

南華大學藝術與設計學院民族音樂學系

碩士論文

Department of Ethnomusicology

College of Arts and Design

Nanhua University

Master Thesis

另一半：執導無台詞集體創作之個案研究

*The Other Half: A Case Study of Staging a Non-Text Based  
Devised Project*

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中華民國 111 年 7 月

July 2022

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民 族 音 樂 學 系  
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# Acknowledgement

It is a pleasure to thank the many people who made this thesis possible. It is difficult to overstate my gratitude to Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan for sharing an amazing abode to me for these six long years. My stay made it possible to learn life's lessons in and out of the classroom while giving me the opportunity to find something meaningful in my life. I shall remember in my heart the trust that you have given me through this graduate-level scholarship

My gratitude also to the staff of Nan Hua University and Guang Ming College for their unending support and in advising us on what to do. Thank you for helping me get through the difficult times, and for providing me with all the emotional support, and care. For providing a loving environment for me. To all the GMC staff and the manuscript editor, Eugenio Sonny O. Calapit, Ed.D. LPT, EnP who worked double time in proofing and editing this manuscript, thank you.

I am also very thankful to my research adviser Pao Laoshi for his enthusiasm, his inspiration, and his great efforts in explaining things clearly and simply. Throughout my thesis journey, he provided encouragement, sound advice, good teaching, good company, and lots of good ideas. I would have been lost without him. To Professor Ya-Chen Lee who have helped me a lot in completing this Thesis, thank you for your patience and guidance throughout my journey in this MFA Program. I am also indebted to my fellow student-colleagues for providing a stimulating and fun environment in which to learn and grow. I am especially grateful for the years of being together and sharing each other's company. I am very honored to work and be supported by the cast and production staff of *The Other Half*. You are the reason why this project was performed, thus performed and staged.

Lastly, and most importantly, I wish to thank my parents, now in eternal paradise for their spiritual guidance. To my dearest brothers for their love and support.

# 摘要

本論文主要是紀錄筆者的畢業創作和實踐過程，針對一部無台詞的集體編作劇場進行闡述與反思。該作品《另一半》首演於 2021 年 4 月 15 日在嘉義縣表演藝術中首演。30 分鐘的故事以反烏托邦的形式，探索當代女性掙扎於父權社會下所認定對美的悖論；本論文是以“美麗就是痛苦”為發想，執導一部無台詞的集體編創的實踐研究。相關研究資料的蒐集除了筆者的工作日誌、紀錄影片、排練筆記和觀察，還使用演員的日記與回饋。本論文首先介紹《另一半》的故事內容、場景、人物角色分析，並進一步探討導演編創與實踐過程中的相關所採用的方法，最後也會呈現整個過程中所遇到的挑戰與如何克服難題。

關鍵詞：編創劇場、無台詞的編作表演、性別議題、當代劇場與困獸之鬥、實踐研究

# Abstract

This dissertation documents and reviews my creative process and techniques used in staging a non-text based devising project. The production *The Other Half* premiered in Chiayi Performing Arts Center on April 15, 2021. This 30-minute project was set in a dystopian setting to explore the paradox about the contemporary struggles of women in terms of beauty in a society dominated by male society. Guided by the saying “Beauty is pain”, the aim of this practice-based study is to develop a non-text project using different devising techniques. Potential data was also accumulated from the creative process of play making. Aside from research and documentaries, this study used actor’s journal, assessments, rehearsal notes and observations to corroborate materials to present a detailed portfolio of the project. This dissertation initially introduces my play *The Other Half*, then it discusses devising as directorial approach by exemplifying the importance of a stimulus, practical exploration, devising techniques, developing style and structure, refining the performance and rehearse; finally, I will address the challenges of creating positive environment throughout the process and how I overcame them.

Keywords: devising theater, non-text based devised performances, gender issue, contemporary struggles and theater, practice-based study

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# INTRODUCTION

## a. Motivation and Research Question

I am Wincy B. Ramilo from the Philippines. I graduated from Guang Ming College Philippines with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theater. With my school-based experiences in Theater Directing, I decided to pursue my graduate study at Nan Hua University in Taiwan taking Masters of Fine Arts in Theater. In early 2020, I decided that the practical element should be a piece of devised theater created collaboratively by me and my colleagues in the theater program. The decision to create a work in this way is heavily inspired by the final production I directed in my Bachelor's Degree. The production *Mulat*, a devised performance which used choreographed movements, songs, poems, and prayers (see Figure 1 and 2).

The objective of *Mulat* was to produce a play that will tackle violence against women while using minimalism and calmness without distorting the harsh realities of the narratives that were portrayed. To achieve this, I used devices that will reduce the depiction of aggression and brutality as guided by Buddhist Idea of Aesthetics and Arts. This 45-minute performance employed true-to-life narratives of women-victims as tool for devising a theater performance. From then on, I became highly interested in the challenge of creating a non-text based performance early in the process of developing the project.

