

AN OBJECTIVE LOOK INTO THE DIRECTING PROCESS

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education**

In the School of Education
at Salem State University

By

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Commonwealth Honors Program
Salem State University
2021

Abstract

This paper is meant to display the authors journey as a young and developing director as she works with two actress on four different and varying monologues of the directors choosing. The monologues are from *Medea*, *Macbeth*, *A Doll's House*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Each monologue provides its own series of challenges for the director to work through with each actress. It displays the work that a director must do to better help their actors in their work of a piece. Such as breaking down the plot of the play and the character arc. Understanding the character and being able to convey that information forward. This is followed by notes from the different stages of the rehearsal process. Concluding with a reflection of the process both positive and negative aspects. As well as what the author will be able to take away as she graduates and enters the world of directing.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor Julie who has always pushed me to be the best version of myself I can possibly be. She has helped me shape and develop this thesis into something I feel truly proud of. Without her mentoring me through this process I would have been lost. She has been an inspiration for the kind of person I would like to become one day. I will always be grateful for how much she has taught and helped me.

To my actresses, Jillian and Paige who so willingly agreed to be a part of this project. Both of you were so willing to listen and learn when I felt like I had no idea what I was talking about you have helped me teach me so much about our craft and myself during this process. Both of you are some of the most talented and wonderful people I know.

To my family who have always supported me in my endeavors and helped foster my love of theatre. Without your constant support I would not be the confident and creative young woman I am today.

Finally, to my professors here, thank you from the bottom of my heart. For the past four years you have taught and pushed me into being more comfortable with my skills. You had faith in me even when I didn't. You helped show me my path for the future in our crazy little world.

The Why

This past year has arguably been one of the most difficult and tricky years I have ever experienced in twenty-two years on this Earth. Just last spring was when I realized that I had a love and passion for directing. I had come to SSU with the full intent to leave a trained and ready actress. In the middle of my Junior year, I discovered I had a talent I had not even noticed before. With this in mind, I decided then and there I would use my Senior Thesis as an opportunity to explore who I am as a director.

I wanted to explore the various stages of working with actors. I have a strong interest in Feminism and Iconic Women in theater and can imagine continuing to explore these topics throughout my career. For my thesis, I choose to use monologues from characters that can be considered iconic female characters for the basis of my directing exploration.

At first, I was worried that I would not be able to fully prepare myself to lead and work with actresses in a small and intimate setting. Working with someone one on one to reach an unknown and undiscovered place is hard. But I knew that by reading the plays and understanding their characters I would be prepared to take the dive into directing.

This paper was always a creative and collaborative process for me to learn more about directing and who I would be as a director. It is meant to help me provide insight into that big question. I hope is that my process at the end can provide me a clear picture of my goals for my thesis.

The Choice of Characters & Monologues

My interests have always been in exploring Feminism and its connection to theatre which is why I choose to use only female characters who could be deemed as iconic from my thesis. It was an extremely hard process to narrow down just how many and who I would be using in the thesis. I was able to narrow it down to four characters, Medea, Lady Macbeth, Nora, and Blanche Dubois. All these four characters are iconic in their own right, but each brings a different aspect to this thesis.

To start all four of them stem from different eras of theater. Medea is a classic Greek tragedy wherein a woman and mother ultimately spites her former husband in the worst way possible. Lady Macbeth one of Shakespeare's most well-known characters who is willing to do everything and sacrifice anything for the sake of gaining power. Nora whose character broke traditions set for women in the 19th century, her actions left the world stunned. Finally, Blanche Dubois who is one of the most complex and interesting characters Tennessee Williams ever wrote in the 20th century, her story and heartbreak is something that always leaves me amazed and saddened.

Each of these characters goes through such tremendous arcs that always make me wish and dream I could play them someday. Deep down I knew that I should keep my course with these four characters and their journeys. They each bring something different for me to work on within my thesis. Whether it be subtext, rhyme schemes, tempos, and emotional challenges. All of these are going to be things I will have to work with in the future so I thought it would be best to get my first time with these different things out of the way now.

The monologue choices were simple. I re-read each of the plays and I chose the monologues that I believed occurred at the height of the character's arc or was the moment of highest stakes for them. In each of the monologues, I chose I wanted to be able to really challenge the actresses I was working with. By giving them such monologues as I described I knew that I would be giving us as a team a lot to work through and to work with. I wanted to give myself the challenge of leading my actresses through these pieces so that way I could learn what I believe in when it comes to moments like these in future plays, I could be working on.

