

What I learned from and with Rebecca Holderness:

I went into this process with very little actor training, most of what I had learned was from the sidelines watching others struggle with concepts and exercises in rehearsals that I have stage-managed. Even without this training, however, I felt very comfortable working on the various exercises we did in the beginning because you took the time to explain the concepts and had an incredible ability of recognizing my confusion or uncertainty even when I did not vocalize it. I think one of the most important things I learned about directing from this show was the importance of having that ability to see and understand what your actors are feeling at each moment and to address it, either directly or through scene work.

I really appreciated your efforts to keep me involved in the acting perspective of the show. One day during rehearsal, one actor asked what time it was, and when everyone looked at me, you told them all that I was NOT a stage manager in this show, and it was not my responsibility to tell them what time it was. This really helped me feel like I was a part of the acting troupe; rather than a rogue stage manager, and I kept that type of mentality through out the show. It gave me the permission I needed to let go of that state of mind, and to focus my concentration on the creative process rather than the management side.

I really liked the idea of the entire group making up the rehearsal schedule. I know how hard it is to impose a schedule on a set group of people who all have different availabilities and schedules, and more often than not, there are few rehearsals that every member can attend fully. This show was such an ensemble piece that I never really felt like I was waiting to get onstage, or wasting my time. The rehearsals were long enough, that we were really able to dive into the piece, but not so long as to tire me out physically and mentally to a point where I felt like I was just moving through the scene to get it done. This was another area in which you were sensitive to the group's energy, and knew when to cut the rehearsal short, or allow it to run overtime. While the rehearsal schedule ended up being 6-7 weeks, long, I never felt like it was over rehearsed because we only had 4-5 days a week of rehearsal, this is a testament to the collaborative schedule making process, and shows that it clearly works on a small-scale show.

Acting-wise, I learned a lot during this entire process. Here's just a couple of the big ones:

- Don't be afraid to throw yourself into a scene or idea or exercise. The more you put in the more you will get out of it. (This is specifically related to the chalk and chair exercise that you had the constables work on)
- If you worry about what you look like then it will look bad, if you go all out, it might actually work (pulling the gun, catching the shoes, playing bark at the other dog)
- Stay focused within the scene, it takes work to concentrate and react honestly to something that you've heard and rehearsed over and over. Constantly push on what you are doing, make it different, tweak it, play with it. This will keep it fresh and interesting.
- Be a good partner, support your fellow actors, throw yourself up against their boundaries and be ready to catch them whenever they throw themselves at you.

I don't necessarily believe that I accomplished each and every one of these things in Anarchist, but I definitely achieved some level of them throughout the show. As it was a whole new world for me, even identifying these ideas feels like a success to me. Of all of them, I felt I was most successful at staying alert and focused within the scene. As an actor that is constantly on stage but very rarely able to speak, I had to find my place inside this world of non-vocal reaction, with a low status to boot! With this concrete idea in place, I tried working on finding different ways of heightening that frustration, both of being unable to speak, and unable to act upon the situations I was placed in. I felt the entire character was summed up with the action going to grab something and then not being able to touch it.

Anyway, those are a few of my thoughts on the whole process, I thought you were (and are) a wonderful Director, and it was such a privilege and a blast to work with you in this way. I want to thank you so much for this opportunity. I know that I was probably not the most qualified for the part, but I know I learned more and appreciated it more than maybe others would have. Thank you again,

his rehearsal process was unique because I am used to directors having more set blocking from the start and then adjusting it later. This rehearsal process involved me just playing at first and it just sort-of falling into a flow around the room.

The biggest lesson I learned was how to be even more specific with my language and what it feels like to be committed to that specificity.

I feel I was successful at staying grounded in my body.

I looked forward to maintaining my groundedness, my dominance of the scene, and enjoying the moment to moment flow.

I really like the Labworks productions because I feel that the people working on the show feel as though they have more room to play. It isn't so "serious" as putting something up on the mainstage. We can relax a little and just have fun working hard on theatre.

