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Reflection on Participating in the 2017 Senior Play:
All in the Timing

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2017 Senior Play

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Reflection on 2017 Senior Play—*All In the Timing*

It is hard to put a spiritual experience into words, as the connection between me and theater is a long-term relationship since I was a child. If I have to write a reflection on Senior Play, the journey actually starts from years ago. I like to be on stage, or, in a theater.

Everytime I get into a theater, I feel calm and excited simultaneously. It seems that there is magic in the atmosphere. Therefore, being Senior Play's director is a dream when I was in my freshman year. Since then, I tried to not only get more experiences on acting, but also be a part of the crew. I was an actress in both Annual Play, *The Heiress* and *If We Were Birds*; and was a group member of lighting in *How I Learned to Drive*. Moreover, I attended classes, workshops both in the department and other places. As a student of Derrick Wei, the teacher that leads me to love and see through theater more, I immediately asked him to be my mentor when I was chose to be the director.

To begin with, *All In the Timing* is not the first play that came to my mind. At first, I wanted to choose a comedy with a sad ending that will make the audience cry. Then Derrick recommanded a few plays, including *All In the Timing*. Reading *All In the Timing* gives me pleasure and imagination. These fourteen short plays are mostly playing with language and time. Due to time limitation, I only choose four plays that attracts me most. These four plays are: *Sure Thing*, *Words*, *Words Words*, *Seven Menus*, and *Long Ago and Far Away*. Choosing four out of fourteen plays is not quite difficult, yet the difficult part is how to connect these four plays together since they have no connection. Derrick asked me to give myself a quiet moment to think about this play, and find out the impulse of making this play. Even looking

at the play without having thoughts might help too. Therefore, I deal with these characters' stories and my own life story in my mind every day. In general, these short stories portray the relationships, mistakes, choices, timing, and the meaning of life, which also represent the encounters we have with others throughout our life. However, even till the last day of performance, I still believe that there will be a different meaning when I reach a different age of time. After all, it's all in the timing.

The first short play is *Sure Thing*. *Sure Thing* presents the process of continuity of Bill and Betty's repeating conversation when they first meet in a cafeteria. I like the setting of bell ringing whenever the man or the woman say something that will not make the conversation continue. Just as what Bill and Betty said in the play "City Life. It's Crazy." *Sure Thing* is a miniature of young couples in our society. People have to start a conversation with luck. If one says anything that does not match the other person, then this relationship stops right away. I want to give *Sure Thing* to those who want to restart some particular moments in their lives. Although the truth is, life is a one-way ticket train, they can restart again in *All In the Timing*. As for the rehearsal, I always have a great time when working with the two actors, Alina and Brian. Alina is an actress with experiences, while Brian is a new actor with talent. They learned very fast and can always give out good ideas. Moreover, both of them get along well and are willing to try new things I asked. In the end, *Sure Thing* become a short but lively beginning for *All In the Timing*. The audience laughs in many parts, such as when Betty changes her attitude while noticing Bill is from Harvard; the time when Betty got insane and micmic guys who pick women up just to have sex; or when Bill talks about politic. Nevertheless, I did not let the audience feel delighted too long. The transition between *Sure Thing* and the second play, *Words, Words, Words* is violent.

In *Words, Words, Words*, the experimenters hope that the three chimps could produce *Hamlet* with their typewriter, yet *Hamlet* remains a mystery to the subjects. In the transition, I made the experimenters come up stage and drag Brian away in order to change him into one of the monkeys in *Words, Words, Words*. There are three monkeys in this play, Milton, Swift, and Kafka respectively. The reason why I choose this play is because it is hilarious to see monkeys typing and arguing something they do not understand. What's more, these three monkeys are not ordinary monkeys, they are named after famous writers. Studying in English Department, we face literature every day. Sometimes, I feel like I am the monkey in this cage. Just as what Swift says in the play "Why did they pick Hamlet in the first place? What's Hamlet to them and they to Hamlet that we should care?" Yet, if we look into lives, this is why human care about Hamlet, since it is a reflection of humanity. Whereas, the first thing that appeals to me is that I want to act as a monkey since I first saw the movie *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. The apes in the movie are all motion capture actors, and being a motion capture actor used to be my dream.

