

Production, Performance and Genre

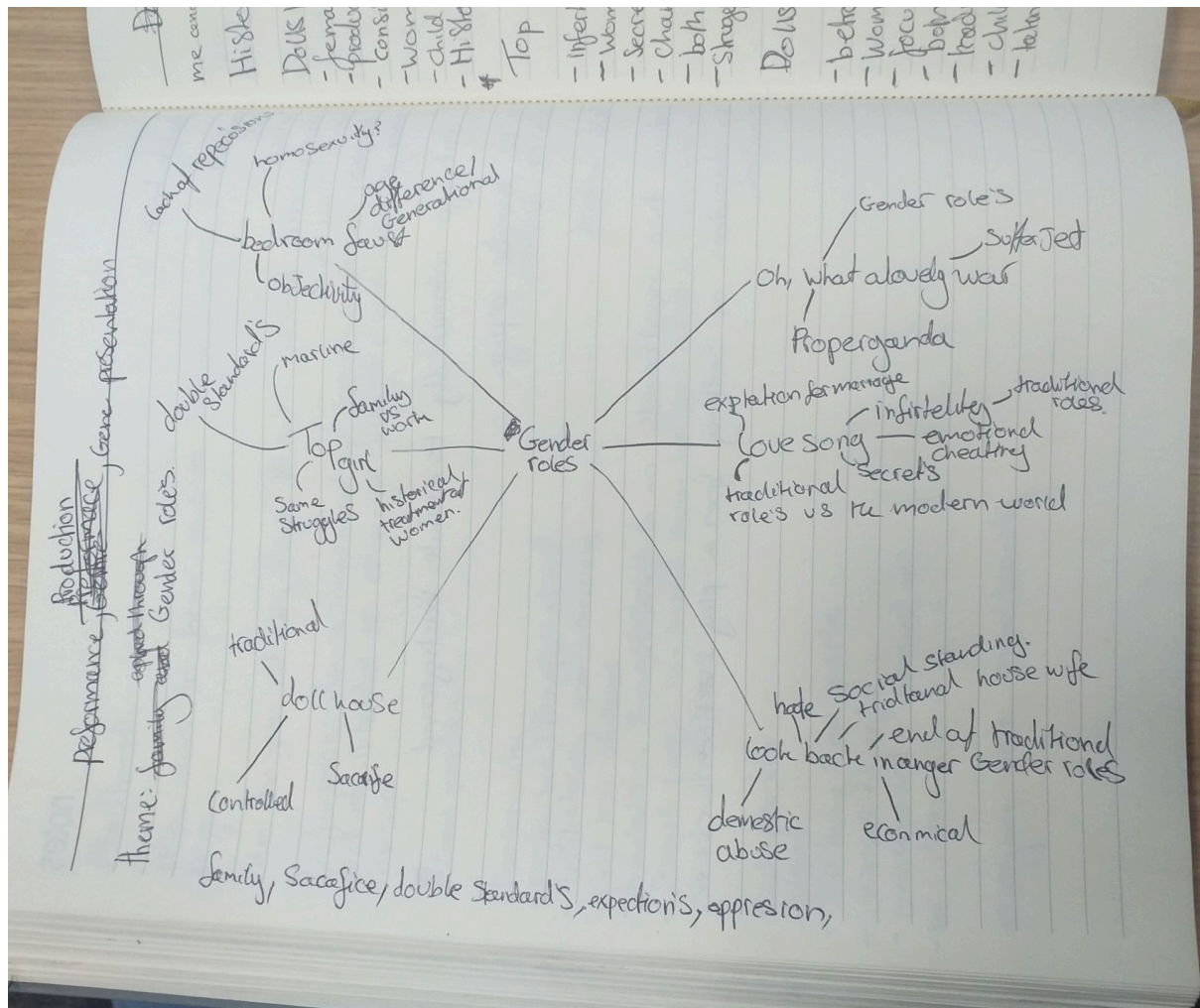
Process workbook: Charlie Field

Production, Performance and Genre was an interesting module as you got to be able to read all different kinds of staged productions that you never normally would starting from 'A doll's House' to the final play 'Lovesong' which allowed me to see the wide range of themes and imagery across the industry.