Subject: I love you.

Hi. So, I didn't make cards or send flowers or anything. In place of that I'd like to share with you the dream I had last night.

We did Anarchist again, only the audience was watching a rehearsal of our new cutting of the script. Somehow we managed to justify "Anarchist II!" when the Maniac gets put in a jail/insane asylum and proceeds to turn that place upside down. Kind of a one-flew-over-the-cuckoo's-nest thing... only by the end the maniacs win. All I really remember is Lillian put me in a rehearsal-block constructed cage and I started crying like a puppy, and Rebecca kept adding new things for us to do during the performance, so she kind of became a character in the play.

Then we all went to see a 500 clown show. We all piled into a tiny car and drove down to Chicago, met up with Adrian at a Twisted-Fork like environment, (mmmm hummus!) and then went to a giant circus tent to watch the show. The dream melted into a Coraline-inspired (somewhat terrifying) bloody clown mess, but somewhere in it there were broadswords, Macbeth, and witches, and we all laughed a lot. And joined in, of course. Something about flying from the rafters, falling through scaffolding, getting set on fire... I dunno, you know how dreams are.

THEN we had a mega huge cast party with a pool and water-park slides and fireworks and chocolate ice cream, and everyone got a puppy...

... okay, so 90% of this is entirely made up. But that would have been an AWESOME DREAM, right?

Also, I don't usually put ANY stock whatsoever in what a reviewer thinks of whatever I'm doing... (and I really don't think anybody should,) but this one is just especially cool for all of us. ("Reviewers are ignorant bastards... unless they give you a good review. Then they're ignorant bastards who happened to stumble upon some truth.") I hope you've stumbled upon it by now, but if you haven't, here's the link:

<http://www.expressmilwaukee.com/blog-3074-here-and-gone-uwms-accidental-death.html>

Thank you to everyone for helping me through my very first experimental, physical comedy, political play!! I think we totally rocked it.

Hi Rebecca.

This whole process has been somewhat different for me. At times it has been stressful, but I think that's only because we've been doing this for two months. I think this has been a good experience overall for me not only due to the different rehearsal process but also because this is the first time I have been cast in a comedic role here at UWM.

I feel very good about this whole production. I believe that it is thoroughly funny and that many of the funniest things are so subtle that you need to work on this play as long as we have to actually get them.

Re: Feedback on Anarchist

Was this rehearsal process unique for you in some way? How?

YES. Usually in a rehearsal process I sit down for a week at a table studying the script while at home I do character research, (find people/characters as sources, read essays, journal in character, etc) and then come to rehearsal expecting to block things in order in a schedule, then a week of tech. Ummmm. The ideas that the usual process (and the roles of "director" and "actor") were taken apart kind of freaked me out a little at first, and it was really easy to fall into getting frustrated - but I stopped that as soon as I felt it happening. The collaborative nature (how about you guys cut the script, where do you think we should go, what does this play mean to you, bring in your own costume however you want to look, etc) became a fabulous opportunity to do whatever... just didn't know what "whatever" was. I don't even know if I do now... but I must have figured something out, cuz the show opened. =)

What would you say was the biggest lesson(s) you learned?

There's more than one way to do a play. Physical shows are FUN. I have more fear than I thought I did. Actors giving actors notes doesn't have to be taboo, as long as it's out of love and care and new ideas, not "I know how to do that better than you". (Definitely the former in this cast.)

How do you feel you were successful?

I stopped fearing so much. I started understanding direction via loose metaphor. ;) I don't know how "successful" I should feel, really, cuz that might make me stop reaching for more...

What are you looking forward to exploring in the run?

Playing with an audience!! Finding nuances we didn't notice before. getting more and more comfortable with the cast.

What ideas would you like to share about the Labworks productions in general?

MORE!!!!!!

(sorry the answers got short, I have to run to class! If I think of anything else I'll send it.)