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Final production reflective journal

Introduction:

Throughout this essay I will be reflecting and analysing the rehearsal process and performances of the production 'Alice by heart' directed by Dan Phillips, I will be evaluating my contribution, the challenges I encountered and the skills I have developed throughout the process. The purpose of this essay will be to analyse where I am as a performer entering the industry and reflect on what areas still need improvement after experiencing working in a professional environment. My role in this production was Angus/Caterpillar and I also had the responsibility of being the dance captain which meant I was in charge of the physical warm ups before rehearsals and shows as well as cleaning the routines and making sure the notes from the choreographer, Eddie Ladd, were being added. The whole process was across five weeks with the four performances on the last two days. My main responsibilities as a performer were to learn the material which included a trio song and a scene as well as ensemble work throughout the show.

Preparation and rehearsals:

This production required a lot of character development for two separate characters as we were switching between the 'real world' and 'Wonderland' throughout the entire production, we focussed on how the wonderland characters were a more emphasised version of our real world selves which meant enhancing the voice used and body language in the songs and scenes. In order to achieve this I used Stanislavsky's 'six W's' to delve into the background of my character as this exercise is a great way to start analysing and build a foundation of your character (O'brien and Sutton, 2019). This production was also heavily ensemble based therefore I was on stage majority of the time, this improved my awareness of stage dynamics and the importance of staying in character even when the sole focus isn't on me. Being the dance captain and more responsibilities meant I had a lot of managerial time with the rest of the cast and had to take on a leadership role, stepping into this role wasn't a major challenge for me as I have experience from previous productions and knew what my responsibilities were. Working closer with the choreographer has also helped me develop much needed skills for the industry surrounding professionalism and communication. I made it clear throughout all the rehearsals what had been worked on and what still needed time to perfect further strengthening the professional relationship. A challenge that I came across was learning and retaining harmonies whilst adding physical movements alongside, when learning the music everything was solid quite quickly however I noticed that when the staging and movement was added my energy in voice dropped which then made the vocals sound weaker. In order to improve my stamina I worked with the musical director 'Iestyn Griffiths' to learn vocal techniques to aid me and focussed on storytelling through my movements rather than thinking of everything as a dance as the choreography is there to aid the storytelling rather than hinder it (Abate, 2022, p.3).

Performance and collaboration:

One of the most significant aspects of the production was the opportunity to collaborate with fellow performers and members of the creative team. Musical theatre is inherently collaborative, requiring performers to work collectively to achieve a cohesive artistic vision. Throughout the rehearsal process, I developed a greater appreciation for the importance of communication, adaptability and trust within an ensemble. Theatre is said to be two-way communication which means it is not only important to communicate with the audience but communication as a cast alongside this for a greater performance (Brandt, 2023). As rehearsals progressed, I became increasingly aware that the success of a performance depends not only on the individual preparation but also on the ability of the cast to support one another. During ensemble scenes such as the trial, collaboration was essential in maintaining energy, timing and stage awareness. By observing the performances of others and reacting truthfully in each show it helped keep the scene flowing and the comedic timing of lines which overall contributed to the storytelling. Stanislavski states that the art of great acting is the art of true listening, further emphasizing how important being truthful is to a great performance (Merlin, 2007, pp.26–27). This meant I needed to get out of the ways I had rehearsed my lines and focus on being in the moment of each show and reacting as if I had never heard the lines before, you could see the positive impact of this as the cast got more comfortable making bigger acting choices which consistently lifted the energy of the scenes.

Evaluation and personal growth:

This production strengthened my confidence as a performer and improved my ability to work collaboratively under pressure, being able to overcome the challenges I came across like vocal stamina which is a known issue musical theatre trainees struggle with before going into the industry due to the pressures of being a 'triple threat' (Moore, 2026) further helped strengthen my confidence and allow myself to develop key skills needed for the professional industry. Participating in this production significantly enhanced my understanding of the demands of musical theatre performance and highlighted the importance of adaptability within a rehearsal and performance environment. One of the most valuable lessons I gained was focussing on the storytelling through song rather than just sounding pretty, initially I would focus on making my voice sound good which leads to a lack of depth for the audience. Acting through song and making sure the emotions are shown to the audience whilst maintaining vocal stamina and health is an important part of performance but less focused upon in training (Morgan, 2025), with this knowledge I came to understand that successful and gripping performances rely on the storytelling from the performer, especially for a show like 'Alice by heart' where it is directly telling a story. This meant I needed to make bigger acting choices whilst singing and focus on what my body language and vocal choices were saying to an audience.

Conclusion:

Overall, this production has helped me majorly in my development as a creative. The main lessons I will be taking forward into my future career will be the rehearsal room dynamic of having clear communication and trust between the cast and creative team as well as reacting truthfully to a situation. Being able to work at a professional standard has helped me gain a deeper understanding of what will be expected of me when going into future jobs and understand where I need to make improvements, this has helped me feel further prepared for the industry and very grateful for the experience.

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