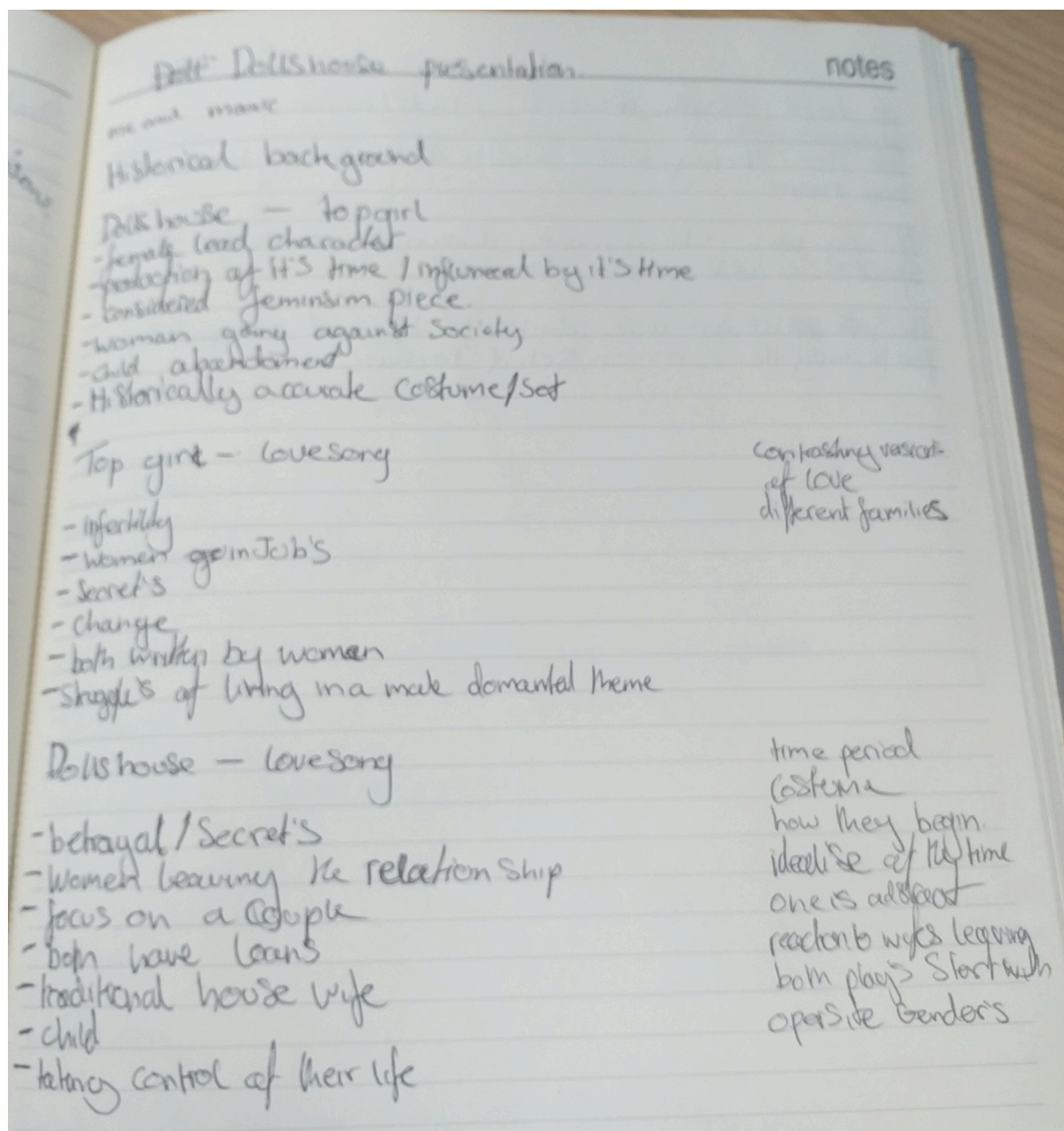
We first started on the 30th September by looking at the history of theatre ranging from the Greeks to the modern day. It was interesting to see how theatre regressed during the dark ages and medieval periods due to the control of the church yet most theatre productions during the era were of a religious nature and always meant to teach a lesson. It was also interesting to see how different events lead to new styles of theatre or Genre such as Restoration comedy becoming popular shortly after the theatres were reopened following the restoration of the Monarchy and how that inturn began to see the creation of proper theatre companies being created.

