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

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Reflection on participation of 2016 Senior Play

– *The Secrets in the Wings*

It has been two weeks since the Senior Play ended. It had taken me one week to stop having nightmares and waking up in the middle of the night, and another one week to recollect myself, to return to school, and to catch up with schoolwork. Though things are similar as where I have left, some things have changed, as if though the little boy has awoken from his dreams, he would still recall the kings, birds, and oceans from his journey. I cannot say that I have learned to be a director, and the memory body which I have experienced is so huge that I cannot consume it all at once, but what I have experienced allow me to continue seeking a “living” life through drama, and to develop a philosophy through it. As a director, as an actor and as a human being, I still have a lot to learn. I have to inhale, to digest, to exhale, and to inhale the flow again and again with love, and because of love I would change things in life, for though living as a corpse makes life easier, it is not easy for me to forget the feeling of being alive, and to be alive requires efforts to stay humble, to be independent, to be brave, and to change. Perhaps through practice the slow turtle would be a little bit faster, and with these lessons keeping in mind, the turtle would seek efforts to renew herself every day, and due to this, life would be tougher yet much interesting.

The lesson first and foremost is aspect. The question is, “what is the story about?” “What does the story try to tell us?” and though there are many ways of interpretation through colors, music, and form, each interpretation is an aspect, and each decision says something. The play is a dance itself, and there is music within the lines and throughout the play. To be a director is to be the painter of the play. When music and lights enter the canvas,

they are the invitation for the audience, and each invitation says something about the story to have the audience continue to be involved.

My senses on music needs to be improved, for till the end of the performance I still have questions on some of the fading outs and the choice of the music, as in the connection between Kristen's Three Blind Queens song and the music before it remains weird and unsolved, and after the performance Charviel told me that there are no consistency in the music, which all I know is that asides from the later decided music in Allerleirah and Seven Sons, the style of the music floats from time to time especially in Princess who Wouldn't Laugh and in the three blind queens (between the two music of the coming princes and the blinding of the queens and between opening and the ending) and it remained unsolved. I was not familiar with the lights, and only slightly changed the cue of the door's lights on the third day of performance, and asked Laura of the pink slash in Allerleirah to be dimmer, and rearranged some of the cues of the lamplight, and I only realized that aspects in the lights means a lot in the space of the stage when the cue of the lights at the end of Seven Sons went wrong on the third day of performance—I have to learn the lights, nothing more.

The story needs consistency, and the consistency comes from understanding the theme of the play. Quote, “an aspect is a theme park where you can play within.” The process of question would be, “what does this thing speaks of? Does the message that the thing conveys match what you want? What else does it speak of?”

I have not really learned the aspect of the setting yet, especially that the meaning of the lightbulbs and the meaning of the tree is still obscure. There were too many things on the stage, and it will make us me even more difficult to understand the stage when there are too many things. Yet when I recall from the very beginning, aspect is something to be developed not only before the process but also within, and first step is to recognize it. The first question I asked Derrick in the beginning of November was on “debut,” and the first barrier I met was “conflict,” and the line was “a good debut is a good action, and a good action helps the actor

think what does next.” The problem I had on debt and conflicts were the sub contexts, and the sub contexts are developed from what I want to say in the theme, and the theme should be noticed from the script itself. On November 23rd when Derrick came, on drama he said that all the senses—violence, sex, beast, and pleasure—are the things deep inside which creates its light and heaviness, and what hovers above is drama, on setting he said that I have detached from what the playwright has already given, which is to have the unexpected appear from an ordinary closed space, and the space (which should indicate the space and time of the play) would allow the actors to have a standpoint. The symbol of the stairs must be something heavy, and the heaviness has not appeared from the beginning till the end whether in setting or in performance. On the Opening, it is about deciding what kind of parents the mother and father are (which should relate to the theme of the whole play) and what stimulations the audience should receive and about the music in speech, and later on it is about the music of the mother’s footsteps, and how the mother and father are a pair of dancers and the child is the interrupter. Clashes and intentions should appear throughout the play, and the intention would be missing all the time and one of the most important job of the director is to find the missing little intentions so as to have the big intention (which is the purpose of the character within the scene, the purpose of the scene, and the purpose of the play) make sense.

