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Final Production: ADPB6003

Alice By Heart Reflective Journal

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I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

The aim for this reflective journal is to analyse the rehearsal process for WAVDA's production of Alice By Heart. In this show, I played Alfred Hallam, who is also the White Rabbit and the March Hare. The purpose of this journal is to critically examine my experience as a cast member in the production. I will reflect on my audition, the rehearsal process, my collaboration with performers and creative team and my personal development and growth as a performer.

The process began with a self-tape audition. This is a recorded audition that an actor submits to a creative team (Hundt, 2024). I found there were positive and negative aspects to this style of audition; I preferred able to record multiple takes and choose my favourite. However, I realised through doing this, I overanalysed every recording, picking at flaws in each video. For my audition I chose the song 'If I Could Tell Her' from Dear Evan Hansen and a monologue from 'Violence and Son' by Gary Owen. In my opinion, both pieces relate to the character Alfred, which is who I auditioned for, they both showed a contrast in emotion, and granted me opportunities for specific and appropriate acting choices.

Once we began rehearsals, we spent our first week world building. The original production was set in London during the Blitz in World War II however, our director Dan Phillips had a different vision for the production. Our production was set in modern day during a fictional war, and our version of the tube station in the show was an abandoned office building in Cardiff. This worked extremely well as our venue we were performing in was Haywood House, which was previously office building. Our set and costume designers showed us mood boards of their visions for the production. They explained that our costumes were made from materials we would find in the office, which was a creative concept. By the end of the first week, we made a start on learning the music in the show. On reflection, I thoroughly enjoyed the world building aspect of the process, discovering how Alice and Alfred knew each other, when everyone arrived

at the office and establishing the relationships between the characters aided our knowledge and understanding of the musical and the performances we were aiming to portray. It is important to develop where the characters are from and where are they going (Taylor, 2023). While this was a vital part of the process, using majority of our first week of rehearsal to illustrate characters and location instead of staging scenes alarmed me, as I knew there was a lot of content to cover in a fleeting period.

When staging the show, Dan began with the scene leading into the song 'Still'; this scene is between Alfred and Alice, played by Martha Davies. He started by having Martha and I action our lines for the scene. Following Mike Alfreds ideology, I questioned and concluded what action caused this specific dialogue (Alfreds, p.4, 2007). I found this approach tedious yet rewarding as it was rigorous trying to formulate different actions for each line, while also remembering them when acting without the script. However, once actions were embedded, I found every time Martha and I would run our scene; we would not get caught up in repeating the way we delivered lines. This was something Dan was adamant about, he would often say "That was great, don't do it again." (Phillips, Personal Communication, 20/05/26). This was challenging at first because in previous productions at WAVDA, I would often develop a specific rhythm with my scene partners naturally through repetition. I went on to using the actioning method for all my spoken dialogue in the piece, as well as key moments in musical numbers. This was a demanding part of the process, but it was necessary for the outcome that was produced.

Throughout the process, it was imperative that I established a difference between the characters I played. I wanted a clear distinction between Alfred, the White Rabbit and the March Hare. To prepare, I read the book 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' by Lewis Carroll. The White Rabbit starts Alice's adventure and is in a hurry. He states, "Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!" (Carroll, p.7, 1865). My interpretation is that the White Rabbit is nervous and wants to move the story forward. This is an interesting parallel to Alfred as when he is playing the White Rabbit, he also wants to continue the story as he is running out of time, "Time is chasing me still." (Sheik and Sater, 2019). I discovered the White Rabbit and Alfred were similar as they have the same motives, so to create contrast between them, I exaggerated certain mannerisms for the White Rabbit and experimented with an RP accent to separate him from Alfred. The March Hare was much easier to establish a difference in. He is mad and disrespectful towards Alice, muttering "It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited" (Carroll, p.56, 1865). I explored the reason why Alfred chose to switch characters from the White Rabbit to the March Hare at this specific moment in the piece. I concluded that it was because Alfred was losing control, he wanted to finish the story before it was too late, and he chose the March Hare because playing that role would make Alice hate him, therefore grieving him would not be as painful for her. In the song 'Sick to Death of Alice-ness' I observed a double meaning in the lyrics; the wonderland characters are

sick of Alice's optimism, but Alfred beneath it all is actually "sick to death" (Sheik and Sater, 2019).

My major obstacle was the vocal elements of the show. Harmony work, specifically with Martha was challenging. I often struggled to find the starting note of phrases, which would then throw the entire harmony off. To combat this hurdle, I spent several hours every night drilling my harmony lines until I was certain on everything. Our music director Iestyn Griffiths was direct and constructive, encouraging me to refine my vocal technique and performance quality (Griffiths, Personal Communication, 27/05/26).

To conclude, being a part of this production was an incredible experience. My skills as an actor improved through actioning and further research into written text. I improved vocally through consistent training and harmony work. Having the opportunity to play Alfred taught me so much about character preparation. This process enabled me to provide a successful run of performances and significant growth for me professionally and personally.

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