The Plays and Characters

When starting work on a new piece or a play it is a director's first job to read the play. You read the play and then read it again, that way when you begin your work with the actors and actresses you have a deep and thoughtful understanding of the play. This gives a director the greatest advantage possible, because then when confronted with questions they can answer without hesitation, most of the time. This also helps the director in being able to give notes to their actors. After reading a play so many times, as well as writing notes about the character. It becomes easy to be able to see individual arcs and stories that connect and flow through the plot. This is why the first step in my thesis was to read the plays and get to know the characters I had chosen.

Medea

The play *Medea* is an Ancient Greek tragedy originally written by the playwright Euripides. Like similar plays of the time, it is based upon a myth, of Jason and his betrayal of his wife Medea. The play is wrapped around this betrayal and it acts as the inciting incident of the play. Where we first meet Medea, we learn that Jason has left his wife in exile in Corinth and has gone off to marry another woman by the name of Glauce with the sole intent of political gain. Out of fear as to what Medea might do to herself and her children the King of Corinth, Creon banishes her from the city. She is able to convince him to let her stay in the city for one more day, allowing her to enact her revenge. She is reapproached by her husband Jason who suggests that he may be able to keep her as a mistress. This fails to sway Medea and she begins to speak ominous threats towards him, his wife, and the king.

Later the King of Athens, Aegeus visits Medea and asks her to help him and his wife conceive a child. Medea agrees to help Aegeus as long as he agrees to provide her with sanctuary if she can make it to Athens. Aegeus agrees to this unaware of what Medea intends to do on her final night in Corinth. After this Medea plans to poison Glauce and her decision to kill her children. As she believes this will be her greatest form of revenge against Jason and the pain that he has caused her. Medea debates her decision in choosing to kill her innocent children. But ultimately, she believes that it will protect them from the danger they may come upon them by their father after his wife and king are officially dead. Medea enters the home, and the screams of her children can be heard.

As Jason arrives to punish Medea for the murder of his wife and the king, Medea appears on the chariot of Artemis with her children's bodies. She mocks Jason and leaves prophesying a bad ending for Jason as she escapes to Athens.

Medea is the classic woman scorned in my eyes. Here is a woman who has been betrayed by the one person who she thought she could truly trust. His ambitions and dreams became more important than she did, so he left her. For someone younger, prettier, and who could give him the support in the political world. She has been made a fool and left in the metaphorical dirt by Jason. This is why she chooses revenge, to make him feel as bad as he made her feel.

But she takes it to the extreme while Jason might have gone low in disrespecting Medea. She went to hell to make him feel her pain. She kills his new wife, her father, but the most stunning death is that of their two children. This choice is bold, to kill own children is not something a person does lightly. But Medea's thirst to even the score

outweighs the pain she knows she will experience from the act of killing her own flesh and blood.

This is why the monologue I chose to help coach was the monologue that she speaks just as she is about to murder them. The monologue as a whole provides a great moment for internal conflict for the character. It is a moment of fighting between the head, who will mourn the children, and the heart, who desperately aches to make Jason feel the pain she felt when he left her. The conflict in the monologue gives an actress a lot of fun things to play with. Because eventually, one side of herself has to win, the heart.

So, to accurately display that conflict and each side's goals and objectives in only eight-teen lines is somewhat of a challenge. But the reward is worth the challenges because by the end it turns into this heart-wrenching moment to watch and hear. You feel her pain as she speaks of her children and a similar pain of knowing that she has come this far and can't back out now. It must be done.

There are also the challenges in the rhyming pattern which can act as a sort of trap because while you need to hear the rhyme, the actress also has to make sure that she is keeping everything incoherent thought as she flows through the speech. Because while the rhyme alone sounds nice the lack of connection between each of the lines hinders the emotions and the power of her words to be truly heard by the viewer.

Another issue that seems small is that of the wording which in some cases is still in an older type of English similar to Shakespeare one we do not say or use often unless in the theatre. It is important to be able to hit all of those words with the same confidence and energy that you might hit a word in everyday speech. Not something from Ancient Greece.

Macbeth

The play begins with the introduction of the witches, transitions to a Military camp where King Duncan is notified of his Generals Macbeth and Banquo's victory against two armies. Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches who prophies that Macbeth will become the Thane of Cawdor (A Thane is a form of Scottish nobility.) and eventually King of Scotland. They then tell Banquo he will be the father of kings but will never be a king. Despite being skeptical they meet King Duncan who names Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. Later Macbeth writes and tells his wife everything. Lady Macbeth is no skeptic and persuades Macbeth to kill the King the night they arrive at Inverness. That night they get the guards drunk and Macbeth kills Duncan in his sleep. In the morning he kills the guards. Duncan's sons, Malcom and Donalbain flee the country out of fear and Macbeth takes the throne. Now terrified of Banquo's prophecy Macbeth sends murderers to kill him and his son Fleance. They are successful in killing Banquo but Fleance manages to escape, later that night at a feast Macbeth is haunted by Banquo, and this causes him to startle the guests. Lady Macbeth tries to ease the damage, but Macbeth's outburst has created fear in his people.