The actors in this play, Brian, Charveil, and Joyce are all good at their body movements. We mimic apes and discuss this play together. The difficulty of this play is that Derrick told me this play is an example of Theatre of the Absurd, while I do not know much about it. Furthermore, this play also satirize three kinds of person in a high pressure society: the fatalist, the rebel, and the one who only lives in its own world. As a result, I tried a lot of ways to make the actors do absurd actions while saying clever languages. However, I am too young to have experiences in observing these three kinds of people in a high pressure environment, such as a war. Therefore, I had a hard time in the beginning finding directions to give the actors. Thanks to Derrick's help, *Words, Words, Words* turns out to be a strange,

hilarious play with a bit of violence. The ending is interesting, since no one could ever know why Kafka is the one who types Hamlet, and whether did Swift take his revenge successfully.

After the intermission, *Seven Menus* is the next play. It is about seven dinner dates that take place in the same restaurant chronically, as each of the dates reveals the characters' status quo, and the development of their relationship. I like this play because it deals with different kinds of relationships, including young couples who just fall in love lately, couples who married for years. It shows that people could change their mind through different ages. Just as Ruth in the play, she could be a woman who does not care about money in her early twenties, but hang out with a guy works in high finance in her thirties. Derrick asks me to look deep into these people's relationship, and make the audience feel upset whenever a couple separates. I want the character stay on stage after they left the dinner table in order to represents even though we leave a person, memories stay. I could see and feel these people's stories. I feel warm when I see Hazel supporting Ruth's decision although she does not like Ruth's fiancé, Barry. I am with Ruth when Dawn replaced Hazel's seat. I feel sad when Paul see his friend, Barry, having sex with his partner, Dawn. *Seven Menus* ends up with Phyllis sitting at the dinner table alone, while the people once has sit by the table passing by, saying the conversation they had before. It is as if the table has all those memories in it. Through the music from Her's soundtrack glides in, the last play *Long Ago and Far Away* is shown.

Long Ago and Far Away depicts a scene in a house, where a couple, Gus and Laura, holds different opinion over the meaning of "reality" while packaging for moving to a new residence. This is a play that I devoted the most. Not only because it is the longest play of all, but also because it is deeper than other four plays. *Long Ago and Far Away* really drags my emotion and memories out from reality, since I am coping with a relationship at the same time. I can understand how Gus feels when he cannot handle Laura's mood, yet I can also

feel what Laura has in her mind. They are just a couple who loves each other the most, but both are not the suitable one for each other. Gus is a guy who worked hard for ten years and finally has money to move to a better place and enjoy a better life. He thinks straightforwardly, cares about what other think of him, and he tends to feel anxious about everything he cannot handle. However, Laura is the kind of sensitive woman who likes to think a lot, talk about philosophy, and emotional. After her father's miserable death, she become more easily to get into melancholy. They could never understand each other, yet fate put them together. Therefore, Laura used Ruth as her another identity, travels to another space, where she met Jack. In there, she could be happy there. While Gus, could not find Laura in the present time and space. Working with both Austin and Irene makes me learned a lot in how to train actors with no experiences. I spent a lot of time with them on developing their relationship and force them to bring out their true emotion. Both of them improves a lot in the end of the performance and I am so proud of them.

Three months of rehearsals and preparation are never enough. I had to think about stage design, lighting, music, while training the actors with different exercises. It is definitely an experience that is irreplaceable. Director is a position that needs to push myself continuously, since the whole team all relies on me. Nevertheless, after the performance, I do not care much about how well is the play, but hope that every Senior Play's cast and crew can fall in love with theater. Theater is a place that brings miracle and happiness into life. As for me, I will always keep these four stories deep in my soul. I love every one of them, and will let them stay by my side in life, always.



Sure Thing



Words, Words, Words



Seven Menus



Long Ago and Far Away