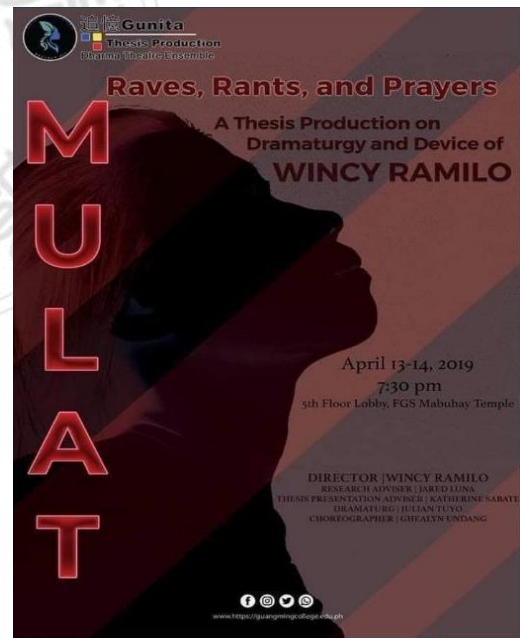


Figure 1: Poster for *Mulat*





Figure 2: *Mulat* performance

In devised theater, scripts tend to be developed as the show progresses. However, I would like my project to simply be guided by the chosen stimulus and the developed structure by using a directorial approach. I prefer simplicity because I am curious to know whether the pieces will still have the same effectivity. Will I still be able to carry out the story telling with the absence of text? More intriguingly, I am excited to use different elements and devising techniques to know whether this is possible. Therefore, *The Other Half* is my first non-text based play.

## **b. Devised Theater, a note on term**

According to Robinson (2015), devising is the process of inventing materials for performance together, including scenes and script work, choreography, narrative structures, and design elements. The devising process applies equally to creating something original or adapting existing material and reframing it in a new way. As Orti (2014) explains, devising is a form of production in which a performance is produced as a result of collaborative, improvised work by performers and is often referred to as collective creation. It is particularly common to use improvisational and physical performance techniques, as well as a lengthy development process, as well as a period of accrual and excess, which is used as the basis for subsequent selection and editing. For Thorpe and Gore (2020), the power of devising lies in the scope of its infinite possibilities, which offer theater-makers the chance to create something wholly original, which reflects their own views and concerns towards the world.

Young artists can especially enjoy devising as part of their growing process of applying their newly acquired creative tools to ensure the best possible outcome of their plays. A great deal of the best and most innovative plays currently being staged today are the result of creators experimenting with content, form, style, staging, and performance style to create fresh and exciting theater. In her book *Devising Theater*, Oddey (1994:1) stated: "Devising Theater is about thinking, conceiving, and forming ideas, being imaginative and spontaneous, as well as planning."

In spite of the variety of methods used by various dance or theater companies in devising their works, they all lead to the same conclusion which gives importance to collaboration and exploration. Collaboration is the key to making great theater, as explained by Crossley and Yarker (2017), as it is instigated by ideas, experiences, and opinions. It outlines our creative process, from laying the initial foundations for successful collaboration to presenting a performance in front of an audience and offers practical and philosophical insights.

The book *Your Handy Companion to Devising and Physical Theater*, written by Pilar Orti (2014), provides an advocacy chapter about the joys of devising. It also outlined detailed steps in structuring the devised process. From discussing the importance of stimulus and how to find it until the ideas on how to refine the performance. To develop this devised project, I have followed the steps proposed by Orti. I find it easy to read and follow the various devising techniques mentioned from which I was curious to try.

A playwright has written a story and the actors live it out to tell the story. Most theater productions start out as plays. Both directors and actors play an important role in bringing this story to life through creative staging in front of the audience. However, what happens if, by the time we reach the script stage, the plot and characters aren't there? If we start from scratch, will the same conclusions be reached?

In this project, I hope to demonstrate my experience as an amateur director putting on my MFA thesis project, which was a devised, non-text-based project. This written manuscript offered a documentation for devising a theater from scratch that would be of help to people exploring this tool for the first time. That said, it is important to acknowledge that my process is not the only way in approaching devised theater. It was a way of working that inspired investigation and innovation and one should always think of new and inventive ways to express their ideas on stage and assess their possibilities.

### **c. Scope and Purpose of this Project**

“Devising” is a process in which the entire creative team develops a show collaboratively. Sometimes, there isn’t even a script to begin with like in this project *The Other Half*. Creating a devised theatre piece allows creativity to blossom from multiple sources in a space which is usually facilitated by the director. In the case of this devising project, I treated myself more of a facilitator that encourages the birth of ideas from the minds and hearts of actors and designers.

