planned to. By the end, I felt proud of my work and the process it had taken to get there. However, I did feel that I delivered my piece too fast. When compared to the others, I considered that I might have made my piece too far short. During my performance, I found myself smiling at certain parts that were especially serious. I did this both due to nervousness and because of my reflection on these sections. It was a sort of bittersweet response to those feelings. Evidently, they were included for the best. Afterwards I received a positive response to them as being an “elegant counterpoint” to the poems overall message. Others mentioned that they really enjoyed my poem and its delivery. After talking to my peers and members of the audience, I was told that the length was sufficient in conveying the message.

By the end, I was proud of my peers and my ability create the event and put on such a performance. Many people from the audience said it was one of the better events held at the SU during this year. As well, it was something I had not thought I would have ever done previously. Having done so now, I can say I would be eager for the opportunity to do so again. While I do not plan on being an author or performer professionally, this project has helped me seriously consider pursuing performance as a career alongside my main job.

Overall, this experience helped me consider everything that goes into showcasing performances. I had to work with my class to produce a performance. As well, we had to

manage our time to get the performance ready in time. We also had to help each other make our pieces the best they could be. This project made me consider what makes a piece performance worthy. Finally, I improved my rhythm and delivery when performing free verse poetry for others. Because of this, I believe that this part of the module was unique and exceedingly helpful at shaping my understanding of creative writing. Going forward, I hope to implement this knowledge into my continued academic career and eventual job.

This is the finished piece which I performed. I have left in the notes I took within the piece for delivery:

Discarded

I am **Pause** second best

At best

To those who almost loved me

To those I chose who did not choose me back

Pause

I am **Pause** leftovers from a restaurant, bagged up and put inside the fridge

Cast aside once they were filled, kept aside in case they could not find better.

Pause

I am **Pause** a shirt that has outstayed its welcome in their closet

They used to choose me, maybe I was even their favorite one to take out

But then the seams came undone, worn down, not as flattering as before.

And I was always so loud, such a niche piece to begin with

Slowly worn less and less

All but forgotten, folded away in the back so they could pick me up if they ever felt like it
Eventually tossed out all together to make room for better things.

But I am not a thing

Me

I **Pause** am not a thing

How could I even know this?

If it were not for the warmth in my skin, my beating pulse

Subjectively being told I matter as all life does

How would I ever know I am a person?

I am observed, vivisected, discarded

Once they find out why I try to make people laugh

Why I care so much about everything

Why I never stop talking

Then there is nothing left for them to know or to want.

Pause

There is always someone who is better

Others deserve the space that I take up

Whatever I want is too much

The right person will give them everything

And I am no one's right person, I am everyone's now person.

Pause

I am **Pause** a music box

Wound up and then opened up

A small tune rings out

I dance in circles, hoping it is enough

Then I am closed when they have had enough.

Pause

I have not always thought these things

That I am not as good as other people, that I am inadequate

But I am interrogated every day, they want me to see that I am nothing

To believe that I am not enough and resign myself to such a fate

Only to pull me out of that place once I start to agree

They show me I am who they choose

Pause

Until they do not.