

Learning in the Digital Era

Lauren Griffiths (2203840)

Module name: Learning in the Digital Era

Module code: ADPA4001

Due date: 30/01/2023

Pages 1-2, Task one Reflection

Pages 3-4, Task two Review

Page 5, Bibliography

Task 1, Reflection

I am going to reflect on Acting Performance Class's. During this class, we talked about and researched how to prepare a monologue, what to expect at an audition, I also performed a monologue for the class.

As a class, we had an open discussion about choosing the right monologue that fits most audition requirements. We decided on four of the most common requirements, you need to follow your casting age range. You need to choose a racially appropriate monologue, you need a monologue that can be in your natural accent, and you need a monologue at least two minutes long. Most auditions call for two minutes of script unless specified otherwise, so it is good to find pieces to work on that meet that requirement. I enjoyed talking about finding monologues with emotional journeys; a distinct beginning, middle that builds in emotion and an end that resolves.

I found the lesson helpful; I would not have ever thought of researching plays and playwrights to find monologues. I also found it useful to talk about monologue books and websites and how they are not always the best way to research. Finding a monologue that suits you is important and creating layers of the character is a way to help relate to them. Once you find out the context and the "given circumstances" of the character you can make up more backstory. Richard recommended that I use the Five w's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) to aid me when building a character profile. From my research I found that Stanislavski's 7 questions are similar to five W's, but I prefer to use Richard's recommendation.

In the class, I was taught how to structure a monologue using Stanislavski's "uniting technique." Elsewhere in my research, I found that the "uniting technique" is part of Stanislavski's seven pillars, Action, Imagination, Attention, Relaxation, Units and objectives, Emotion memory and Truthfulness. We focused on sectioning the monologue; each section could a change of thought or emotion. Reviewing the individual sections and labelling them with separate objectives uniting is meant to help with understanding a character and practicing. Uniting also aids in finding the super objective of the character; their main goal.

With the aforementioned information, we comprised a list on how to prepare a monologue which is to find and research, read monologue, unit monologue, look at the emotional journey, use the five W's and hot seat yourself as the character. To put the list into practice we used a monologue called "The best years of your life" by Clive Jermain. We were then tasked with applying the list to current monologues we were working on in our own time. I would have liked a follow up lesson where we brought in prepared monologues and given feedback on whether we done it effectively.

We then changed focus to preparing for auditions and what to expect in the audition room. I contributed by recommending you greet panel when entering audition room, walk to center of room, and use confident body language. We also said to try to harness nerves to aid in our performance; and take a breath before you begin to think about your character, trying not to rush. Once you finish the monologue, do not snap out of character or mind space; let the panel have time to reflect on the performance.

Richard advised us to make use of the research you have from your character profile and pick out things you would like to tell the panel if they ask. Similar to your character, think of things about yourself to tell the panel. He also said to consider what you bring to the table, as

an individual, “what have you got that nobody else does.” like that the advice about preparing for an audition, also applies to any type of audition whether it be singing, acting or dance. The advice also be applied to stage or screen.

As a performer, you must be prepared to take both criticism and direction from the panel. Your audition does not always end right after you perform; the panel might direct you to perform the monologue in unusual ways. For example, they might ask you to try on your shoes while reciting your audition material. You also must be prepared to potentially learn a piece of script in as little as twenty minutes; or even sight read on the spot.

Using this session’s guidance, I applied it to a monologue taken from ‘The Events’ by David Craig about forgiveness and revenge when faced with the unimaginable. The monologue explores grief and revenge; it builds in suspense and anger then resolves the plot with a death. Feedback I received from my performance was that it was clear that I had done my research on the monologue as well as the character. I was asked to sit and take my time when reciting the monologue and pretend I am getting ready to execute my plan for revenge. Next performance, I will prepare a more suitable monologue as the one I performed is slightly too old for me (even though the age of the character is not vital to the story). I wish to be more effective when finding appropriate age casting monologues.

Reflecting on the class, I feel as though it was useful and informative to me as a performer. I not only learn from feedback on performances, but from classmates with their ideas and feedback that they get when they perform. We all strive to help each other be better performers and I enjoy contributing to peers with ideas on how they can strengthen their abilities, as well as praising them with effective choices they make with their monologues. In future classes, I will practice finding and preparing monologues. I will also continue to observe other’s feedback and take note of if I can apply it my own performances. By the end of level four, I will build a portfolio of monologues from which I have used in class. They will consist of a monologue of my choice, a family-friendly monologue, a contemporary monologue, and a musical monologue.

Task 2, Review

On Saturday 3rd of December 2022, I went to see the touring production of 'Blood Brothers' written by Willy Russell. I visited the Wales Millenium Centre to see the final performance of the touring production, directed by Bob Tomson and Bill Kenwright.

Willy Russell was tasked to create a play lasting seventy minutes to perform at schools, and so, he "borrowed" the plot of 'Blood Brothers' and created the play which would later become a book and musical. The play ran from 1981-1982 in the greater Merseyside area. 'Blood Brothers' the musical came to be in the Liverpool Playhouse in 1993 directed by Chris Bond. The musical's success led it to Broadway where it ran over two years and was nominated for six tony awards. The plot of the show consists of a struggling mother, with too many children, discovering she is pregnant with twins; a plan is formed between her and her wealthy employer who is struggling with fertility where each takes one of the twins and they must never find out they are brothers. The narrative delves into the themes of betrayal, poverty, superstition, lies, depression, and classism.

