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Reflection on the Senior Play: preparations, rehearsals, and outcome

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Senior Play Learning Outcome

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Outline of Senior Play Learning Outcome

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Senior Play—The Secret in the Wings

When the semester first began, we seniors who were about to participate in the play already voted for the play and the director. After the play and the director were announced, I hesitated about whether to go auditioning or not; after all, I am not familiar with the student director, Autumn, at that time. Moreover, *The Secret in the Wings* is an extremely difficult and complex play that I didn't think it would work out in any way. However, it turned out that everything work out really well and not one single person gave us unsatisfied criticism so far. Most important of all, the actors have all become close friends like a big family because of this precious experience. In the senior play this time, I learned team cooperation, play analysis and, most precious of all, more about who I am as a person.

From practicing to rehearsals, it has been a number of challenges for me to cooperate with each other because I am not really a “team person.” At first, I am not really comfortable with chatting and teasing with other actors like Doris Chen and Melody Fu did. Student director, Autumn Tsai, even told me in private that I really need to get myself closer to the others in order to feel the flow on stage and to receive and deliver messages and emotions on stage. For quite a long time, I had a hard time forcing myself to interact with each other because I prefer being alone and resting to chatting and having fun with the others. For me, I really enjoy being alone and enjoying myself when I am not in the rehearsals. Fortunately, it was not until I faced the challenge of playing the role, Allerleira, that I received help from Melody Fu, taking me and Seven Qi to have a walk on campus and chatted deeply, and truly opened up myself to everyone. After that, I became closer to the actors and was more

willing to talk to them and share my thoughts with them.

I had five roles originally: ambassador, royal dancing couple, second singer, Allerleira and child from the crawl place. However, because the script is too long and the scenes are too complicated, one of the scenes was deleted. In the end, I only had four roles left: ambassador, royal dancing couple, second singer and Allerleira. The play begins with a little girl being unhappy about her parents' leaving her alone to a dinner party. The little girl, Kristen, has to stay with a terrifying neighbor, Mr. Tung the Ogre, who has a tail. In order to calm his daughter down, the father of the little girl brings her a rose from the garden of Mr. Tung. However, the little girl yells: "You stole the ogre's rose and now he's coming over!" All of a sudden, Mr. Tung the Ogre appears, standing on the highest point of the stage, walking slowly down the stage hunched and creepy. After the parents are gone, Mr. Tung proposes to Kristen, asking her to marry him. Kristen rejects with fear and disgust, so Mr. Tung asks her: "I have a tail/tale." "I know," answers Kristen. "You wanna hear it?" And there begins the story.

The ambassador is a role that serves as the narrator of the first story, Three Blind Queens. In the story, three princes, living on their own with the nursemaid running the house, one day decides to get married and have their ambassador find three girls who match the portraits of the ideal wife they want. "The ambassador finds three fishermen's daughter's who resembled the portraits, dress them up as princesses and bring them to the king's sons" who eventually marry them. However, war breaks out afterward and the princes are forced to leave the castle. The princesses are all alone and the nursemaid take hold of the castle and orders the ambassador to take the three

blind queens to the woods and kill them there. The ambassador cannot let himself do it, so he takes the queens' eyes and bring the eyes back as proves that the queens are dead. This scene shows the cruelty of war and the terror of the nursemaid's ambition and lust. The ambassador, cannot find a way to disobey the nursemaid, nor can he find a solution to save the three queens, have no choice but to take away their eyes. Two of the three blind queens, left alone in the mountain side, eventually eats their children out of hunger, leaving the audiences ultimate horror and shock. For me, it was hard to act like a man. I needed to try my best to observe how men walk and speak, how they position and act. This was one of my most important role and I probably spent the most time on developing this role. Next, Kristen is the only three blind queens who doesn't eat up her child. Trapped in the nightmare, she needs someone to save her from the nightmare—Mr. Tung. Mr. Tung brings Kristen away from the nightmare with his continuous proposal: "Will you marry me, Kristen?" Kristen's rejection and Mr. Tung's running away bring out the next story. In the following story: Princess Who Wouldn't Laugh, I play one of the royal dancing couples. The scene begins with six royal dancing couples dancing merrily with each other on stage. I, as one of the three male royal dancing couples, go on stage first and invite Kristen, who is still in the previous shock, to the dancing. The dancing needs to be sexy and full of lust because lusts and desires are what the princess, as a pessimist who hates everything about the world, is fighting against. In fact, the dancing took us quite a few time to revise. We tried more than five different versions and finally found the best one that suits the topic. When the royal dancing couples are dancing excitingly with each other, the princess walks straight through the couples with her idiot-looking father by her

