

Production, Performance, and Genre Progress Workbook

Our pitch to perform Lucy Kirkwood's play "NSFW" at the Royal Court, London encompassed how we as a company would stage the show, an analysis and our interpretation and a focus on specific scenes we felt would best communicate our vision (short performances included).

My research led me to find very little existing information about this play online. Reviews I have found talked about how the actors were able to strike a really effective balance between comedy and a much darker tone.

We focused on the historical context of the show, political influences, sociological impact, character analysis, acting choices, costume designs, set designs, etc. With a specific focus on sociopolitical impact and influence, our decisions as a group were centred around sending a message about objectification and over-sexualisation within the play.

My task was to focus on the role of actors in this play and how to most effectively communicate this story. As well as this, I took a great interest in the sociopolitical analysis aspect within this play. For the sociopolitical aspect, I read articles and papers that talked about the topics I wanted to cover: over-sexualisation, feminism, capitalism, intersectionality, the efficacy of pornography, etc. When writing about the acting in the play, I took care to consider the characterisation of the characters in each scene and I collaborated with the other actors in the group to craft an impactful performance using a mixture of movement and voice.

My analysis of the play through a sociopolitical lens took me many places. It felt important to me that we as a group talked about this context within our presentation as it gave more background and explanation for the character's actions and showed a deeper understanding of a darker tone for the play. My research focused on the casual objectification and over-sexualisation of women and girls- including children- perpetuated by the media in our society. The message of the play is made even more prevalent when you consider how social media has made unsafe content much more accessible to children.

For the characters of Aidan and Sam, I had chosen to carry out Stanislavsky's seven questions as it gave me a grounded understanding of each character and their motives. The question of where the characters were prompted me to take a deeper interest in the power dynamics of each scene. In the act 2 scene, the location is Aidan's own office, which further places him in a position of power over Mr Bradshaw in the scene. Another way I tried to convey this sense of power and influence was through the character's movement; I'd have the character lean in closer to Mr Bradshaw and hold direct eye contact.

In act 1, we focus on a more humorous tone. Aidan takes centre stage and is guiding the conversation. We chose to focus more on Aidan's laid back attitude when he's in a comfortable environment. This was done through very loose body language. We directed the actor that played Aidan in act 1 to move his hands a lot when he speaks as it creates the idea that he's someone who is confident in his movement and acts as the brains of their workspace.

In Act 2, I play Aidan in his conversation with Mr Bradshaw and I tried to appear very casual and laid back as I believe that Aidan went into that conversation with a certainty that he would be victorious. I move with a slowness that lets the character revel in his power over another human. When considering how the characters of Aidan and Mr Bradshaw would interact with each other, I had to take into account the intensity of the situation. Both characters wanted something from the other and were incredibly stubborn. I wanted to

highlight how the character Aidan weaponised discomfort in order to persuade Mr Bradshaw to eventually take the settlement money and drop the issue.

The intentional choice of flipping the gender based hierarchy was made in our staging of act 3. This was done by positioning the character Miranda above Sam and creating a domineering presence with uncomfortable levels of proximity. As actors, we made the decision that towards the end of the play when Sam is highlighting the flaws in the woman in the picture and repeating the cycle, Miranda's actor would have a gentle tone and speak to Sam in an affirming way, which would contrast the real horror of what they are doing. This choice felt important to me as it highlighted the complicity of women within the patriarchal system that sexualises women, girls, and children. By focusing on this aspect, we send the message that anyone can be complicit in upholding a corrupt system and we encourage the audience to observe the systems in their own lives.

We chose to have both Miranda and Aidan use proximity as an intimidation tactic even if the way they specifically carried themselves was intentionally different. This was done with the intention of Aidan and Miranda paralleling each other. Within the script, they both use language with positive semantic fields to describe their respective fields. Aidan wants his workers to be "brave" and "bold" so they can uphold their "mission", implying that he, on the surface, believes the magazine is doing a great service. Whereas, Miranda views the Electra magazine as "insightful" and their readership as "genuine" due to the magazine's ability to connect women that thought they were "alone" in their struggles.

Evaluation

I was incredibly pleased with how the presentation went. The group managed to convey a wide array of information and I felt that I achieved the goals I set out to complete. I feel as if I could have utilised silence as a tool in the act 3 scene in order to create a further sense of discomfort. I played the character of Sam when he was interviewing at Electra and if I was presented with a scene like that again, I would like to see how more silence and a focus on physicality would create uncomfortable tension. However, I do not regret choosing to characterise Sam as a character that talks very quickly as it showcases his anxious nature extremely well. For a character like Aidan, more moments of silence really would have benefitted the scene- especially in moments in the script where Mr Bradshaw has stopped interrupting him. Revelling in that silence would've been an excellent way to show Aidan's power and it would have allowed the audience to truly sit with the gravity of the situation. I believe we succeeded in showing both the comedic and dark moments of the show through a light hearted tone in act one and a more sinister approach in acts 2 and 3. Though the fast paced movements from Aidan in act 1 worked well, it would have been intriguing to try directing him to utilise some of Laban's techniques and use slower movements, as if the actor is melting into the movement and revelling in his own power. However, I believe this was utilised well with Aidan in act 2 so we've encompassed a lot of his character very well.

Bibliography

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