This project involved both practical and written components. I utilized devising as the method of developing my devised performance. From the conception of the project to its completion, a practical series of steps were followed. The goal was to develop a non-text based project using different devising techniques. Aside from research in the conceptual stage, written accounts and documentaries, actors’ journals, assessments, rehearsal notes and observation were also used to corroborate data for potential materials in making the practical work. Documenting the process and techniques employed in creating the project will be the purpose of the written manuscript. My secondary goal is to provide a platform where I can address the challenges that arose during the process of making the piece.

### **d. Organization of the Project**

Chapter One, details about the practical work of *The Other Half* will be presented particularly its title, concept, setting, characters’ background and the scene breakdown. Chapter Two contains the devising process that I used, guided by the steps outlined by Pilar Orti and on how and on how employed devising techniques were used to help in the delivery of the move away from written text project. This chapter will also reflect the challenges of creating a positive environment. I encountered alongside developing the devised piece and the steps I made to resolve it. Lastly, the Conclusion will be my personal “critique” of the project. This should reflect upon the major facets of my journey. The conclusion includes my discoveries and/or breakthroughs in my directing and preparation, both as an artist and a person. Towards the end of my critique, I will provide suggestions regarding what other people should consider doing, avoiding, or changing if tasked with a similar project.

# CHAPTER 1: My Play *The Other Half*

After months of preparation, the show was actualized on April 15, 2021 at the Chiayi Performing Arts Center. There were two other plays staged together with *The Other Half*, all directed by my colleagues in the MFA Program. All 3 plays were under the same general title “We and our Contemporary Struggle” (see Figure 3). In this chapter, I will be discussing more about the conceptual side of the play *The Other Half*, about its title, concepts, setting, character’s background and the scene breakdown.

## a. Title

### *The Other Half*

The “other half” figuratively means one’s husband or wife. This title was inspired by the concept of domestic violence somewhat hidden agenda being touched in the play. Though it was not the focus of the performance, most of the scenes can technically be considered as sample cases of domestic violence. In staging the play, I also draw inspiration from my first devising project, and mirror heavily my interest on women’s issues, struggles and empowerment.

However, in this devising project, the “other half” was used metaphorically. This was used to pertain to those or groups of people who are treated differently by others. The play would show a great comparison between groups of people. In this case, separating the beautiful one’s from those who are always humiliated because of their appearance.



Figure 3: Thesis performance

## b. Setting

*The Other Half* is set in a dystopian world. A non-realistic space is used in each and every scene. There are also characters who are more likely to appear in real life. The scenes were

designed in a representational way, basically creating an illusion of reality. According to Moises Kaufman (2011), in an online article named Men at Work, “representational theater artists strives to create a visual and performance reality to the stage that tricks the audience into accepting the idea that what they are seeing is real. The audience becomes a passive viewer of the experience that is happening to the characters in the play.

### c. Concept

Guided with the saying “Beauty is Pain”, *The Other Half* imagines women as all brides, being bounded in a household filled with expectations and standards. This old French saying was used as a headline for Oxford’s independent student newspaper, Cherwell, with the title, *Il faut souffrir pour être belle* that said, “We are taught that there is some kind of correlation between beauty and pain. The reiteration of this statement – it is something repeated as girls learn the ‘secrets’ of conventional femininity – ingrains the idea that artificial distortions achieve a natural way of looking”.

The play *The Other Half* is a magical realism that explores the paradox of how women desperately take some measures to keep up with the standards of society, particularly, beauty standards which involve painful procedures. However not all are equally desperate, others on the other hand are involuntarily or subconsciously chosen to be a victim of this oppressive patriarchal system of society. Unexpectedly, at the end, they become the oppressor themselves.

### d. Characters Physical Analysis

	Wife	Husband	Mirrored Man	Daughter
<b>Physical</b>				
Age	30	35	NA	8
Appearance	fat, Unshapely	Stiff Mascular	Stiff Mascular	Skinny
Walk	Normal	Slow	Slow	Normal
Dress		Formal	Formal	Pajama

<b>Background</b>	Red Dress (Casual)			
Career		Butcher	NA	NA
Current Relationship	Housewife Married	Married		

Table 1: Character Physical Analysis

### e. Scene Breakdown

#### Prologue

A butcher with his face hidden by a mask enters with his butcher’s knife at hand. He started slicing pieces of meat on the table. As his chopping became more forceful, a fat and ugly lady, sleeping in the center stage was revealed. The man woke up the lady and helped her stand. She was then surprised when the man kneeled and presented an engagement ring to her, which she accepted wholeheartedly. There were glimpses of their lives and struggles. Other mirrored men were revealed and even the tension was present once when the man tried to answer the phone but was prevented by the woman from picking it up. The daughter was also introduced only before the last image of the scene was revealed. The woman was lying on the table while the butcher was standing beside her holding the butcher’s knife (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Prologue

## Scene 1

In the first scenario, the wife happily tried the red dress given to her by her husband. He gave her a pair of red heels too, however small in size. By force, he insisted on putting it on her. The wife managed to run but was caught. Again, he forced her to put on the shoes but again managed to escape as she threw away the shoes. By that time the phone rang. The husband picked up the call as the wife was still enduring the sore foot. Three mirrored men entered and dragged her to the corner where her husband was waiting. While being distracted by her ring, the husband cut off her toes so the shoes would fit in. The wife is howling and writhing in agonizing pain (see Figure 5 and 6).



