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**Reflection on Participating in the 2017 Annual Play:**  
*Machinal*

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Reflection on Annual Play 2017—*Machinal*

This was my third time participating in the Annual Play, while every time I had a unique experience and learned different kinds of things, this was the first time I strongly felt my responsibility as an experience actor. Since other actors, including the director and the stage managers didn't have experience before; I started to help my fellow actors with their acting. Since the play included some intimate scenes, I helped the male and female leading actors to create the intimate moments. While I always believe acting is believing—believing yourself to be the character you are playing at the moment and try to feel and connect as that character is instead of trying to “show the audiences” how the character feels, I always love the feeling of becoming another character other than myself and enjoying the experiences of another human beings, and I try to direct the actors with this way. Amazingly, seeing other people trying to immerse themselves in their characters and observing the characteristics of the characters they were playing start to emerge was such a wonderful feeling.

On the other hand, the other most memorable part in my Annual Play was the character analysis. I was responsible for three roles this time, including the Mother, the Stenographer, and the Voice. I enjoyed the process of creating the Mother role the

most, since it was the most challenging and the most interesting among the three. At first, I thought I should give the Mother character a Texan accent. On one hand, it sounded more original, on the other hand, I imagined the Mother character to be someone who used to live in the countryside in America. While being poor but pretty, her mother asked her to marry to some rich landlord. Rebellious and stubborn, she chose to marry for love. Her husband was merely a cement worker who occasionally loved to learn to read books and even wrote some poems in his spare time; in other words, the husband of my character was the unrealistic type. After getting a job opportunity to the north, the husband got lightened up and moved the whole family with him. Unfortunately, since he was still a cement worker and the expenses became higher in New York City, my character experienced a lot of hardships and endured starvation with his husband. Tragically, he died quite soon when Helen, the main character in the play, was only 7 years old. Because of this, my character firmly believed in the power and necessity of money, and was determined to have her daughter get it, not making the same mistake as her mother did.

Despite the fact that a Texan accent would lighten up the rural part of the Mother, when I actually used it in the rehearsal it did not turn out that good. Because of this, I gave up the idea of a distinctive accent and stuck to the features of my character—being strict in general for her daughter's own good, yearning for money,

and remaining quite cynical for the world. While acting the Mother on stage, it was a more emotional for me personally since the scenario in the play was pretty much daily life events that would happen to any family and were highly relative to anyone. For example, after the performance, at least 10 or people came up to me and said how much the conversation and interactions of me and my daughter in the play were completely identical to theirs with their mothers. More importantly, since my own mother passed away four years ago, playing this role was a great challenge to me. In fact, I often felt like I became my mother and spoke to myself when I was on stage. As I got into a psychology of a mother, although the characteristics of my character was indeed quite different from my own mother, the subtle way a mother cared for her child was pretty much the same and thus I felt like I understood my mother from a completely different angle as well.

My second character, the stenographer, was the one that I was not really happy with my final presentation. The main reason was the personality I set for the role was too one-dimensional. In the play, in Act I, there were two stenographers, Helen Jones and me. According to my reading of the play, I thought the function of my character was to emphasize Helen's inexperience in her work as well as her look, since Mr. Jones, the vice president, was always only interested in her rather than me. Concluded from this understanding, I pictured myself to be about 40 years old, single, very

envious and jealous of the attention Helen was given from my boss, since I fancied him and his money for a long time PLUS with my ability and professional appearance I could not figure out why my boss was choosing and chasing her instead of me. As a result, when Helen even acted so ungrateful toward my boss' kindness and still fooled herself around and did nothing at work, I could not help myself but scolded and bullied her. The main reason why I considered my character of the stenographer to be one-dimensional was mainly because I believed even playing a villain, I should be able to still make the audiences emphasize with my character. In that case of my character, it was her loneliness and her efforts in supporting herself on her own as a "spinster". However, in my three days' performances, I did not think I show that side of my character very much. I mainly presented my hatred toward Helen and my adoration to my boss, and perhaps that was all. Plus, since the scene my stenographer was in was the very beginning scene in the play, I found myself to be a bit nervous and could not create my imaginary setting of the office environment on stage.

As for my final role, the Voice, was actually personified by us rather than the original play. In the play, there should be some voices in Helen's head encouraging her to kill her husband with a bottle of stones, in another word, we, the voices, were the inner voice inside her head. As a result, when we came up on the stage, we needed to gradually emerge ourselves from off-stage and came to Helen cautiously step by

step to seduce her to pick up the bottle and fill it with small stones.

When the other actors and I were discussing how we should present the voices, we set ourselves to be different stages of Helen in her life. That is, I was the young and innocent Helen before she ever knew anything between men and women, while another voice represented the Helen when she first had sex with her lover and finally realized the pleasure in sex, etc. There were in total four of us, and I did find quite fun while playing the character, since the only thing that was staged was when we should speak our lines, the rest of it would be completely improvisation. In this way, I could be very creative and interactive with other voices and sometimes Helen. Plus, the feeling of being a young girl was quite interesting to me since it set a complete contrast from the Mother character I was playing in Act II.

In the end, the experience of my third participation in the Annual Play was after all, very memorable and precious to me, since it was the first time I got to play so many different characters with complete different characteristics. Moreover, using my performance in Annual Play as my Graduation Project was significant to me since I acknowledged the efforts and passion I put in acting and drama in my university life. Since I would like to pursue the career of acting in the future, this became a mill-stone in my path to become a professional and responsible actor.