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**Reflection on Participating  
in the 2020 Senior Play: *Cleansed***

SANCTITAS BONITAS

PULCHRITUDO

VERITAS

學生：黃詠怡撰

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LOD - 2020 SP Reflection

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### Learning Outcome Demonstration: 2020 Senior Play Reflection

To make the reflection as authentic and accurate as possible, I started recording details from the beginning of it all. Going through the audition, I did not expect to be chosen as an actor, much less one of the main characters. The directorial unit assigned me the role of Tinker, the main antagonist and one of the main characters of the play. Either way, I was initially optimistic about the play, as I did not think that worrying about it would do any good. While I'd never participated in any department play productions or even watched any plays produced in the department, I could still feel the dread and distress in other people's voices when experienced crew members muttered that this year's play would be difficult to execute when compared to plays in the past. I thought they were just being humble, but the play turned out to be much more daunting than I expected.

To be honest, I found my personality similar to that of Tinker's, except for the fact that my means of emotional expression were less extreme and violent. I believe that some of my capriciousness helped to further develop Tinker's character. The downside to playing Tinker was that the rest of his personality was very tricky to portray. Aside from his sudden outbursts of extreme emotion, his emotional expressions were either ambiguous or awkward, and definitely not what one would typically find stereotypically dramatic. In spite of all the ambiguity, the scenes I found the most challenging in terms of my original character were scenes where Tinker had to exhibit affection and intimacy. I'd thought that this would be the case due to the observation that I tended to express my emotions differently when compared to the average person, but I did not expect it to be that conspicuous. Many people suggested

that my regular methods of showing affection would not be understood by normal people, and this frustrated me a little; it was not as if I could alter my values on what meant affection and what did not in such a short time. Luckily, the director and director assistants experimented with different vocalizations and intonations with me. In one of the more specific cases, they discovered that the quality of different voices affected how they were perceived even when the intonation was almost completely the same; where another person sounded positive and encouraging, I sounded aggressive and snarky. We kept experimenting with different intonations until they deemed some adequate.

The first noticeable issue during the initial rehearsals was that *Cleansed* relied heavily on physical portrayal; this was not to say the lines were unimportant, but the wordless actions were of great importance regarding the holistic presentation of the play. Almost every actor sustained some sort of injury, with the most common being knee and knee joint injuries. I personally suffered several bruises to the knees and ribs, and sprained my thighs, calves, and ankles while rehearsing the scene where Tinker had to lower Graham to the ground while speaking lines. Since the actors still had to rehearse without the possibility of getting severely injured, we decided that we would rehearse with less intensity if actors were recovering from injuries, and get knee protectors for future rehearsals and the actual play. Around the third or fourth week of rehearsals, I started to feel discomfort in my knee joints after rehearsing the scene where Tinker had to support Grace's body weight and walk her to the mirror. I was worried whether I would be able to last till the week of the actual performances, so I communicated with the directors and fellow actors to make adjustments to the physical portrayal of the scene. To add extra protection, the directing team acquired five to six pairs of knee protectors for the actors to wear during scenes where their kneecaps had to hit the ground. That was it for the major portion of our joint pains.

Further down the path of rehearsing, the problem of ever-changing portrayals plagued many crew members. No one was to blame, for we all knew the play was a difficult one to portray, fairly open to different interpretations. The actors, dressing team, and the props team took the brunt of these changes, as they all had to make adjustments without a moment to rest. Even crew members who were not from the directing team wished to voice their opinions on the actors' acting, which I found hard to follow. With suggestions and opinions coming from so many places, it was not a simple matter of which to follow. The directing team eventually noticed that everyone had a different understanding of the play's themes, resulting in a temporary halt to our constant rehearsals. Instead, we held a few sessions to unify our views on certain scenes, compromising with one another. While this did not completely align our thoughts on which scenes had what meaning, it helped the crew move on with acting-related decisions.

As the rehearsals became more serious, a bunch of technical problems surfaced. I have really bad astigmatism, however, my eyes were too dry for contact lenses due to



*The process of makeup application during the first mock performance. (Courtesy the photography team)*

excessive working and studying. The problems did not stop there; it seemed that my eyes could not handle eye shadows in powder form, ending up red and teary after the mock performances. I decided that I would go on stage without any sort of vision correction, and that was that. For

the eye shadow, the directing team and makeup team chose to substitute a part of it with lipstick. During the first mock performance, it struck me that I did not memorize the order of the scenes, and did not know when I was supposed to appear in certain scenes. Some of the comparatively action-based scenes had not been rehearsed before for reasons unknown, and I

found this to be extremely stress inducing. Just because certain scenes had minimal dialogue, it did not mean that they were meaningless or easy to execute.