Figure 5: Scene 1, Fitting of the shoe



Figure 6: Scene 1, Cutting of toes

## Scene 2

While still anguished because of the pain on her foot, the woman was led to a dance by her husband. She was surprised by the candle light dinner. She excitedly approached the table only to be stopped by the mirrored man. Confused, she asked her husband what was happening, then she noticed another mirrored man coming with a sign board saying “50kgs. and below only”. She felt insulted after realizing what was happening but got even more insulted after all the men pointed to the weighing scale, asking her to weigh herself (see Figure 7). Without any choice, she followed, somewhat stopped by a loud alarm. She realized why. She was dragged by her husband and another man and was asked to exercise and lose weight.

Being motivated by a variety of food in front of her, she ran and shed sweat (see Figure 8). After a moment, she was tempted to eat the food instead. The phone rang. Her husband came rushing and grabbed the plate from her, she ran after him. Frightened, she stooped down after noticing the mirrored men again, she was dragged and thrown to another corner.



Figure 7: Scene 2, Asking Wife to weight herself



Figure 8: Scene 2, Wife performing Exercise



Figure 9: Scene 3, Wearing of Wig



### Scene 3

The husband approached the wife in his hand with a long gold-color hair wig. He made his wife wear a wig (see Figure 9). The wife was furious and started to take off the wig and throw it on the floor. The phone rang again, the husband picked up the call while the wife was obviously worried about what the phone call was all about. With the other mirrored man, they were forced to snatch the ring from the wife's finger; however, the wife forcefully refused and instead accepted the wig. She picked it up, and slowly wore it by herself. So, delighted by the actions of his wife, the man started to become passionate about his wife. And right then and there, they made love.



Figure 10: Scene 4, Giving Birth

### Scene 4

In the bathtub, the pregnant wife soaked herself in the bathtub. While in the middle of her bath, she suddenly felt labor pain and started giving birth to her daughter (see Figure 10). The next thing she knew she was dragged by her husband and forced to lay down on his butcher's table. There, the butcher man performed a surgery (see Figure 11). She was injected, sliced and stitched. A long bondage was encircled her, creating tension and struggle for the wife (see Figure 12).



Figure 11: Scene 4, surgery



Figure 12: Scene 4, Wife in bondage

## Scene 5

On the wedding day, after throwing away the bouquet of flowers, the new-faced wife joined the husband on the altar (see Figure 13). The phone rang and the husband picked up. He offered the phone for his wife to answer. Surprised and at the same time nervous, she answered the call (see Figure 14). She dropped the phone and was in a total shock when she was offered the butcher's knife.



Figure 13: Scene 5, Revealing new face



Figure 14: Scene 5, Wife holding the phone

## Epilogue

The daughter is crying in the corner. The wife is looking for her, while holding the butcher's knife (see Figure 15).



Figure 15: Epilogue

## CHAPTER 2: Devising as Directorial Approach

It is an exciting and terrifying process to work together to devise a show. A director or creator will need the whole creative team to work together to create a show. It is a joy for me to create a show from scratch. However, this freedom comes with a huge drawback: there's no script; no basis at all. I find the creative process exciting because of the fact that everyone brings his or her individual skills and abilities to the table.

Personally, an extremely collaborative performance is important. As an actor myself, I want to have ownership of the piece that the group is doing from the very beginning. I think, as an actor, it's great to come into a good script; by the end of the creative process, it is exciting to look back at the beginning and give it shape and decide where you want to go with it with the group. That was just one of the many reasons why I choose directing as my directorial approach.

In this chapter, I will further discuss the devising process I went through. With the steps outlined in Pilar Orti's book *Your Handy Companion to Devising and Physical Theater*, I will mainly discuss and exemplify the importance of a stimulus, practical exploration, devising techniques, developing style and structure, refining the performance and rehearse, finally, I will address the challenges of creating positive environment throughout the process and how I overcame them.

### a. Stimulus

In the book by Orti (2014), highlighted the importance of a stimulus for starting a devised play. The stimulus is the starting point in devising a project. This can be from a text: a novel, poem, story, letter or factual material. There are visual components such as paintings, photographs, films or artefacts. The sounds made by a piece of music, a recording, or a soundscape. Concepts, themes, or moods formulated are in the abstract. In order to achieve this, a stimulus has to be carefully selected from a variety of possibilities.

