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Reflection on Participating in the 2019 Senior Play:
Golden Child

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LOD- 2019 SP Reflection

Reflection on Participating 2019 Senior Play

Senior Play is a tradition in the FJU English department. Every year, undergraduate students work together to develop a performance before the last year of graduation. The reason why I chose to join the 2019 Senior Play is that I hope to gain some theatre experience before I graduate. I developed an interest in theatre near the last few years in college. The time I came entered the English department, I was more interested in Cinema rather than Theatre. But as I took theatre-related courses or go see plays held by students in our department, I gradually grew more and more interested in theatrical performances and studies. Because of this late discovered interest, the 2019 Senior Play was my last chance to participate in a school theatrical production. I was thankful that our director, Mandy, was willing to give me a chance despite I had no experience. To share my experience in joining the 2019 Senior Play, it is always nice to start from the very beginning.

Part one: Sailing Into the Unknown

This year, the senior play was led by Mandy, she decided to perform a script named *Golden Child* by David Henry Hwang. The script tells an interesting story related to a Chinese family in 1919. The first thing I learned is that nothing is free. I was naive and thought that scripts won't cost any or a lot of money, so when I knew that this script not only costed a fortune but also it has to be paid per performance day, I was shocked. However, I then understood why and appreciated having this script. Since the playwright spent a lot of time and hard work, it is fair that we have to pay.

As I was "fresh on the theater boat," I was excited but nervous as well to work as an assistant director. In the beginning, I had one big question—What exactly does an assistant

director do? I had no experience, I started to get very anxious. I searched for information on the internet, eager to find any concrete guidelines, but I only got answers saying: what an assistant director does depend on different directors or productions. This definitely was not helpful. I then asked Mandy, and she gave me a simple suggestion, which she said my job is to help the director anytime when needed. This tip helped me loosen up a little, I decided to take a more flexible attitude toward my work. Still, it doesn't mean I just vegged out, I should be prepared for anything at any time. It is like always being in a ready position.

During the early stage of preparation, many tasks were waiting to be completed. The first task is to assemble a team. Since the theatre is a highly group-based activity, forming a team is the very first step. This year, the team is led by Mandy, the director of the play. Brynn and I were the assistant directors. Along with Jackson, the stage manager, and Michelle, the producer, we were chosen by the director. After the main crews were decided, we will have to work together to add more and more people to form the whole production. Just like in heist movies, when assembling a team, a person's skill or ability is always the reason to choose a person for a position. In the process of picking the "right" people for the team, it is always hard to know if the person is the right one. In this process, I started to realize that the idea of getting all the best of the best in a team would be not the only goal. A team involves a group of random people with different personalities working together, though a good team does need talented people, it is more important if people can work together smoothly. But this is always easy in theory when we started to choose crews, we are unable to predict the future. Hence, instead of forming a production, it is more like letting all the people form the production.

Because I worked more often with the director, I was less involved with the technique groups. The second task for my part is to cast for actors in an audition, this process was a fun experience. I used to think, in an audition, any detail should not be unseen. Later on, I asked

an acting teacher about what to do during an audition, and he told me you just follow your heart. This is when I realized I am overthinking, and I decide to just relax and enjoy the show. During the audition, the feeling of watching the actors reading their monologues was amazing. To choose an actor for the play was not that hard, the feeling if the actor is suitable for the character just comes along. After all the positions are filled, the first stage of preparing a play is almost done. AT this time, I would say we were like walking in a mist, every step is risk-taking. It was scary but exciting.

Part Two: The Show Must Go On

During the second stage, rehearsals were our main job. The team was separated into two parts, the actors and the techniques. As for the technique groups, Mandy, Jackson and I used to have meetings with different technique teams every week. Every week we would have some progress. It was like puzzling bit by bit, in the end, we started to see the picture. As for the actors, together we would discuss the script and the characters, then we started the rehearsals. Hegel, our instructor, taught us to cut the script into scenes and beats. By doing so, it became easy for us to analyze the actions of the characters; and also, better for us to rehearse every day without calling all the actors in for practice.

One thing to notice is that Senior Play has no credits, which means people in the production can only use their spare time to prepare the play. Therefore, the effort everyone put in needs more worthy of praise. Most of the time, my main job is to participate in rehearsals and take notes. At first, the rehearsals were delightful and fun. It was not hurried to start with the script. Mandy would first conduct some warm-ups and activities. There were warm-ups such as lying on the ground and being like a starfish floating in the sea. The purpose of this warm-up is to relax the body and the muscles. It is funny is that sometimes actors get too relaxed and they would fall asleep. There are acting activities, for example, there would be two actors, one can only say one line, such as “I love you,” and the other actor has to be

convinced. The actor must try different ways to present the line “I love you,” to convince the other actor.