During one of the rehearsals, I suddenly felt my surroundings spin in my peripheral vision, and I hit the floor after hurriedly stating that I did not feel well. This was not the only instance of vertigo hitting me like a wave during



*Carl (played by Benjamin) is interrogated and tortured. (Courtesy the photography team)*

rehearsals, which worried me greatly. I am usually quite proud of being health-conscious and keeping myself in good shape, and the fact that participating in this play put a dent in my health made me a little disappointed. I had a strong, even stubborn, sense of responsibility, and could not just call in sick or skip rehearsals because it made my health less-than-satisfactory. To make matters worse, Tinker appears in almost every scene, so I had to attend rehearsals five to seven days a week. I'm a double major student who is also taking courses from a graduate program, and I had no choice but to sleep less and sacrifice my studying time for the sake of the play. About a month before rehearsals, I got extremely irritable and cynical owing to the fact that sacrifices were non-negotiable; I had to fail my midterms while being sleep-deprived, and I could not do a thing in this predicament. Maybe my fellow actors were much stronger than me in both spirit and mind, but either way, I was not very pleased under that situation at the time. My eyes burnt, my throat was parched and in pain, yet there was nothing I could do but move forward.

The biggest issue I personally encountered was remembering the entries and exits on stage, and props for Tinker. Tinker appeared in seventeen of the twenty scenes, which meant that I had to remember a total of thirty-four entry and exit points. Memorizing which props to hold onto for each scene was necessary too, because I could not fully rely on the technical groups to remember the prop cues for me; there is always the possibility that someone might forget. It was not so much the problem of memorizing the entries and exits, as I could do that in a single day, but rather the constant changes in the entry and exit points. To be honest, the constant and random changes to the entry and exit points on stage nearly drove me mad. I would memorize a set of thirty-four stage locations, only for the directing team to tell me the next day that the set of points had changed. I could understand they may have found certain stage entries and exits more desirable than others, but the ever-changing points made me miserable. The anger inside me continued to fester like an infected wound.



*Tinker (played by myself) cuts off Carl's (played by Benjamin) tongue and feeds him the ring from Rod's finger. (Courtesy the photography team)*

The week before the rehearsals, I almost gave up on myself from the crippling exhaustion; I barely slept for four hours each day, as I live quite far from school. My whole body ached from being awake for too long, and my limbs and joints hurt. Unlike certain people who could catch up on sleep while the technical groups did their work, I did not have a chance to rest. I had to cooperate with the sound, lighting, and prop teams to check if their plans for the actual stage measured up to their expectations. I so desperately wished for just a few moments of sleep, but to no avail. Before I knew it, it was the day of the actual performance.

On the date of the first performance, I had thoughts of running away from the place where the play would take place and never return. Fortunately, I had a better sense of responsibility than I thought I possessed, so I grit my teeth and remained there. I initially thought I'd have really bad stage fright, but five minutes before the first scene started, I became unnaturally calm. It could have been the joy of finally doing something with all the rehearsals, or it could have been how immersed I was in the role of Tinker. I breezed through the three days on stage without missing a single line, and I feel a little proud of myself for doing that.

After the play, there were all sorts of interesting comments from the peers and professors; the reactions were positive in general, with a few people emphasizing that the performances were shocking. Most people thought that the production went above and beyond expectations, far more than what university students could achieve, and my family members who went to see the play thought the same. Some people were concerned whether the characteristics of Tinker would stay with me after the whole process, but I feel like my

personality never really changed before and after the production; the only thing that changed was my capability of emotional expression. I've also gotten more confident about my deeper-than-average voice. While I had many complaints before the actual performances took place, I felt completely liberated after the performances were over. I now know that the process of



*The crowd after the first performance. (Courtesy my mom)*

producing a well-rounded stage performance is no easy feat. One thing I find interesting is that the stress and anxiety of doing schoolwork is nowhere near the stress one experiences during rehearsals. All in all, I am very thankful that the majority of the audience were pleased with the performance, and most of all, I am grateful to everyone in the 2020 senior play crew for bringing *Cleansed* to the stage.