Finding the stimulus or the inspiration for the piece that I will be doing is very challenging. It took most of my time developing the idea. At first, I was certain to use the concept of "Beauty" however, I just felt that it was not enough. Then I started associating ideas, words and concepts. Later, I started adding photographs, props, music and many more. I used this as my starting point for the

development of new ideas, it became my ground work. I also have considered what kind of dramatic approach I may be able to use. I have thought about the conflicts, contrast, irony, sarcasm or humour to address this subject. With the aid of advice and discussions with my professor and colleagues (who later became my actor), I came up with the final stimulus- “Beauty is Pain”.

You can see from there that the possibilities are limitless. To capture and hold the attention of the group during the duration of my created project, I considered my stimulus. I choose a subject that fascinates me and will surely get my actor’s attention. This will help me in generating new possibilities, ensuring that there’s always something more to dig into.

Most devised theatre pieces are about making a show that centers around a larger concept: love, envy, bravery, education, loneliness, and family. Devised pieces can be rooted in a story a performer tells during a rehearsal. That’s the kind of stimulus I am referring to in a devised theater. It all started with the desire to do something, as an example, exploring beauty, specifically the pains that we endure to achieve ideal beauty. The stimulus is not just an idea that crossed your mind and that’s it- you’re all fired up. Rather, the stimulus has to be something that is significant or prevalent in your surroundings.

I also considered the number of actors I could possibly have since our available manpower was very limited. That was the first challenge that I had in creating this piece. We were only six in our group, not to mention that the other two also had their own pieces to direct. Nevertheless, I decided to go through with my ground work and in the future, we might need some adjustments with the casting then, I’ll just decide later.

Thorough research must be done about the chosen stimulus. A significant amount of time was spent on the research stage before beginning the practical exploration. I also collected stories and documents about my stimulus. Significant elements that might contribute to my process were also taken in note. When the stimulus was developed, the practical work started. However, research remained an essential part of the process, enabling me to make sure that the work maintained its freshness and depth. For me, it made sense that the engaging material would be more effective if it was exciting and compelling.

Orti (2014) mentioned that in order to develop my ability to identify links between my research and the piece that I am composing, I needed to gain research skills. While encouraging ideas, I have to look for new ways to tell stories by having a bit of an adventurous side. Considering

that there is a chance that the benefits of contemplation have been overlooked, taking advantage of any spare time to wonder and imagine the possibilities of this project was also suggested. By this, my imagination runs freer when I understand more about my starting material. It makes sense that the richer the research, the better the rehearsal will be. I could devise the final production entirely from the materials I had collected, and the final product would be authentic.

Initially, the first stimulus that I had in mind was different. I accidentally saw a picture on a social platform. After my research about this image, I learned about the idea of Panda Eyes. It is a slang for child sodomy. It is when a child is sodomized by force that its eyes can welt to black circles due to blunt trauma involved, making their eye look like that of pandas.

In my exploration of this idea, I came across the images of the Hollywood singer, Lady Gaga. She performed once, appearing with big black circles in her eyes after her trending 2020 fashion statement saying “Panda Eyes” is the new Garish Fashion Panda-mic of 2020. Apparently, I began to become more interested in fashion and beauty that Lady Gaga reflected in her music videos.

And so, from there I started looking for images dealing with beauty and fashion. Until I decided to go even further by producing a devised performance about the efforts and risks of people in order to achieve a desired beauty. Specifically, the strong need to purchase beauty products or avail themselves of modern ways of beauty. From then on, I decided that my stimulus would be “Beauty is Pain”.

With this given situation, I had realized one thing is certain: it’s always harder to work on a project when you’re not passionate about it. I have always asked myself why I care so much about the devised theatre piece that they have created in the past. I would certainly say that it not just my desire to create that drives me but my desire to know and discover more about the idea that I have been living with every day but had failed to understand the reason behind it. I also want to know where they are coming from. And why there are biases as well in terms of this subject. Like my close mindedness in terms of the idea of beauty and being beautiful. That is why I am certain in saying that this stimulus has become very personal to me. I am able to analyze why some people tend and need to engage in such.

To move forward to the practical exploration, parameters have to be set, I had to identify the aims and objectives. We have heavily relied on the stimulus to determine our initial aims and objectives, although we have included additional suggestions in the process of deciding its style

and form. It became evident to me that the aims and objectives of a piece can shift and evolve during the process, thus, we must be open to adapting to them. In terms of providing a good starting point in determining my goals and objectives, Orti (2014) suggested to put forth the following questions:

- What makes the stimulus interesting to me?
- What are my initial thoughts on how to develop your ideas from your stimulus?
- What kind of response do I hope people have to my piece?

For me, it is important to know who my audience are. My next step is to determine what I want the audience to experience; how I want them to react while watching the piece. I use this particular idea to guide me towards the goal and help me shape the piece during its exploration stage. Therefore, a unified and strong objective has to be established before starting the practical exploration. In doing so, the ensemble can both shape their performance while staying on top of things.