Macbeth then goes to visit the witches, who show him his future including looking out for Macduff. He feels safe again especially when he hears Macduff has also fled with Malcom. He seizes Macduff's castle and has Lady Macduff and her children killed. With news of their death, Macduff vows to get revenge. He and Malcom raise an army in England and challenge Macbeth, who has lost the support of the nobles. Lady Macbeth haunted by the guilt of what she has done kills herself. Macbeth hears of the

news and falls into despair while waiting for his enemies. The armies engage in battle and Macbeth is slain by Macduff. Malcom takes the throne as the new King of Scotland.

Lady Macbeth is considered Shakespeare's most ruthless female character, which is exactly why I love her so much. She is ambitious, ruthless, and cunning, in most cases everything the men in his plays are. She is the ultimate reason as to why Macbeth was even able to kill the King. She holds his hand through the whole thing practically, pushing him and using every part of her to do it. She does this blinded by her ambitions and hopes and faces the severe consequences in the play. The viewer sees first-hand how guilt eats a person alive. Without her pushing, a large amount of the play wouldn't have occurred. The blood of so many people have fallen onto her hands because she convinced Macbeth to kill Duncan. If she had not, then this play would probably not have been written.

The monologue I chose for her comes at the beginning of the play rather than her end when she is so far gone mentally. It is in the first scene we see her after she has read Macbeth's letter notifying her of the prophecy and his newly found position as Thane of Cawdor. At this moment is when she makes the decision that when king Duncan arrives to sleep in her home it will be the last time, he ever closes his eyes. She wishes for the spirits above to turn her into more of a man so that way she might have the strength to help kill him and not feel guilty for it.

This monologue is the first real introduction to her character as a whole. In my eyes, the goal in my eyes is for the actress is to be able to display that level of brutal ruthless ambition without it coming across disingenuous. There is a balance to it because showing too much will overdo it, but not doing enough will not give the viewer a clear

understanding of what she means exactly. By giving the piece a clear flow with shifts in tone and emotions it will help the actress to define exactly what she means even if the viewer cannot perfectly understand her because of the language. That is another challenge while it is English, Shakespeare had a way with words that often becomes difficult to understand.

A Doll's House

The play begins on Christmas Eve, where Nora Helmer and her husband, Torvald discuss how she is spending too much money for the holiday. We learn through them of their penny pinching and that Torvald has earned a promotion promising a more manageable lifestyle. They are visited by the family friend Dr. Rank and Nora's old schoolmate Kristine Linde. As they reminisce, we learn that in the first year of their marriage Torvald fell ill and they had to travel to Italy for his recovery. Mrs. Linde inquires about Torvald providing her a job now that she needs employment. Nora in return tells her that she had to borrow money to save Torvalds's life and she has been working little by little to repay the debt. One of Torvalds's employees, Krogstad comes to visit him and after Torvald, Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde leaves it is revealed that Krogstad is Nora's secret lender. Krogstad threatens to reveal the truth if Nora cannot convince Torvald to keep him at the bank. When Krogstad leaves Nora makes it her mission to hide the truth from her husband.

On Christmas Nora and Mrs. Linde meet and discuss various topics such as her loan. Once again Nora attempts to save Krogstad's job but fails as Torvald sends the maid off with a dismissal letter. Dr. Rank arrives in the home and Nora nearly asks him to intervene until he reveals his love for her. She refuses him. Krogstad comes to visit where he confronts Nora about the letter and leaves a letter in return in their mailbox with the details of her actions. Nora and Mrs. Linde manage to distract Torvald before they attend a party. Mrs. Linde and Krogstad meet, and it is revealed they loved each other, and now that she is free of her obligations, they can be together. He says he will take the letter back, but she convinces him that it will be better for them.

When they return from the party and Dr. Ranks says his goodbyes his death is imminent. Nora has Torvald read Krogstad's letter. Torvald and Nora fight over the contents of the letter and then the maid arrives with a new letter from Krogstad. In his joy, he has returned the original contract to them. Torvald tries to take back his words but Nora has come to a revelation. She explains to him that they do not truly know each other, and she is not some doll. She chooses to leave him and slams the door shut behind her.

Out of all the characters from my thesis, Nora was the only character whose play I had not fully read before beginning this. I knew her story one of revelation and crisis, but I had not had the pleasure to read her story in full. After reading the play I understand why this play was such a marking point in the feminine character. There was a gap in the portrayal of women as anything other than housewives and mothers. Nora broke that mold by choosing herself.

