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**Reflection on Participating in the 2022 Senior Play-
*Noises off***

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LOD-Senior Play 2022

Noises Off: A Play Within A Play in Director's Perspective

After half an year's effort, our crew has finally presented the play successfully in Arens Performing Arts Centre on December 8th to 10th. As a director of the crew, I am not only proud of my actors, but also myself because this is my first time participating in the English department's crew; let alone being a director. Nevertheless, I have tried my best and the result is good. If I need to conclude the whole process with three adjectives, I would say it was tiring, stressful yet fulfilling.

I still remember the time Amy (Stage manager) and Cindy (CEO) asked me whether I would like to join the crew and be the director of the play. I was shocked and was not sure why they wanted to ask me to be in this position because I haven't joined the department's activity since our first year's mini-play in which I was the stage manager. After that activity, I haven't voluntarily taken part in any kind of campaign of the department; instead, I was in the school's acoustic guitar club working as the vice director in my sophomore year, and kept performing in the following year. However, I did plan to join the crew in my fourth year, and I used to think about auditioning for the main character. To my surprise, they came to me and asked me to be the director of the play before the audition. At that moment, I was actually in hesitation due to many reasons. The first one was that I had no related experiences about how to conduct the play and I did not join any of the crew in the past few years, so I was afraid that I could not lead the team. The second one was that I did not know many people in the department and was afraid that no one would listen to me because I was like an outsider in their social circle. I am actually a very sensitive person, so this one makes me worried so much. The last one was about the balance between the academy and the play. I needed to

take 17 credits in the first semester of my senior year, and it would be difficult and tiring to handle the play and the studies at the same time especially for a director whose job was to pay attention to every detail in the script and the condition of every actor, which was extremely time-consuming. All these reasons made me so hesitant until one thought just sprung up: “I know I always want to be an actor, but being a director is like acting in different roles at a time. The difference is that your ideas toward one character are presented by your cast. It is more challenging, and leading a team is one of your strengths, so why not give it a try?” As a result, I accepted the invitation in the end and became the director of the 2022 Senior Play.

The first job of being the director was to pick up which play the crew was going to present. At the very beginning, I have decided that I would like to play comedy this year because the crews in the past few years all played tragedy, so this year I wanted to bring some happiness to the audience. However, this part was a big challenge because I needed to consider the number of the cast we had, the possibility of presenting the play, and also the financial issue of the crew. For the cast, because we only had two male casts and the remaining seven were female, it was hard to present lots of works, and due to this situation, I had eliminated lots of great plays that I like. Aside from the gender ratio issue, I also needed to consider the age of the characters in the play. It was hard for college students to present characters whose ages were far larger than them because it is rather difficult to imitate the behavior and voice of the elders. For the aforementioned two reasons, it was already challenging for me to decide which play I would like to choose. On the other hand, given that there was one play which fit all the limitations, I still needed to discuss the possibility and financial issue with Amy and Cindy. We spent lots of time discussing and assessing which play might work better and finally we decided to choose Michael Frayn’s *Noises Off*

although there were still some problems that we needed to fix such as cross-dressing issue , age problem, and the completeness of the setting.

For a person who does not have any related or previous experiences of directing the play, there are lots of things he/she needs to learn during the whole process. This was my life when I was in the crew. Lots of theater terms I needed to learn, and I also needed to digest what I have read from the script and have an image in my head, and tell my cast what I was thinking and how they should act out. For a newbie in the theater, that was lots of pressure. I spent lots of time reading the script, and tried to understand what the author would like to convey in his work. Also, I needed to divide beats and scenes which I did not know how to do in the beginning, and thus I was suffering from a lot of stress and then felt depressed. However, I did not surrender to the downpit; instead, I told myself that I just needed time, and everything would be alright if I kept working hard and tried to understand everything I needed to know before the actual rehearsals. As a result, I worked even harder, surfed the Net and looked up all the terminology I needed to know.

In September, we started to rehearse. As I have mentioned before, I was not familiar with the crew members, so I needed to bring up some break-the-ice games, introduce each other, and talk about my plan about the agenda to the casts. However, this part was both difficult and scary for me because I didn't know whether they would trust my arrangement or not. As a result, the first few days were tough for me, but thank god everyone supported and also gave me some advice. Nevertheless, scheduling the rehearsals was very challenging. First of all, the numbers of characters are more than the past few years' play, so there were less past experiences which could serve as a reference for me. Secondly, the arrangement of appearance of the characters were tight, which means that almost every beat had at least five people showing up. This was a tricky problem because we did not really have that much spare time working together and set up the blocking and movement. However, if we did not

rehearse this before we entered the arena, we might not have enough time doing the dress and technical rehearsals. Under so much pressure, I could only try my best to figure out how to solve these problems. As for my director's assistants, both of them had the experience of directing the play, but this also led to some problems. They sometimes would talk too much or try too hard to change my ideas. Getting advice is good, but too much will make everything become messy and delay the schedule, so aside from controlling the schedule, I also needed to hold my position and control the whole team, which was a very tiring task. For a couple of weeks, I was so depressed and helpless because of all these problems and conflicts, and I was not a fan of having arguments with others, so I was truly anxious about the every day rehearsals back then. Hence, I decided to talk to Cindy and shared those bad feelings with her so as to get some comfort from her, and also talked with my roommates and friends who used to hold events with me to give me some suggestions and confidence. Day by day, I gradually found out how to cooperate with the team and direct like a real director.

As the time went closer to the dress rehearsal, I also needed to give advice to Amy who is in charge of the stage. The props and stage design were difficult to work on. We needed to find a way to build a double-floor stage in a limited budget, and at the same time, I must organize all the changes of the blockings and direct the casts to follow my imaginary route and actions. When I recall these days, I could only say that this was almost like an impossible job but we all nailed it. Here I want to thank Amy for always asking me my ideas and trying to accomplish everything. She is a good stage manager in my heart.

Finally, the actual dress rehearsal and technical rehearsals came, and everyone needed to wake up early and arrive at the theater at 8 the whole week. For me, this was a very fresh experience because it was my first time staying in the arena all day long and directing the play. It made me feel like I was a professional one. The week in the theater was tiring, but it was meaningful. I saw everyone doing their job in earnest. The setting was built up, the

music was on, the caption was shown on the wall, and my dearest cast members wore make-up and their beautiful outfits. I was so touched at that time because everything was perfect to me. I told myself that they would definitely perform well on the stage because they were ready and they were the best!

Without a doubt, the three-day performances ended perfectly. The audience loved it so much and laughed so hard, which was what I had expected. Although there were some small mistakes, they still tried hard to fix it. I really love their crisis management and their enjoyment as a character on the stage. I literally cried in the end because the hard work paid off. In the end, I would like to thank the whole crew members for working so hard to complete the play. I knew I picked a rather difficult play for the crew to work on, but everyone just did great. Also, I would like to thank all the professors who came to watch the show because they gave us great support and feedback. Most important of all, I would like to thank professor Cecilia for being our instructor and came to watch us rehearse and give us good advice. After the Senior Play, I feel like I learn to be a better person in managing my pressure and balancing my study and extracurricular activity. Everything pays off and I love being a English-major student!