In terms of keeping the ensemble on track, I honestly had difficulty in building my ensemble at first. I could feel that the energy of the group was scattered. It was only at the middle part of our process that there came an improvement in terms of their participation, sharing ideas and even in taking risks. I am certain that this was all because they started to see the goal of the process materializing and they themselves became much more excited. That is probably the reason why they became greatly passionate about the material which is as important as the process itself. When you are not passionate about the subject, it's much more difficult to do the tasks. Having everyone on the same page makes it easier to collaborate.

## **b. Practical Exploration**

Exploration of the practical implication and doing research of the material overlap significantly. Thus, practical experimentation with the research material should be carried out as soon as possible. The creative process begins with the gathering of actors and a desire to develop together. To a certain extent, it could be more disorienting and therefore a more intuitive way of working compared to starting formal with a script on hand. From the beginning of the process to the final product, this is all about developing a material collaboratively. Among other skills I encourage the ensemble to develop while exploring is patience, comfort with chaos, flexibility, and the



willingness to think outside the box. According to Bicat and Baldwin (2002), the building of a successful process is dependent upon trust and communication.

The actors will feel more confident if ideas are stimulated and discussions occur in a safe area without being limited by the idea that because they are doing practical work it is the final performance. More importantly, I tried to establish a working environment that allows them to express themselves freely and honestly when things don't work. The work of Orti (2014) emerged from multiple brainstorming sessions, agreements and disagreements. To achieve a deep understanding of what the limitations are, and how they can inspire us to produce innovative solutions, it was necessary to go back and forth several times.

Among the practical considerations we identified are those outlined below.

- Improvisation
- Tableaux
- Movement and physical sequence
- Developing a role and characterization
- Exploring subtext
- Exploring status

## **Improvisation**

Making materials up as you go is a great way to come up with new ideas. It was especially frustrating when we stopped at the process and we couldn't move forward. Creating content for the scenes was always helped by experimentation. I still consider some of the materials even if they were not kept as potential materials for another scene.

## **Tableaux**

Visualizing the whole image of the production was easier with a series of images that depicted various movements. Since this was primarily an image-driven project, the focus was on creating images and telling the story through picture.

## **Developing a role and characterization**

Aspects of the character's life or personality were investigated and the actors were forced to develop a deeper understanding of their characters. In addition to helping the actors get to know the characters they were playing, it provided new ideas to explore during rehearsals. The other questions included information about their childhoods, their relationships with their parents, their greatest fear, their intentions and the other details that helped develop the role of the character they were given.

## **Exploring the subtext**

In the absence of a script, my actors needed guidance so that they could portray the character accurately. It is essential that they are well oriented in relation to what they are about to do or what I wanted to convey in a given scene. The actors may have a hard time at first, but with persistent exploration of the subtext, getting familiar with the scenes, and creating the dialogue underneath, they were able to create a more compelling character. A character would ultimately be enriched and the play, as a whole, will be more interesting. Besides creating interesting characters, it gives actors more of what they need to work with on stage and thus adding another layer to the dialogue.

## **Exploring status**

It is through the knowledge of the characters' status that subtle conflicts emerge in a scene. A power dynamic will be generated by assigning statuses to characters. The way we would achieve the goal was to experiment with those with the most authority in the scene. As we explored this content in every opportunity that the character had, it could generate an interesting and amusing experience.

Oftentimes when we discuss theater, we come to think about the traditionally important role of the script and how actors and directors are given the opportunity to visualize a story or sequence as already written. However, the process of devising can differ greatly from working with text. In devising, there is no script and no pre-existing story. Our brand-new work begins with a blank page for us, and it's up to us to fill it in. We're the storytellers and it takes our imagination to get it off the ground.

There were instances where I ran out of ideas. The best thing to do at times like this is just to listen attentively to the people I am working with. Things will inevitably go wrong, but we should always be constantly looking out for the joy and inspiration to create. Some of my favorite scenes were inspired by tiny and accidental explorations. It was often the most disastrous rehearsal that would tell us where I was going wrong. As long as I am venturing into the unknown, there is no such thing as failure. This is something I have learned throughout my journey. The process provided me peace of mind since I knew that if I focused on the plot from the beginning I would miss out on so many opportunities.

### **c. Devising Techniques**

More so, this devised project relied heavily on different devising techniques. The absence of spoken text was compensated for by developing techniques. Just as important as a work of art is, it is how devising should be told through action, movement, music, or any other element. Employing the following devising techniques helped me in staging and moving away from text devised projects.

Prop

Movement and Choreography ·

Performance Image

Action ·

Music

#### **Prop**

When building a new piece, one often finds there is an object involved in the telling; some props, some pieces of fabric, something that helps define and communicate the story you want to tell. I found it useful to have potential objects around the rehearsal hall early in the process in order to develop ideas that couldn't be foreseen without the objects present. From there, it allows for the

discovery of its multiple uses. If you are working with designers, it also helps to level with the world you are creating with just one or two essential elements. Clarifying the object will help inform the designer.

