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Assessments
Ba musical theatre

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The world goes round

The creative process of The World Goes Round has played a key role in preparing me for my professional development as I move towards entering the industry. Having the opportunity to work alongside industry professionals in a rehearsal environment has allowed me to develop a stronger understanding of the standards required within the performing arts industry. “By partnering with employers, we can create opportunities for graduates to test-drive their skills in real-world settings, building confidence and industry connections.”(Graduates, 2023)

Throughout this process, we focused heavily on character development, as the show does not follow a fixed storyline or have defined characters; instead, we were responsible for independently exploring and establishing who our characters are.

Originally a 5-cast show, ‘The World Goes Round’ is a song cycle made up of songs written by John Kander and Fred Ebb. Working alongside our director, Matt, and musical director, David, we set the production in a 1940s tavern, using this setting to explore themes of freedom, individuality, and fear for the future.

My Character development continued to evolve throughout the rehearsal process, and as I learnt more about the other characters, I discovered new connections between them and began building new relationships. To start, I drew inspiration from my song Colouring Book. For this process, I used subjective interception. I primarily applied Utah Hagen’s approach, as I find she developed a more structured, grounded, step-by-step method that can be applied directly to an actor’s work, and highlights that the actor’s primary goal is to achieve truth on stage.

I used Uta Hagen’s nine-question technique from Respect for Acting. because it provides broader, more detailed insight, allowing me to develop specific answers for each aspect of the character. This helped me gain a clearer understanding of why my character is singing the song. She states, “My immediate needs and obstacles must be made particular. Nothing should be allowed to remain general.”(Uta Hagen,2009) I identified keywords and details that helped me build stronger connections with others. For example, the line “This is the room I sleep in” led me to imagine that I’m staying at the tavern, and Vi has kindly taken me in in exchange for helping to run the place, giving me more purpose in the space to be behind the bar and have status compared to other characters. This helped me define my character’s goals and the obstacles she faces, making my lines feel more intentional, authentic, and grounded with a clear reason for being at the tavern.

Because our show is a song cycle, storytelling was essential; we have to use both vocal expression and body language to communicate. To support this, we used Michelle Checkoff's line exercise, "It involves physicalizing a character's internal want, need, or impulse into an external gesture. The actor practices this movement until it's incorporated internally"(Backstage, 2022) Using the "push-pull" technique over time helped me to naturally feel my emotions more truthfully; while incorporating "radiating" it allowed me to strengthen my connection to the energy of my peers. "You will discover that the kind of movement you make will give you will power or an inclination that will awaken and animate in you a definite desire, want or wish." (Checkhov p. 63). Working with new directors often means quickly adapting to different teaching styles and expectations. For example, David Llan introduced a fun yet challenging exercise in our ensemble classes that pushed us out of our comfort zones. The game required us to sing our individual harmony parts on the spot, without relying on the rest of the group. This highlighted how important it is for each singer to be confident and secure in their own part, rather than depending on others to stay on track. At first, I found this approach quite intimidating. Being singled out made me feel exposed and vulnerable, especially with the risk of making mistakes in front of others. However, this challenge ultimately helped me grow. It forced me to become more confident and independent in my harmonies, improving both my accuracy and overall musicianship. As a result, I felt more secure within the ensemble, which I believe contributed to a stronger, more polished performance.

One of the main challenges I faced was navigating audience interaction, as we remained on stage throughout the show. During our first Dress rehearsal with an audience, we noticed we needed to engage the audience more, as they were part of the show, and we all voiced concerns about feeling awkward chatting to them in between. "Improv demands a profound understanding of your character, and unshakeable connection with fellow actors, teaching us to listen, not just hear; to respond, not react; and to embrace the unpredictable nature of emotions and interactions." (Smith, 2024)To help us gain more confidence in this, we did an improv lesson to deepen our insight into others' stories and relax into spontaneous responding.

This helped me practice answering unexpected questions, allowing me to respond quickly and naturally rather than getting stuck overthinking what to say. It helped me build confidence in thinking on the spot, which is essential in immersive performance where interactions can be unpredictable and constantly changing. During the shows, I still found it difficult to interact with the audience. Some audience members were reluctant to engage in conversation. This often led to awkward silences, making it more difficult to maintain the flow of the scene and keep the energy alive. Through improv, I learned strategies to manage these moments more effectively. By drawing on my understanding of my own character, as well as the relationships and dynamics among the other characters, I was able to take the initiative and keep the interaction going. For example, if a conversation began to stall, I usually used my knowledge of other characters to call them over for more support. Calling another performer into the interaction allowed me to bounce off their energy, creating a more dynamic exchange and relieving pressure on the audience member. This helped avoid

uncomfortable pauses but also made the experience feel more engaging and natural for everyone involved.

Overall, I feel very privileged to have worked with such a professional and supportive team, helping me develop a range of new skills. I learned to take on critical feedback and apply it quickly during rehearsals, improving my ability to adapt my performance in the moment. I also gained a stronger understanding of organisation and time management, particularly through following call sheets, knowing when I was needed, and communicating effectively with the stage manager. I believe this opportunity has improved my discipline, communication, and adaptability, while giving me a clearer understanding of professional expectations and preparing me for future work in the industry.

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