The ogre is a character which I think I will remember for years, for I should always think, “if the ogre is the character that I insisted to create because that he is me myself, then why is he neglected in the play? Perhaps I have to become an ogre once to realize how it is to be the ogre on the stage.” Quote, “Every summation of a fixed point has a meaning; do not let it go easily. If you have summoned a monster, you must give the monster a meaning, or else he would be redundant and meaningless.” The relationship of the ogre and Kristen is a question which I had not handled well. In the beginning I thought Kristen would be less and less afraid of the ogre for the fact that she has been listening to his stories beside him and

each time he speaks she is addicted to the story, yet I did not really recognize the fear that pulls her away from the story—it is fear that the ogre has created unwillingly (for he is fear himself,) and that is his sadness. Within the story as the ogre sits beside, he has no relationship with the story itself, and when he cannot communicate with the characters within, instead of helping the story to process, the ogre is redundant. As Wayne said on December 16th, when Kristen has entered the story herself and is seemingly a female chorus, the ogre speaks nothing, and therefore one way to slightly fix the situation to make the ogre's intention (do not be afraid of me, I will tell you a story, I am sorry... but will you stay beside me? The basement is warm when you are beside) make sense is to have Kristen enter the story later and differentiate her from the other chorus members. With her beside the ogre for a while, the ogre would have a meaning, for Kristen would help the space of the basement to have a better standpoint. Till the end, the character of the ogre remains a question to me. The ogre's growl and the orange in the script are the two codes that I did not solve. Initially I thought that the growl is desperate cry of the ogre as Kristen has left him, but since it is not workable, there should be other interpretations, or at least, we must find something else workable.

The aspect of *Allerleirah* and *Three Snake Leaves* remains a question to me till the end of the performance as well. For *Allerleirah*, I understood that the conclusion has lost focus, but I did not know how it is because of the aspect missing. When I discussed with Sue after the performance we reached a conclusion that the father should not leave his space where he is high on the stairs, and he should not have connection with the ogre. The ones who need to have connections would be the female chorus and *Allerleirah*, and that *Allerleirah* should not dress herself in the woods but in front of the mirror instead. I do not understand why the father has to be sneaking in the scene though—the interpretation of the father was that he is the king of the world and symbolizes male domination. And I never really understood what went wrong in the *Three Snake Leaves* (perhaps when the heaviness really entered the scene I would realize that it is not right this way). However, there are many ways and reasons that

things could go wrong and could be fixed in the intentions and losing focus problems, and I will not know how these “many ways” could be simply after this semester, and I will certainly not be able to convey them simply through words, so about all these questions, I will leave them here.

The second lesson is communication. Communication leads to cooperation, and I have to be fast, and learn not to be afraid, for a director’s job is to fix things through communication; these are, besides aspect, almost everything. I realized that I have not yet experienced the feeling, power, and urge of “speak it” in my previous play *If We Were Birds* as a chorus member when our intention was to urge the princess Philomela to tell her story to expose our pain to the people, not before I took hold of the microphone in the theatre. The only way I could possibly learn is to ask, ask and learn and reflect, and all these come from experience in the theatre and life. Life is heavy, so be it. Learning to recognize that I am giving up and escaping is the first step, and then I have to be brave and face it.

In the theatre week I was blasted and I did not know how to work with the crew members. Suddenly they are in front of me, all 55 of them. And when I finally understood how I should work with them, I was too slow, and I was afraid, and I was angry. I was afraid to face the group of nervous people who would blast their anger on me in no time, and I was afraid to make the decision. I had to understand what is going on in every one and every group, and in especially the actors, yet I did not ask either. It was a horrible experience, and for this part I could only recall with the quote for that is almost everything that touched me on being a leader, “Tell them what is right and what is wrong. This is the way you should love them. You are the eye of the ship; the captain tells them where to lead. If there is a reef before you will you simply let the ship sink? Where are you leading them? You will not have an aspect if you continue to back off, to compensate, and to tolerate. If one is not ready to change, then the theatre is dead. The person enters the theatre as a zombie. It is your job to tell them where the Gape of Good Hope is, and you have neglected the responsibility.”

