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Reflection on Participating in the 2016 Senior Play: *The Secrets in the Wings*

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2016 Senior Play: *The Secrets in the Wings*

In this year's Senior Play: *The Secrets in the Wings*, I was honored to be picked as a part of acting crew, and due to multiple characters in this play, I was able to get a few different parts throughout the play. More specifically, I was one of the three blind queens in the story "The Three Blind Queens", one of the dancing couples and ladies-in-waiting in "The Princess Who Wouldn't Laugh", a company in "The Three Snake Leaves", Louis (later as Melody since we decided to use our own name in the scene) in "Allerleira", and, lastly, the daughter in "Seven Swans". This is the first play, as I recall, that contains so many roles, but later on I realize that this creates a remarkable influence on the audiences, and it is indeed a joy for me to wander in this fantasyland full of different stories.

With so many roles in one play, the first problem I encountered was how to adapt myself to such, sometimes, dramatic change from one scene to another. For instance, from the blind queen to the dancing couple in "The Princess Who Wouldn't Laugh", my emotions have to switch tremendously in a short period of time. In the beginning, it was for sure a challenge for me, but as I got more familiar with the play and the characters through continuous practices, I had become a lot better at switching among different roles naturally, and I believe not only me but also everyone in the acting crew felt the same way.

Besides, the fundamental question for myself was how to interpret different roles and how to act the way they do. As this is my first time attending as well as acting in a play in college, I am a virtual rookie. However, I was really fortunate to have Doris with me in the acting crew since I can be really shy performing in front of a group of people whom I was not so familiar with even if we were classmates, and Doris really helped me overcome the awkward moments I might encounter if I were alone. After getting along well with others, including actors, director, and assistants, everything became a little bit easier because I was comfortable with them, and we all tried to help each other discover a better way to perform because there is never an end to acting.

From the beginning to the end, I truly appreciated the support from the director, Autumn Tsai. She never denied my efforts or ignored my opinions nor told me what to do; on the contrary, she would guide me gradually with patience when I was confused and uncertain of what I should do. Little by little, senior play had taken up my brain; I spent a lot of time in my brain thinking about different ways of performing and was allowed to try out these ideas to see if they worked. This is when I realized that my passion for acting and this play started to make me think critically, diversely, and, hopefully, more creatively, for we, as actors and actresses, have to understand our roles well enough to build a relationship between ourselves and our roles and develop our own definitions for these characters.

However, there would be times when I had no clue what to do or how to improve my performance. In this case, we would work like a team; others would

either propose their suggestions for my role or search for useful sources, such as related videos or hypothetical situations, to help me shape my characters. This is also why I love this team so much, for there was no competition among us; we all spared no efforts to make this play better.

Yet, despite the fact that we had spent a lot of time analyzing the play and the roles, the gist of the play remained unsolved until Derrick came and pointed out the question once again, asking us to look for the answer to this most essential question of the main focus of the play.

The Secrets in the Wings is basically talking about relationship between parent and child in every form as every story is related to love and family. We are also reminded by Derrick that sometimes we may put too much emphasis on child's side, probably because we have more sympathy for them as we are children ourselves, but forget to put ourselves in parents' shoes. This is a play talking about humanity, and when we are in different positions, we react and perform differently as we usually expect others to love and understand us. Also, there are dirty or selfish sides in every story, or we can say in every family since these stories cannot get away from family and love; just like this play, it is full of fairy tales enchanting to children, but meanwhile it is about the cruelty in the reality of the stories, as Kristen was left at home by her parents, seven sons were cursed by their own father, or the way Allerleira was forced by her father.

In addition to the contents of the play, we had spent a lot of time wondering what makes these roles say such words or act in certain ways and the meaning of connection of each story. Take my role as the daughter in "Seven Swans" for

example. It took me quite some time to figure out how to express the internal struggle of the daughter, especially after her brothers are turned into swans and she is left alone. To me, the climax of the scene lies in the part when the daughter sees the feathers of her brothers and she feels that she can find them by tracing those feathers but ends up getting lost in the woods. At first, the only emotion I thought of was fear; nevertheless, after several discussions with other actors, I developed a series of emotional transitions for the daughter that could enrich the scene. Likewise, as Melody in "Allerleira", I initially thought that I was not so important in the story since I was only one of the companions of Allerleira, but later I had learned that there is no roles that are unimportant; every role counts, and even a supporting role needs to create his/her own identity to make it distinct from other characters. It is the task of the actors to build up the identities for each role in the play.

Apart from the play and characters, I have come to realize the importance of property and stage scene. When Derrick first came, he strongly requested us to have the settings confirmed as soon as possible; otherwise, it would be difficult for actors to perform properly. Even though at the very start I did not understand why those stage settings were so urgently demanded, I have to admit, especially after the sketchy scenes were created and we started to get used to the existence of those settings, that they indeed matter because in that event, we were able to take advantage of different settings; by involving these scenes in our performances, it gives them the reason to be there, instead of just being furniture that is placed to convey certain kind of atmosphere.

Last but not least, with so many people working together, communication, collaboration, and mutual understanding are undoubtedly significant. There were disagreements among us without dispute, but we still have to negotiate and, sometimes, compromise to solve the problems and make everything work.

Luckily, we all respect others' opinions regardless of some dissension. As for me, I have learned to perceive others' feelings and how to be in a group. I firmly believe I was lucky enough to have this group of people as a team, for each of them was lovely and kind. Every rehearsal feels like a family reunion to me; everyone in the team is my family. We went through those hardship and difficulties together and we helped each other improve. They made me enjoy coming to school for rehearsal because I knew there would always be something funny happening and that we would gain ground every time.

I truly feel that I cannot make a conclusion for this wonderful and meaningful experience, because there are so many things I have perceived and observed. I know I have definitely grown a lot mentally as I challenged myself to something I didn't have courage to try, and the result came out just right. Senior play is certainly an achievement for me; I felt good when I was on stage acting with other actors and actresses, and I was pleased with the relationship with stagehands and the atmosphere we created jointly throughout the play. Although it could be tiring and hard shifting among characters, I enjoy the show and the fairyland created by all of us. All in all, this is a precious memory that I will never forget; I will remember everything I learned from the play and my "crew family" and apply those lessons in the rest of my life.