Which is why I choose her monologue where she has this existential crisis after Torvald yell and tells her she won't be allowed to raise their children. It's so painful to watch as she realizes that everything about her life has in some way or another has been manipulated by the men in her life. She is the perfect example of a woman who has never made a decision in her life without the guiding hand of a man. It is a moment of stark reality that is so stunning against the hiding and faking that the viewer sees for most of the play.

This makes this monologue tricky in an emotional sense. Here the actress has to actively break down and realize the life she is meant to be portraying has been an utter sham from the moment Nora was born. It takes a lot of breathing and letting those

emotions come to one naturally. As well as letting yourself actively realize that is what is happening at the moment. Until it builds up in the piece and lights up at the end of the piece where she is now fully aware and is exploding.

A Streetcar Named Desire

The play begins with Blanche DuBois arriving at her sister Stella's apartment in New Orleans. Blanche informs Stella she has lost their family home, Belle Reve, and was given a leave of absence from her teaching job due to bad nerves. Blanche is immediately uncomfortable being in close quarters with a pregnant Stella and her husband Stanley, who does not like Blanche because he is convinced, she robbed Stella out of family money. Blanche reveals that she lost the home due to money troubles and her growing alcoholism. During a poker game at the apartment, Blanche meets Stanley's friend Mitch who takes a liking to her. Which angers Stanley and an argument breaks out leading Stanley to beat Stella. Blanche helps her escape to their neighbor Eunice's apartment; Stanley begs Stella for forgiveness, and she takes him back. Mitch comforts Blanche over the event.

Blanche attempts to get Stella to leave who laughs it off. Stanley overhears a later part of their discussion and threatens to bring up the rumors about Blanche. Later just before a date, we watch Blanche flirt with a paperboy. That evening she reveals to Mitch that her young husband killed himself after she discovered and criticized his homosexuality. Blanche and Mitch share a moment. A month later on Blanche's birthday Stanley reveals Blanche's recent past where she was living out of a sleazy motel engaging in sexual acts and the fact she was fired from her job after it was discovered she was having an affair with a student. He then tells Stella that he has already told Mitch. The dinner goes as planned with no sign of Mitch and Stanley tells Blanche that he knows about her past and gives her a one-way bus ticket home. Stella goes into labor.

Later that evening Blanche is drunk alone in the apartment and Mitch confronts her. She defends her actions, and he tries to force her into sex, she manages to force him away. Stanley comes back from the hospital and Blanche is even drunker. She carries on with her delusions and they begin to argue and fight. It goes to the extreme and it is alluded to Stanley rapes Blanche. Weeks later Stella and Eunice are packing Blanche's bags and it is revealed she is going to an asylum. Blanche was broken by Stanley's actions, but Stella does not believe her. The doctor and nurse arrive and take Blanche away. Stella is comforted by Stanley as she holds their child.

Blanche is the type of character who has several dimensions and layers to her that even the most talented and seasoned actresses might struggle to fully achieve to encapsulate. On the outside, she holds herself in a layer of delusion and fantasy that feels childlike. As the play progresses it becomes clear that Blanche is merely using that as a way to cope with the trauma that she has endured throughout her life.

This makes this one of the largest obstacles for the monologue I chose because it is the speech she gives to Mitch when she tells the story of her dead husband. It is one of the first and only moments that lasts longer than a couple of words or lines that show Blanche's true mind. This is a long and painful story for Blanche to speak because it is ultimately her fault that Allen is dead. She is the reason he wound up killing himself.

That guilt is the key obstacle in this piece. Blanche must ultimately confront her guilt for making Allen feel so terribly about himself and who he is that he was willing so quickly to shoot himself dead. By the end of the story, she must lose the fight as well because she falls back into that world of fantasy and illusion instead of continuing with the reality of her actions. She truly believes that she can continue her life in this old-

fashioned debutant way. Where a handsome and rich man will someday come and sweep her off her feet and take care of her.

But that is not the case, no one is coming to rescue her because she cannot be rescued. Blanche is far too gone in her illusions to be brought fully back to reality by anyone. She lays so close to the edge of insanity which is why by the end of the play she has fully dropped off that cliff. Stanley raping her is the last push her mind could take.

This monologue also functions as a tool to give backstory as well as a foreshadowing tool for her future. She talks of how young he was which gives a hint towards just why Blanche had to leave her home in Laurel. The mention of light also foreshadows that Blanche's light in her mind will be snuffed out so much so that the only light in her will be similar to the kitchen light that she mentions.