side. The princess is extremely unsatisfied about the world because there are people starving and wars everywhere. She knows “what the world is really like,” so she hates all the joy, happiness and excitement on the earth. To amuse her, the king decides to have different suitors making her laugh: “Whoever can make my daughter laugh, she may wed.” The princess agrees with the proposal sarcastically with one condition: “but if the suitor tries to make me laugh and doesn’t succeed, we cut off his head.” This shows what parents can do simply just to satisfy their children—even if it means killing and sacrificing others. The three suitors go on stage with their different jokes. I was the second suitor. Originally, the jokes were not funny at all. However, after Director Derrick’s adjustment and revision, the three jokes became extremely funny that make the audience laugh almost unstoppably. In fact, I enjoyed this scene so much that it became my favorite scene of the play. I really enjoy talking joke on stage and making people laugh. Student director, Autumn, always tells me before I go on stage to enjoy the stage and enjoy being in front of the audiences. In the second day of the play, I truly enjoyed being on stage and performing in front of the audience. According to Derrick, he said: “The Spanish prince is awoken today.” I could never forget what it was like to truly enjoy being on stage and perform the best—it was fantastic, and I think, the purpose of performing and acting. Only when the actors truly enjoy themselves can the audiences be pulled into the magic of drama.

Next, the play moves on to the third story: Snake Leaves Princess. This story originally was going to be deleted. However, this story is told by songs with beautiful melodies, no one wanted it to be deleted. In the end, Autumn chose to work on this scene and delete the last story: Stolen Pennis. Snake Leaves Princess is a story about

the perversity of true love—dying for one another. Snake Leaves Princess announces that whoever she marries “must take an oath to lie with me in my grave.” A boy goes courting her, and they get married. Unfortunately, the princess dies in a year, and the boy has to carry her into the grave and lies beside her with her. In this third story, I am the Second Singer. However, Autumn wanted to change the point of view of the story by making the First Singer, Seven Qi, the friend of the boy who marries the princess. This means my lines were cut down and I become chores, not Second Singer anymore. Although this was for the director’s request, and this could probably make the story better, I still find it very rude not to discuss with me about the arrangement and change of my character setting. Luckily, I still enjoyed the acting with others. The next scene is my major scene: Allerleira. The playwright of this play specially noted that every actor gets to use their real name in the acting except for Allerleira. It wasn’t until one day before the formal performance that I learned why. Derrick used one of his friend who also works in the theatre as an example. He said that that person is clumsy, so the person was always being laughed at by others, including the director and the actors. The person, in response to those rudeness, laughed. “How come you look so stupid!” said the director. “Ha, ha....” The person responded. The person, not knowing what to do and not wanting to make the situation awkward, using consistent laughs in order to cover up the brutality. Same to Allerleira whose father tries to make her his wife after the death of Allerleira’s mother. Allerleira is captured and brought to her father’s room by her father whom she was supposed to trust without any condition. After her father starts touching and cuddling her and she can feel something weird and uncomfortable, but she cannot say it out, nor can she run away from her father.

She can do nothing but laugh. She keeps laughing and laughing that in the end the laughs become begging and struggling—she screams. Allerleira eventually runs away from her father but marries a man who “look exactly like her father.” This shows that even if we do not like it, our parents still affect us in the way we choose our future lovers, especially fathers for their daughters.

The last story is *Seven Swans: or Silent for Seven Years*. The story is about a father who has seven sons and a daughter cannot bear the extremely noises his sons make, curses his sons. The seven sons become swans and their only sister has to “remain silent for seven years” and knit them “seven jackets of aster flowers, never breaking a single flower.” I played one of the son in this scene, and the most magical moment is when the daughter runs onto the woods to search for us and we make creepy sounds in imitation of the sounds in the woods. I even imitated the wolf. The story ends with Daniel, one of the swans who is the worst of all, not being able to change back to its human form because his sister isn’t able to finish one of the sleeves of the jacket. “For the rest of his life, one arm remains a wing,” read the father from the book. Daniel tries to get close to his father but the father refuse to confront his son.

This play looks light but is in fact very heavy, so it is very hard for us young unexperienced actors to carry out the seriousness of the play. The most challenging part was the clothing and cosmetics because we all played multiple roles. Thanks to my very helpful Anita, I got to get everything done in time. Tis experience is going to last for such a long time that I do not think I’ll ever forget it.