For our end of module project, we were given the brief of creating a 30 to 40 minute presentation about the themes and play's we have looked at during the Module. We started by creating a mindmap around the theme of

Gender roles for all the play's we looked at. This was because a majority of the plays contain the theme of Gender roles.



This was created to look at all the other themes and talking points that come from the theme and idea of Gender roles. It was interesting to see all the different offshoots which eventually led together such as the idea of tradition and even the theme of homosexuality but eventually, we settled on the ideas and themes of Family, Sacrifice, double standards, Expectation and oppression. From here, we partnered up and so it was me and Emyr doing 'A Doll's House' by Henrik Ibsen with Emyr looking at sacrifice and myself looking at the theme of family.



My Research started with me going back to look at the time period the play was set in and that was the late 1800 in Norway. This led me to find all kinds of interesting facts about the country during the time through the Website 'Searching for Nora' which is a website dedicated to the book sequel to 'A Doll's House'. This Website contained many facts about Norway at the time such as that a large majority of Norwegian men were being to immigrate from Norway to America, settling in the urban Centres and the American Midwest which at the

time the play is set in (1879), The American Midwest was still wild and unconquered and had plenty of Territory for people to claim as their new homes. This in turn left those who had been forgotten back home in Norway (Mainly women) a new struggle to survive as while small jobs had been passed into law allowing women small craft jobs or school teachers, they still would struggle to survive, mainly turning to acts such as Prostitution to make whatever they needed to survive which would have impacted their life more due to STD's and the social stigma behind being a Prostitute at the time.

The theme of family is constantly flowing throughout the play as Nora battle's with the idea of wronging her family and even goes as far as contemplating suicide to stop any shame being brought onto the family for her actions. The theme is also brought up by Torvold when he shouts at Nora when he finds out about what she has done. Questioning if her behaviour has come from her father who it is heavily implied Torvald doesn't like. It was upon these questions that I began to look at the set and see how family is shown through that and there wasn't really much there. The house is described as "Furnished comfortably and tastefully" (Opening stage direction, act 1) with there being a "Cabinet of China" and a "Piano". All of these show wealth and show that the family is well off yet none of them really speak to the theme of family and how it changes and while yes at the time Wealth was important (poor and working class families often had everyone working to make ends meet to survive). It was then, Upon rereading the play again that I found what I needed. I found the Christmas tree.

Throughout all of the acts, the one major set piece that changes is the christmas tree and it was through this Vessel that i realised how the theme of Family could be explored. In

Act 1, the Christmas tree arrives with Nora. Nora is described as entering "Humming a tune and in high Spirits". At the same time, the tree is fresh so naturally would be strong and healthy which is the symbol of the family at the start of the play. This idea stays as we learn about how much Nora loves her husband as she went out of her way to ensure her husband would survive his illness by committing fraud.