The Process

Medea

Medea was the monologue I was personally the most nervous for, mainly, because it was the only type of play that I had not previously performed. I kept this in mind and knew that this one would require us to take our time with the piece. I knew that we couldn't fight against the structure and the language of the monologue. To begin our journey Jill my actress and I just talked about the monologue and Medea's story which would be the start of our table work. Table work is the start of a rehearsal process where the actor and director discuss the play and their characters. I had her run through the monologue one time for our first recording so that way I would have a clear show of progress in the piece. Then we took the monologue line by line, this way she had an understanding of the words and the tempo that the piece has. The tempo is a key part to this piece, it has rhymes and flows like poetry and if you don't hit it in the right way then the whole piece falls flat.

Once Jill got used to the tempo and wording of the piece, we started working on more table work. This was mostly in a discussion format with a mixture of dissecting the lines. We sat and went over each line of the monologue and talk about what we thought together that specific line meant to Medea. Why did she choose to say what she was saying? Together through our discussion we were able to find the larger obstacles of the piece, which we had dubbed the Head vs Heart. This idea to us meant that Medea was facing an internal conflict of trying to convince herself that she must kill her children. With this information we used it to go through the piece once again and tried to figure out

which lines or sections of it would have been Medea's head speaking and which would have been her heart.

The first roadblock we hit was the tempo, Jill like me has never really worked with Greek plays before so she was having a tough time tackling the tempo and getting it to flow in a way that didn't feel jarring. To possibly help combat the issue I started doing a small warm up of stretches and jumping jacks with her before we would run the monologue. This helped to keep her on her breath to push through the monologue without losing herself in the tempo. By having an actor do some sort of physical exercise like jumping jacks or running around and then jumping into the piece helps to make sure the tempo of it is energized and faster than what they might have been doing before.

We found that while this was helping the piece, I decided after we had recorded our halfway recording. That it would be best that the piece should be done with Jill standing. Up until this point I had her sitting down and while it somewhat worked but the energy was lacking and that was hindering the piece overall. The next time we ran the piece we focused on allowing Jill to use her body in a more encompassing way that was being held back by being in a chair. Now being on its feet Jill and I took the movement slow seeing where it felt natural for her to move her body while she is performing the monologue. Once we had a good idea of what her body wanted to do during the piece, we added on to it. We picked parts of the monologue to physicalize to help reinforce her conflict.

Once we had been able to get her in positions and movements that helped engage her into the piece, the tempo and flow of the piece changed drastically. She was able to keep herself in the moment by using her body to keep herself engaged. By having the key words, she could latch on to during the piece she was able to allow herself to make the

discoveries in a fresh new way. She was able to find the conflict in a new way within herself better than ever. We were able to sail through our final recording with ease because of these new connections.

Macbeth

Now unlike Medea, I have personal experience working on Shakespeare along with my actress Paige. We began with talking about the monologue in the context of the play and doing table work. By taking each line and breaking it down into a rough modern translation for her to follow through while rehearsing. This way she knew exactly what she was saying in the piece. After that we took those lines and broke them into groups so that way, she could more accurately find her way through the piece. This was her idea as it was something she had done previously to help build her color shifts. Color shifts is a theatre idea that when writing on a script or monologue the actor uses different colors to help guide them in the changing of emotions. For example, yellow could mean happy and red means anger or passion. Doing this gives the actress the ability during the memorization period to guide themselves in the emotions by just looking at the colors the words hold. Rather than the actual words, it gives them the opportunity to start working on the deeper emotions of the monologue from the start.

The idea of shifting emotions is especially important in the case of this monologue, because she cannot just play the anger and ruthlessness of Lady Macbeth from the start. It needs to be revealed or else she would just come off as crazy rather than calculating. The shifts help aid the audience into not judging the character from the moment she begins to speak; it gives the reveal to her mind.

After this point we both felt really comfortable playing with the piece and seeing how far we could take her emotions in it. This specifically laid in the idea of her wishing to not be as feminine so that she may have the strength to help kill King Duncan. The easiest way to see how far is too far is to go to the extreme, because it is easier to pull

back than to push the emotion further later on in the process. This way it feels natural being as ruthless later on in the process in a way that seems genuine. This was a fun process for the both of us because we were able to really see how ruthless we could make her seem. At one point I had given her the specific action of acting “As if she were the unsub in a Criminal Minds episode.” She got exactly what I meant the second I said it. Someone so unhinged and beyond help, which is where the butter knife came in. I had not intended to use props or costuming of any kind in this process, but it popped into my head and I just needed to see it.