I never knew that I actually hated to be a leader before this: Leaders do not listen what other people say, they are bossy, and they always do what they want to do. And it is of these words that I realized that leaders must be brave, and because of love they speak, and because that they speak, things can be different. I have to speak. Whether it is about learning to work with Laura, to work with my crew, to work with the actors, or to work with my assistants, I had to keep these words in mind; for the things that I had not done well, I would have to work on it in the future, for I already know what the problem is. Quote, “Do it or not, it is your choice. Tomorrow is the last chance, however, and I will not be here.” The morning of the second day of performance, I sat beside Laura, and tried to work with her. I took hold of the microphone as she took hold of the call, and I spoke of what kind of image I wanted through the microphone, I had my phone beside me to look at the time, and that was when I felt what she felt in her place with the crew along with the actors. Later that day we were led to thank all the crew members, and I know that was something that we should have always done but did not do, not really because that I did not want to and certainly not because of pride, but that... I was afraid, and perhaps if we did it the third day Laura will not be so angry. I have never been a leader in my life till this semester. I know that I am still afraid to take hold of the flow, but I know my speech is important.

The third lesson is “Do not judge yourself.”

I remember the day my nerves broke down after Derrick came because I could not understand how the little intentions could be missing and I have to understand what went wrong but perhaps I was too slow and perhaps my senses were not open and I wanted to open my senses but each time the flow just passed like a cast of wind. It was the first week of December, Wayne came and in the next hour we were discussing how the communication between the actors was missing and I was wondering how I could solve the problem. Though the actors were beside they did not really understand what he was talking about and neither my assistants did and the only thing I could do was to catch up with Wayne and try some

things out on the eyeballs and the way the actors walked, and I left my actors puzzled. The day after that day when Derrick came, things were horrible in the Opening and I should have reviewed the Opening but I did not, and I asked Derrick the same question on intentions and, quote “I’ve already showed you, and you will have to learn to steal from what I did. You cannot learn all these from a thesis, a paper, and especially not from words,” and from these I could only remember what he did but could not solve it myself.

On December 11th the question was, “you want the people to appear stupid in a dull party, so you gave a dull dance that appears boring?” and when Rita and Sue came they gave an advice on the dance in *The Princess Who Wouldn’t Laugh*, which is that there should be intentions in the chorus’ dance and that the dance should have three movements to build up the ‘high’ atmosphere, and the princess should have her debut in the third step when Daniel appears to be the prime dancer. Yet in the beginning I could not follow them and I was beginning to be dazed, so they questioned me whether I should skip the scene for time had been wasted. I told them I cannot, for the dance is horrid and I had tried to fix it for months. And although later on Sue and Rita slowed down, the atmosphere was totally wrong. I was told to give up this scene by my assistants because there are a lot to be done in the later scenes, yet I told them that I really did not want Derrick to have another three hours spent on something I could have solved. Later on Friday night I got a message from Wayne that “if you cannot fix the basic parts, it would be difficult for Derrick to save the play, because... let me guess, he is still spending time teaching the basics now, and it will only take him three days to finish directing the play.” It was about the Opening that I had not reviewed, and I knew what he meant, including the time and all, and yet there are lots of things to be understood and solved.

Later that night I told Sue I really do not want Sabrina to come because everything is chaotic and I could still bear to be lectured by another director at the time after the instructor and all these senior directors and actors had come, and that I am afraid that I would collapse

in front of my actors, which is the last thing on earth that I wanted to do. And, I would NEVER forget what she said to me, “You are not Derrick; of course you will not become him. No one will become him—you will only become a better you, so try and keep up. Tell the people who come and help that you are slow. Stop them when you have questions. They are here to help you.” The next day, December 12th, when the actors and me tried zoobie doobie, everyone actually appeared to be high, and they looked stupid, and the Princess Who Wouldn’t Laugh’s state of mind only makes sense when she had contrast with the chorus members, and the same idea goes to the jokes of the suitors and their following deaths. Although some people still think that it was a huge waste of time, I think I had made a choice which is much better than what I could have done.