Of course by Act 2, this idea is starting to collapse as Nora has now been given the ultimatum and now has a weight on her shoulders. At the same time, the tree is described as "Stripped of all its ordiements" and "dishevelled branches". This is a direct comparison to the current situation with the family as the sheet has now been pulled from infront of Nora's eyes and the very truth about her family life is now collapsing, in a way "Stripped of its Ordienents". Of course, she is still desperately trying to find a way out of the situation so her husband doesn't find out and even starts distancing herself from her children. That is another big thing which linked into the theme of Family. Act 2 takes place on Christmas day and the none of Nora's direct family is with her for most of the scene which once again empties the collapsing family in the play.

And finally in Act 3, The act were we see everything collapse around them and finally see the end of the family and all the problems laid bare. The Christmas tree is no longer there, Mirroring the way the idea of the family in the play and to Nora, is now gone.

Of course, none of this is possible without the letter. The letter is the Crack which starts the chain of events that eventually leads to the collapse of the family. It was my idea to write the later and i did enjoy doing it as it allowed me to get into the

mind of its writer and how desperate he must have felt. While I believe the most important item in the play is the Christmas Tree, the letter's importance cannot be understated.

Historical Context of Norway		

 The Set of "<i>A Doll's House</i>"	• Christmas tree • Traditional costume of a Norwegian family for the time • Christmas tree symbolizes the family's health	

End of Project Evaluation.

What I am really proud of for myself during this Project was the fact that I produced my ideas with very little involvement from online information and other people. While the Foundation work was done by me and other people, the idea about the Christmas Tree and the letter came from my own ideas and while they aren't as unique as I think they are, I'm still surprised at how quickly my idea developed. At the same time, the biggest thing that surprised me was how easy it was to find information which helped expand the ideas I developed.

Normally, I am used to having to spend hour's trawling across the Internet trying to find whatever scraps can support my ideas but my main website for information 'Searching for Nora' appeared when I simply typed in Norway 1879 into google. Of course this was also a downside as i only focused on one Website for information which while it has helped me progress me point and help flesh it out, also meant i didn't have the ability to sit back and analysis what other points i could find and while i don't believe that this has affected me too badly, it is still a practice i need to move away from.

End of Module Evaluation.

Performance, Production and Genre was an interesting module. It taught us things that we need to know about the Industry such as the different Genres which in my opinion is really important as its no good being a Set designer or Decorator and not knowing the difference between a romantic Comedy and a horror film. Particularly, my favourite part of the module was covering 'Oh, what a lovely war' as it is a muscial play about one of my favourite time periods and wars to learn about. I also enjoyed how it took a different take on the anti war media and instead of making the play gritty and intense, it used an atmosphere of comedy to then Blind side you with a scene that would stay with you and i do believe that was some of my best work in the Module was when we had to Analysis hard hitting scenes and how they may shock the audience. What surprised me the most about the module was how similar alot of the play's were. Of course, 'Oh, What a Lovely war' and 'Top Girls' stood out but the rest seemed to just blend in with each other. In a way, it felt like they were nearly all the same story just retold in harsher or nicer ways and its that, that brings me into my main problem i discovered with the Module and thats,

that i couldn't really get Invested into the plays. 'Look back in Anger' comes to mind when i make this point because no matter what i attempted to do, i kept getting distracted by Jimmy having a shouting match with no one because he believes that the working class are amazing, i just really struggled to get invested with most of the plays and i Believe that it comes from my biases towards what i like. I love Productions about war and period dramas and alot of these plays didn't scratch that for me. Of course each play had something i liked. An example is 'bedroom Faust' with Erensts character. Of course everyone is allowed their own likes but as someone going into the Industry, i need to learn to accept plays that aren't in my comfort zone and allow myself to expand my theatrical Knowledge.

The One thing I will take forward with me from this Module is to always try and think of new ways to tell a story and to always try and come up with ideas before diving into the Internet and finding information.

Bibliography

Online, outbox (2023) 'Searching for Nora: After the Doll's house by Wendy Swallow.' [online] Available at: <https://searchingfornora.com/> [Accessed 13 jan. 2025]

Ibson, Henrik (1879) 'A Doll's House' Denmark, Henrik Ibson.