Props are a great tool to give an actor to help ground themselves and gives them something to play with in a scene. Having something physical thing for her to hold on to during the monologue gave her this chance to use the knife as tool to help enhance her emotions. The butter knife might just be a butter knife to us but to her it is a letter opener and a symbol of what is to come for her character both in the near and far future. It was also at this point we thought it would be best if she was standing.

While this did work it did give the piece a bit of a roadblock because while sitting Paige was able to really go for it emotionally with her words and face. Standing she had all of this energy that she didn't seem to know what she wanted to do with it. To help with this before the piece each time we ran it I had her do some physical stuff to get her blood pumping so she would be on her breath like I did with Medea. This helped a lot because it allowed her to feel more comfortable in her body and portraying the emotions she was experiencing during the piece. I also was giving her words of encouragement during her runs of the monologue. This way she good feed off the words and energy I was sending her to fuel the piece even more.

The combination of all these things helped build her confidence in the piece and in herself. That way when we did the final recording of it, she was acting in dynamic and lively ways that allowed her to embrace the color shifts we had been working on.

A Doll's House

Nora was the character I felt ready to tackle as her monologue was one, I had done previously in my own acting work. The only downside to that was I had to be very careful to not have Jill act the same way I had done the monologue. This meant I listened to her a lot on how she viewed the monologue and Nora's journey through it. We spent a lot of our tablework talking about her emotions and how they shift and build into this moment of existential crisis and clarity at the end of the piece. Similar to Lady Macbeth we focused on separating the monologue into chunks so that way she and I could find the flow of the color shifts. We used the punctuation in the piece to help us guide us into where we thought the emotions should clearly change.

Another focus of this piece was the use of operative words, which is when an actor chooses a specific word from a line or sentence to add emphasis on it. This can do a lot of things like helping the actor discover the next line in the monologue in a fresh new way, or it can be used to better get the emotions of the actress across for the audience. Operatives along with using color shifts are really good tools to use in the beginning because it can help the become more comfortable with the piece and explore it more. We would play around with choosing different operatives and seeing which ones felt right emphasizing. This way she could play around every time we ran the monologue, and I could see how well her choices were able to strengthen the piece overall.

One of the issues we found early on was Jill's breathing, she wasn't breathing enough in the monologue for it to feel comfortable for herself and seem natural to the audience. Her breathing forcing the monologue to move at a faster pace where the emotions were getting lost in the words and she wasn't able to properly connect to them.

My way to remedy the issue was to force her into pausing. What I had her do was to pause on every single punctuation commas, periods, and hyphens. At first, I had her pause for about five seconds which in acting is a really long time. Five seconds are precious in the grand scheme of things when you only have two hours to give the audience a good show. But if you don't breathe it won't matter, the words will move too fast for anyone let alone the actor to keep up. Once she got really used to pause so long, I had her do it for three seconds. After a couple of times doing that, I just had her pause for however long she felt she needed for that specific punctuation. Doing this allowed her to see how much emphasis she should put on each one similarly to the operatics. This helped her to remember to breathe by putting that pressure on them.

Once her breathing was under control we got to continue working on the emotions and the buildup of the monologue. I refer to a monologue like this as a slow burn, it moves slow as she begins to realize her next words and what exactly she is saying. We are watching the actress actively come to a realization as the character that her life has been a lie. Which is a lot to do in such a short monologue, but that is exactly why I had her rehearse with those pauses and the basic breakup of the emotions. Having this in her back pocket allowed her to focus on coming to realization naturally both emotionally and vocally. The end needed to be strong in this difficult way because her whole life is shattered by the end of the piece. It took a lot of just running the piece letting Jill naturally find her next wording so that way she could use it as a stepping stone for the next line. So on and so forth until she reaches the final line of piece where she ends on this really angered high note.

Once she had all of these things done it was really just a matter of getting comfortable with the piece running it with that level of intensity. But she was able to clearly keep herself focused and let the emotions drive her realizations in the piece. This allowed everything to build up into this really beautiful explosion at the end.

A Streetcar Named Desire

Blanche's monologue is by far the longest piece I chose for this thesis which made the length of it the biggest obstacle Paige and I had to work through. It also has a lot of moving parts in general because of the character itself. She's at least tipsy in this monologue and still drinking throughout, along with the heavy shifting emotions and tempo. It has to have a build despite those facts as she tells the story, but it has to come across between a balance of clarity and illusion. At first, we had nearly decided to cut out the second part of the monologue entirely just for the sake of having more time to really work on the beginning. But after one run of it just the first half it was clear that we would need the second half if we were going to feel the first impact of the first.