One of the ways in which I stylize a scene is by channeling communication between the characters through a prop. In the devised project, many props were used. From a minor prop to those that are used in major scenes, each one had to be decided carefully. Other props have to be used more than once in different scenes and purposes or sometimes have it stylized to preserve the connection of the props to the characters. Here are some major props and how they were use:

### **1. Black Cloth**

- It was used as a mere cloth to drag some props or the actor, either for a scene change or an act of oppression.
- This was also used as walls to cover the love making scene of husband and wife, the black cloth will eventually be transformed as the baby bump after the love making scene to indicate her pregnancy.
- This later was used as the baby itself after labor.

I intentionally used black cloth since this can be easily associated with the idea of violence.

### **2. White Cloth**

- This was used as a bedsheet, table cover and even carpet.
- Also used as cover for the surgery scene.
- The white cloth's major use was to cover the actors on their way to next blocking and to reveal the images afterwards, to indicate a shift of time.
- Also used as the wedding gown of the wife.

The use of white cloth is a big contrast to the black cloth that we also use. While it was used to indicate violence, the white cloth was used as a scene changer and a way to cover the violence inflicted.

### **3. Wooden Cube- (As set)**

- This was used as a butcher's table at first.
- This was then transformed as a bathtub.
- This was also used as a surgery table.
- And lastly, this was used as a wedding altar.
- The usage of the transformative set gave a clear indication of changes in the scenes, time and space. Practically, this was easy to manipulate, keeping the pace of the performance as it ushers the transition and transformation. At the same time, the prop gives an additional feeling for the audience that they were part of the scene changes.

### **4. Butcher's Knife**

- Used to cut the meat prop;
- Cut the Wife's toes; and
- as the surgery knife
- The same knife was also used by the mother at the ending scene with the daughter.
- Keeping the use of the same prop helps in keeping the character of the Husband. It preserved the idea of violence the object

### **5. Mask**

- Masks were used as part of costume for men.
- Aside from building the character of the men in the play this was also used to create an isolation to the characters and labels

## **6. Bandage**

- This was used as a covering of Wife's face after the surgery.
- Then, it was used as devised in oppressing the wife, specifically, it represents the society, its demand to people, its biased or discriminating reaction whether someone seems to be different from them.
- Later on, it was transformed into a bouquet for the wedding.

In general, the bandage was used to devise a more dramatic transformation of the character of the wife. It mirrors her struggle and as well as her acceptance of those struggles when she continued in marrying the Husband.

## **7. Telephone**

- The ringing sound was used as an indication that something is about to happen to Wife right after she refused to follow. This only happened when The Wife tried to refuse what the Husband wanted her to do.
- Its purpose changed distinctively in the wedding scene, when the phone call was given to the Wife. Its purpose now is to give a command to Wife as she was now part of the ideal society.

The prop is very crucial in my process of staging a non-text devised play. I wanted to have the props used with so much fluidity. To achieve this, we have to be wise. Using them entails careful

study and reviewing it for so many times before we arrive at the decision of whether to use it or not. Aside from the reason that it will preserve the nonrealistic type of staging, a theatrically transforming prop would suggest a non-conventional way of staging.

The props used complemented and motivated the characters in our storytelling. It helped them feel more 'the part' in a particular scene setting, in identifying a particular time and place, even the culture setting. Moreover, sometimes the props employed seem to take center stage too in some scenes. At times, the props were metaphorical in nature, and this encouraged the audience to connect with them. Through the use of transforming props, guiding the audience in following the action and the plot of a non-text based project is made easier.

## **Movement and Choreography**

This method of creating materials encourages us to consider other forms of expression not possible with words. In turn, this motivates us to explore the way we relate to our bodies, also to others', and our surroundings. Rather than being confined to one definition, a move can also contain many meanings, and can even be unpredictable. Our receptivity to new ideas and its many possibilities increases as we move.

Taking a moment to explore an idea physically can also help us to understand it in new and unexpected ways. Interpreting an idea through the body can help us get at the core of what it is that we want to say. Using movement as a tool for exploration and interrogation can help offer a different focus and allow for a deeper level of understanding.

Here are some ways we used in exploring movement and choreography as a creative tool:

### **1. From Gesture**

In exploring gestures as movement or something choreographed, preciseness is a must. In particular if the gesture was done by a couple or more people. For movement to be effective, it has to be rehearsed over and over. Gestures also give a strong indication of a character's status, so it is important that the continuum of the gesture must complement the character's personality and status. As an example, the husband must strictly maintain a strong and firm gesture which strongly

contrasts that of the character of the wife. The use of clear gestures will also help establish the character's status and intentions.

## **2. From Rules**

Some rules were established to guide the actors as they explore onstage. A distinction was made between each character in movement. This was done first before I asked the actors to respond creatively to the set of rules or instructions in the development of a new movement for the performance.