Sabrina came later on that day and opened a discussion with all of us on how the father would play with Allerleirah and what identities the chorus in Allerleirah would be, and I think that is the beginning that I could finally work with the actors, and that was when drama hovered within us. Sabrina showed to me that my job is to make a decision which fits into my aspect and which also fits into the actors, and that I am my actors’ third eye, and due to this I must always ask them what they feel on the stage. I do not have to be a ‘director,’ and that is because I never knew what a ‘director’ is. From her I learned that I am not really different from being an actor myself, and therefore I must always put myself into their shoes. When I work on the flesh, one way is to always think of how I would want to perform on the stage, and feel the motif myself, and I do not have to think that it is difficult—instead, the intention is better simple. Be the actor, find the feeling that I want, and when they have made their decision, I decide what the focus should be. And this is what happened within the week before Derrick saw the new version of the dance in Princess who Wouldn’t Laugh, and the rehearsal was one of the best ones I had ever experienced under his instruction in this play.

I have to remind my actors this same line, “do not judge yourself” that I am reminded all the time, because it is too easy to hate oneself, and too difficult to love oneself, yet it is only

when we love ourselves that we could enjoy the moment that we are involved in the present, and due to this, each moment has a meaning, and the connections of the meaning would make the ending meaningful. And self-hatred leads to hating others, and if we hate each other as well as ourselves, we will not be able to work with each other, and things will be wrong, because the real emotions will be missing, and things will not work all the time, no matter this is about an actor facing his or her character, or me working with all the people around me, and I am still learning. I had learned from Sue a lot when she came to the rehearsal and helped out on the scene *Allerleirah*. I found out that I never really understood the actor, and when she was being fast, I could not have her understand what kind of fast it was and therefore I could not slow her down, and due to the fact that I could not persuade her with an intention that she could relate with her character, she hated the character so much that she could not perform well, and because of that she hated the rehearsals on the scene. And all these should be the things that I need to talk to her and persuade her. A director's job is to give supports to her actors. They need to know when they had performed well, remind them to take it easy, play, and enjoy the stage. And I have finally begun learning this in the beginning of December.

If each character in the play means a kind of person, each person reveals a part of the actor himself. Due to many reasons, one could be the oppressor whereas the other would be the oppressed, like *Allerleirah* and her father, the person who protected and nursed her yet consumed her, and the world is horrid and stupid when you see it, and due to hatred one would isolate with the others and the world would wither and crumble and die, and then communications would be missing, and though to become a bird and escape from the world seems to be a choice for freedom, it is also a curse for one isolates himself from the world, and yet with a little bit of understanding, things could be much different, and that is what the play is all about. Because that each person is different and yet interesting, we must find a way to understand each other, and open up in front of each person, for each person deserves

respect, and each person would know some things that I do not know, and similarly I would know things that others do not know. To be a 'zero' is to have a big heart to consume the souls of the people around me, to inhale their emotions, to notice and then listen what they need, and to do what I can do to fulfill their needs and project my needs, and then there will be communications, and then things will be different, for when there are communications, we will have the chance to change the things in our lives.

I guess one thing that I did just fine was that, at least the actors, assistants, and I are still quite good after the play, and it is good that we really enjoyed a part of it in one way or another. I do think this winter is really warm because of all these people beside me. A story has just ended, but it is not the ending. In fact, it is only the beginning now, and I must review everything I have learned to become a better me. The ending should be gentle and soft, for each moment deserves to be treated gently, and this is what I have learned from Derrick and the stories he told me and the others. Life has a thousand tastes, and I have to learn to accept, and to treat them with care, for life is so heavy and beautiful that one has to dive really deep to understand it and to touch it. The theatre is a mirror, I guess, and it allows me to look into myself and the people around me, and when I look back I will understand that I am not alone, and that there are lots of people around me, and each life yearns for love and understanding, and I must have a big heart to embrace it. Therefore when the next story begins (and in fact it has already begun now), I will have to learn to look into the eyes of my fear as he speaks, "once upon a time..." and it is only when I listen to his stories that I could understand the heaviness of a life and live, and though difficult I have to learn to 'live' each breath I breathe, and with this I will add aspects in my life, to be brave, and to be a 'zero.'