We spent a lot of time going through the monologue line by line in our tablework just so we could really nail down the whole story that she is telling. While it may be clear in the script building up the backstory surrounding the situation in general is a good way to help create a more concrete memory for the actress to act upon. Doing lots of table work for this piece gave us a lot of good info to work around Blanche and her mental health as a character and how she lingers on this story. Especially how she seems to relive the whole event and knows that it always has to end with the eventuality of Alan dying.

The biggest challenge for us was Paige getting used to being in the moment of the monologue so quickly for so long. I knew this would be the biggest challenge but we both knew that once she got there in that specific head space the character needed it would work out. Most of that came with playing with her emotions and using her voice to tell the story in the monologue. Similar to my rehearsal process with the Nora monologue

it was about the shifting tones and emotions, along with her use of operatives to help strengthen her connection to the piece.

Her tone needed to be able to shift quickly as Blanche has moments where it seems she speaks in lucid ways and then immediately goes back into a fantasy type of tone. We separated out those lines so that way she could get used to the quick shifts of the beginning and the ending. The emotions of the piece while they change fast just like the tone needed to act as a way for her to build up to the ending just like Nora's monologue. I had called it more of a wave motion, there are moments of high and moments of low in the piece and they flow into each other to create this seamless blend.

About halfway through we were still having trouble really grounding Paige in the monologue so she would be able to really live in the moment. To help this we added a cup, most likely in the scene Blanche would have been drinking so having the cup helped ground Paige, while giving her the chance to stop take a drink and discover that next moment of the piece. This piece is much more of a marathon instead of a sprint so having something to drink made sure her voice wasn't going to get dry mid-way the scene and crack or something. By having that prop, she began to do more fun things vocally with her lines to really emphasize things that she had not before which really gave her the chance to play with the piece.

She did cry a couple of times we ran the piece, which is fantastic, but it also acts as a double sword. Because it means she was really in the moment and she was feeling every emotion she should have been feeling in the piece. But then there comes the challenge where she had to try and not replicate those exact versions of the piece. If that happens then she might cry again during the piece, but it would lack the authenticity of

the first or second time she cried in the piece. It took reminding for the both of us that she would have work against falling directly into that emotion she felt during those runs. All to ensure we were able to keep maximum authenticity for the monologue.

The Reflection

This journey was eye opening for me because I really found myself through this process. I realized that I really enjoy making theatre as collaborative as I physically can by always keeping up with my actresses and their feelings and energy throughout the process. Energy is a big thing for me now, if the energy of the rehearsal isn't right then I think it makes it harder to work and hit that big moment or that breakthrough. Having a good energy flow between myself and the actress was huge for me in this process, and I think that is one of my big takeaways from the process. I want to make sure that my actors in the future and I are on the same level of energy or we can bring each other to the same level. That way I can make sure they can stay connected to whatever it is we are working on and can bring it to full life.

I have also realized that I want to get my actors excited, I actively can participate and cheer them on as they are working so that way, they know they are on the right track. Especially if afterward, I have to give them a hard note or I want them to run it again. I also think that some actors need this active pushing when they are in the middle of a moment. To physically see or hear your director getting excited at what you are doing might help to bring them out of their shell more. Of course, they may not work with everyone but if you find an actor who has that talent that just needs a little more cracking of their shell than I would want to celebrate those moments with them.

Giving notes is something I never thought would be my strong suit, but I realized that feeling comfortable in the space and with the actor can help. I think that I like to ask questions of my actors. It keeps them on their toes and helps us to elaborate on the story more, giving us new ideas and some depth to things we had never thought of before in the

process. I think asking questions as note helps for me to see if the work is really getting done, because if the actor isn't doing the work on their end, I can't do mine from where I sit.

There are things I see that I want to improve upon like having more tools to use when we hit a roadblock. Or being more comfortable with taking risks. But I know that I can remedy these things with reading, studying, and practice. I will have to teach myself these things so that way I will be able to implement them in my own work.

Overall, this process has been an eye opening one, I have learned more about what kind of director I want to be when I leave Salem State than I ever expected. This has been a fantastic journey to go on and it makes me excited for what's to come for me. Whether that is working in a high school helping the future of the arts flourish in young and imaginative minds or working in a reparatory theatre working with professionals. All I know right now is that I am ready to go out and start finding work for me to do.

Journals and Notes

Lady Macbeth

The raven himself is hoarse
 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan *Duncan to arriving home*
 Under my battlements / Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, *Call out to spirits for support*
 And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full *is to be unmanly*
 Of direst cruelty / make thick my blood,
 Stop up th' access and passage to remorse
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between *build into*
 Th' effect and it / Come to my woman's breasts, *copy*
 And take my milk for gall, your murd'ring ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances *lose her womanhood*
 You wait on nature's mischief / Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, *make her strong enough to be a man*
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
 To cry, "Hold, hold!" *guilt free*

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1533/1533-h/1533-h.htm>

Blanche *Fighting the memory*

He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery-love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking- still- that thing was there... He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me--but I wasn't balding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty-which wasn't empty, but had two people in it... the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years...