Standing aside and watch the actors do activities or rehearsals was fun. There were times when everyone would keep laughing for seconds just because someone did something funny. As time past, the rehearsals went on for months, people started to get tired. It was a long process such as running a marathon. To get to the finish line, one needs determination and never give up. I also felt exhausted from time to time. Time management is important. Since we only got our own free time to rehearse, time became precious to us. But people are not machines that can work 24 hours non-stop, and acting involves high concentration. To maintain a balance between working and resting became one of our challenges.

There are also other challenges \ we start to realize during the second stage. The first one is that there were too many actors. Hegel suggested to not choose too many actors before. Because we will have to spend extra time and effort which we do not have. Also, many of the actors this year have no acting experience. As a result, there was more time and more effort spent to help with new actors. Under these circumstances, rehearsals needed a lot of time and effort, I think Mandy and the actors worked hard to overcome these hardships. There were times when conflicts happened, but in the end, everything just worked out.

Part three: Once in a lifetime

Finally moving to the last stage, entering the performance theatre and preparing for the three-day performance. In the first two stages, the team only prepared outside the theatre. And by this time, we have to start making final and formal preparations. The technique groups became busier as we entered the theatre compared to the actors. I remember the production was as tense as a man on a wire in the theatre; especially for the technique groups, they only had a couple of days to make sure everything was all right. Usually, I would sit in the

audience seats, and watch all the stage props being set. Those moments, I will feel that the world we are building is coming alive, and I cannot wait for the show started.

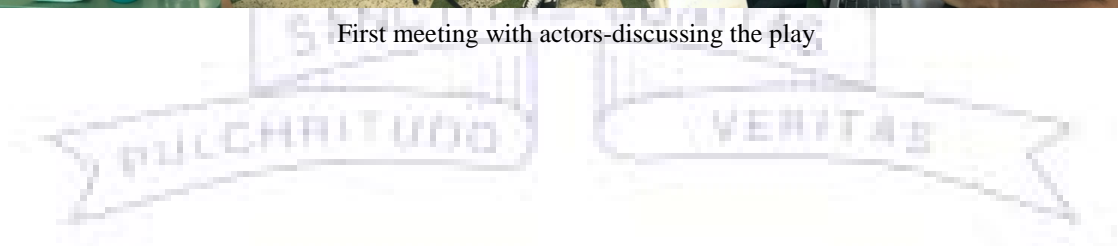
The three-day performances were a wonderful and magical experience. When the play started, the lights were all, out only the stage was lit. The crews were breathing in the shadows, waiting for their cue. I was standing at the backstage, I could only listen to the voices on the stage. Although I cannot see the actors or the lights, every line and every action were familiar to me because of the rehearsals. I listened to the play in the dark and felt moved. I almost cried in some parts of the play when the characters spoke their heart out. The performance was the time I fully understand that a play is a team production. All the small parts that make the whole machine move nice and still. Even a person has to make sure to do their job in the right moment, and a play is born. I was impressed by the power of teamwork. Usually, I am more accustomed to working alone. After this experience, I learned that trusting others and let them do the job is important. No one is an island, and sometimes it takes “two” to make things right. And as a person working among people, communication is a crucial key in the team. No one can read minds, and it is important to keep on communicating ideas and difficulties for the production to go smoothly.

After this experience, I became more and more amazed by Theatre Arts. The script was a well-written story. To be honest, until today, I cannot claim I know the script thoroughly. During the three-day performances, every day, I would still realize something new about the characters or the story. I suppose this is a fascinating part of the story. The characters are not just texts to be performed, they are people with complex personalities just like real human beings. And when seeing the characters on the script being presented on stage, I felt that they are human beings needed to be listened to and understood. It made me think of the power of theatre.

I am happy that I grasp my last chance and joined this production. I met many great people and had a great time working with them. And I am sad that I did not do this earlier because I met so many fun people and now I am leaving them. I learned a lot and gained many experiences that will definitely be helpful for me in the future!



First meeting with actors-discussing the play





Actors are funny and weird and cute



Director and Assistant director



Assistants working aside



The Earliest Crews♥□



Joining SP with best friends is Fun



One Big Family
Thank you guys!