Arriving at the Millenium Centre, I was not surprised to see the breathtaking structure with the infamous word lit up by the lights inside where excited audience members getting refreshments and taking their seats. I was disappointed to find out the main foyer of the building was under refurbishment; two staff members were outside the main doors directing people to alternative entrances. Overall, it seemed disorganized as patrons were unaware of the refurbishment beforehand, with no signs notifying wandering audience members where to go or who to talk to.

'Blood Brothers' opened with two stretchers laid side by side and the Narrator actor Richard Munday; introducing the audience to the story of the 'Johnstone twins.' The foreshadowing before knowing the initial story makes the musical stand out from the rest; personally, knowing the ending first intrigued me into finding out why the ending took place.

Portions of the set enter from above (the fly) during scene changes; the transitions that stood out were between the council estate and the inside of the Lyons house. There are obvious differences between Johnstone's and the Lyons address; the main differences being a wall covered in graffiti, bins outside houses and a large formal room. The contrast between pristine and unclean are stereotypes that help present the difference between the lives Mickey and Eddie live. The transitions were smooth when actors brought props and set onto stage. You could tell the professional level of efficiency by how a table was brought on stage with a rug pre rolled on top for easy removal and positioning.

It was refreshing to see a musical that includes little dancing; the song 'Marylin Monroe' contains snippets of couples dancing in an imaginary dance hall. In many modern musicals, dance numbers are used purely for spectacle and can be redundant to the plot. Also, within the number, the Brechtian technique of freeze frames were used; this reminded me of the fact 'Blood Brothers' originated as a play. The technique highlights aspects of Mrs. Johnstone's backstory that evoke sympathy toward the character and the devastating decisions she made. An actor that stood out to me was Josh Capper who played Micky; new to the iconic role, he embodied the mindset of a child with every tantrum being comedic and realistic of that of an eight-year-old.

His performance was both convincing and impressive; I hope he reprises or is cast in similar roles in the future.

The music and songs in the production were just as evocative as the scenes. An example of this is the number 'Shoes Upon the Table' where the narrator sings this song after dialogue between Mrs. Johnstone and Mrs. Lyons. This song projects the theme of superstition in the recurring lyrics 'devils got your number,' aimed at the women, after it becomes known that if the twins ever find out that they are brothers they will die. Another song the narrator sings is 'Summer sequence' where Eddie, Mickey and Linda are growing up over three summers; the songs locations play out on stage. The narrator is severed from the diegesis until he takes a photo for the children while he sings 'summer sequence.' During this sequence, there was also a subtle hint to the fate of both Micky and Eddie, when they shot toy guns in a carnival game.

The lighting throughout the production was effective in showing characters when they are stressed or if there is tension in a scene. Before the end of the show, Mickey was angry and tense; the lighting helped enlarge the emotions he was feeling with flashing lights and red-washing the stage as he ran around. During the final scene, the lights dimmed creating an eerie atmosphere as Micky and Eddie now lay on stage in stretchers, bringing the show full circle.

'Blood Brothers' main message is that society's neglect of lower classes, in a capitalist world, can have a destructive effect on a person's life and this is hindered by the clear distinction in ticket prices for the show. With the tickets marketed at £13-£56, the production was indeed accessible to a wide audience. However, with dearer tickets closer to the stage and affordable tickets being further away from it, an inadvertent class divide was made in the audience.

Certainly, this goes against the message of the show. A downside of the show was that the actors were not aware of the theatre's upper circles; in fact, they barely looked up at all. This made me feel let down because I was not able to capture the performance to its full potential; I was partially omitted by the actors. I enjoyed the show and feel as though, generally, the message was portrayed clearly and effectively to the audience. I would recommend 'Blood Brothers' to anyone above the age of twelve; not just avid theatre goers.

Bibliography-

Bill Kenwright Limited - Theatre, Film, and TV Producers. (2023). *Blood Brothers – UK Tour 2022 - Bill Kenwright Limited*. [online] Available at: <https://www.kenwright.com/portfolio/blood-brothers-uk-tour-2022/> [Accessed 27 Jan. 2023].

Blood (2014). *willyrussell.com*. [online] willyrussell.com. Available at: <https://willyrussell.com/blood-brothers> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2023].

Gardner, L. (2013). *Best theatre of 2013, No 1: The Events*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/dec/31/best-theatre-of-2013-no-1-the-events> [Accessed 30 Jan. 2023].

Laura (2018). *Learning From The Best: Bertolt Brecht*. [online] The Superprof Blog - UK. Available at: <https://www.superprof.co.uk/blog/learning-about-bertolt-brecht/#:~:text=Freeze%20frames%2Ftableaux,seen%20for%20a%20short%20moment>. [Accessed 30 Jan. 2023].

Stanislavski, K. (1936). *An Actor Prepares*. United States: Bloomsbury Academic.

The Performing Arts Coach. (2019). *THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES- The 5 W's: WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHEN*. [online] Available at: <https://theperformingartscoach.wordpress.com/2019/11/14/the-given-circumstances-the-5-who-what-why-where-when/> [Accessed 27 Jan. 2023].