*didn't
into
pans*

*next
making
realization*

Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very, drunk and laughing all the way. We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later-a shot! I ran out-all did!-all ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. "Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!" See? See what! Then I heard voices say- Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired-so that the back of his head had been-blown away! It was because-on the dance-floor-unable to stop my-self-I'd suddenly said..."I saw! I know! You disgust me..." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this--kitchen--candle...

*allowing
the
moment*

she loses Allan again

<https://visumbrasov.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/A-Streetcar-Named-Desire-2.pdf>

Medea. *Brain vs Heart*

Women, my mind is clear. I go to slay
 My children with all speed, and then, away
 From hence; not wait yet longer till they stand
 Beneath another and an angrier hand — *someone else kills them*
 To die. Yea, howsoe'er I shield them, die
 They must. And, seeing that they must, 'tis I *why me? tamango*
 Shall slay them, I their mother, touched of none *but it flowing*
 Beside. Oh, up and get thine armour on,
 My heart! Why longer tarry we to win
 Our crown of dire inevitable sin?
 Take up thy sword, O poor right hand of mine,
 Thy sword: then onward to the thin-drawn line
 Where life turns agony. Let there be naught
 Of softness now: and keep thee from that thought,
 'Born of thy flesh,' 'thine own beloved.' Now,
 For one brief day, forget thy children: thou — *forget they are your children*
 Shalt weep hereafter. Though thou slay them, yet
 Sweet were they. . . . I am sore unfortunate.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35451/35451-h/35451-h.htm>

NORA. *Existential Crisis Moment*

It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions, and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you — I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you. Or else I pretended to. I am really not quite sure which. I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman, just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2542/2542-h/2542-h.htm>

slow build

Thesis notes Date 3/1/21

~~Notes~~:

Lillian:

Nora anger
Work on breathing
Have her breathe at every
period and punctuation

operatives and pauses

felt like facing to
breathe because she
is not used to it

take the pauses on periods
now but still pause
during commas & other

Maria: Discussion of Play
and character

Taken line by line to find
the tempo

dill 3/2/21

Picking out operatives
 pauses before operatives
 works in some places others
 not so much

Picking tactics breaking down
 the monologue

first half explaining
 this confusion into
 anger

building to an explosion

this whole moment is a
 slow build to this huge existential
 moment for Nora

let the last lines really hit
 Torvald

Idea:

is she justifying this for
 others or herself?

At war with herself

Brain vs Heart

she is fighting with herself

What lines are her heart speaking
 let the motion slow on those
 lines

Jillian 3/8/21 & 3/9/21

Warm up: breath & voice work
walking on different vocal
aspects & resonators. General
body stretch.

Nora: Emotions far ending there
just need to make the color
changes distinct & smooth.

Do jumping jacks and high
knees to get breathing
up. Making objectives clear
to give validity to switches

Macka: Worked on tempo
emotions & conflict chain
pick up on lines and sentences

Fields more natural

Wanted to make it in three
main parts

Tempo, conflict, & Pacing

two quotes why are in the
quotes what do they
mean.

Paige

Play with tactics
first run and note

work through line

discussion of her willingness to lose
femininity

Talking tactics for lady M

Discussion of Polar opposites
and styles

strong and fast
vs

slow and steady

do many problems mentally
but is all there

Trying to escape her emotional
intelligence but keep him

Infantilizes Allen almost makes
him seem like a victim

Was she upset he cheated vs
on gang

Paige

Play with tactics
first run one note

work through line

discussion of her willingness to lose
femininity

Talking Tactics for lady M

Discussion of polar opposites
and styles

strong and fast
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Trying to escape her emotional
intelligence but keep him

Infantilizes Allen almost makes
him seem like a victim

Was she upset he cheated vs
on gang

Rehearsal Paige

slaw build
taking monologue modern
take it to extreme
of crazy aka "criminal mind would"

great facial expression work

looking around as to the spirits
full crazy

this is her true self she knows
she is only herself when she
is alone

see as letter open prop

Blanche

good switch in tone since
it's so long

good operatives and rediscover
the moments: the pain, the
trauma, the grief

the pause!!

Rehearsal Daise

get monologue morning to
help memorization
Pacing, walking, jumping
jacks

needs to get off book
to reach night for
the prices

lady M - work on diction

Blanche - pacing

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