For the character of a mirrored man, he always moves in slow motion while the wife and daughter move freely. This distinction, I believed, contributed more in giving highlights to the Character of the Wife and Husband and in some scenes where it was used distinctly. However, there were instances that I would fall into the trap of constantly using slow movements almost in every scene. The effect would be a dragging and predictable performance. With this, I had to think again and decide wisely where to use these set of rules in the movements of my actors.

Sometimes it can be literal or interpretative. More often than not, I do it quite literally, which is something I consider less dynamic. And so, I need to go back to basics, pushing against what is expected and exploring something new until actors can share language from which to work together and to explore the space and its meaning.

## **3. From Metaphor**

By using only words, sometimes you will find it hard to express. Sometimes, there are simply not enough words – perhaps not even the right words- to describe exactly what we are thinking. In some cases, it might just be too difficult to try. On these occasions, I found it useful to work with metaphors. One good way to express something that I can't express without the help of spoken text is by creating metaphors, representation or symbols. However, it is important to think through it to avoid vagueness in the perception of the audience. Worse even when it creates a different meaning apart from what I intended to mean or wanted to deliver. A good example of my use of metaphor would be a scene in the prologue. The Wife, who was lying on a white cloth is intended to suggest innocence. She was being pulled by a mirrored man, who on the other hand represented



the society, using a black cloth which was used all throughout the performance as a tool for her struggles.

#### **4. From known stories**

Working from known stories was a good starting point for the group. This was essentially a process of drawing on something we had already seen or recognized in order to create a quick and effective sequence. In doing this, I had to borrow stories that were already known and re-examine them in the context of a new creative inquiry in response to an idea or to illustrate its irony.

A good example of which was scene 1 of *The Other Half*. I have tried using the story of Cinderella. While leaving the palace, Cinderella's dazzling glass shoe fell down from her feet. However, in this devised project, her shoe won't fit and so the husband decided to cut her toes. As told in the Cinderella story, the evil stepsister cut off the toes and heels of the stepsisters so the shoe would fit, resulting in blood on the ball gown. The idea of using the story of Cinderella to show absurdity in terms of how shoes can make a girl feel beautiful was effective.

#### **Performance Images**

Making movements or writing texts are often familiar ways to make theater and provide a number of clear conventions for finding new materials for performance. However, exploring the world of performance images is also a very exciting tool to use when making new work. It provides a dynamic set of options for expressing the ideas and exploring meanings on stage. In our journey in understanding the possibilities of imagery, we are inspired to think about the language of objects and materials on stage in the same way as we use text to create meanings.

It would be true to say that the core of the show is the image. In this project, we have created performance images in a number of ways:

1. Exploring an idea or feeling through working with objects and materials.
2. Playing with objects and materials to find a new meaning.

3. Finding images in the “world” of the performance.
4. Finding images through production.

## **Action**

This goal was achieved in large part through the creation of action-based material. We were able to communicate in a unique and meaningful way what we have been trying to say. Real action is the difference between pretending to do something and actually carrying it out. An action is performed in front of an audience so that they can observe and feel the work that is involved in it. Through this, they are made aware of its significance and relevance in everyday life. In performance, action-based performances create metaphors and can also serve to convey an extreme emotion.

## **Music**

Music also helps us connect to our bodies and can unlock our desire to move and express ourselves. The use of music can definitely affect the execution of the movement. It was hard to select appropriate music considering the different moods I wanted to show in my piece. Certainly, sentiments are usually dispensed with by the narrative; yet the illusion is created by the music.

Music is determined by the tempo, the tone, the mood of the scene, the placement of the song within the entire production, the inherent value of the song, and of course, the character who delivers it.

It was a struggle selecting appropriate music for each part. There were a lot of things to consider as well. The selection was crucial to the scene itself and the atmosphere that it is intended to create. Once the music is selected, manipulation is another thing. How you start and end the music is as crucial as the selection of the music itself. Every cue we do contributes to the atmosphere that we established.

In addition to adding value to the piece, music can also enhance it in other ways. In addition to inspiration, it can help in creating scenes and developing characters. Audiences can also be

touched by it, enhancing the ambiance and triggering emotions. There is no better way of getting an audience into the mood than by using music. So, to speak, music speaks directly to the heart. Music can connect with an audience in a direct manner, without the audience having to think about it intellectually.

Some scenes involve characters feeling strong emotions, like extreme anger or sorrow. These moods can sometimes be difficult for performers to portray, especially if the emotion is unpleasant. In order for actors to portray these emotions, they will need to pick a piece of music that describes what they are feeling. In addition to enhancing the mood of a scene, music also serves as a contrast. In some cases, this can result in a grim harrowing effect. If heavily stylized or choreographed compositions are paired with music, it might be worth experimenting with keeping the tempo steady and fast.

These devising techniques were employed to help tell the story through other elements aside from the spoken-text. This required a lot of brainstorming, risk taking and energy to try it over and over. Sometimes, it can be very difficult for me to accept other people's ideas when they don't immediately mesh with my own. However, and perhaps more important is that I understood that everyone comes from different experiences and backgrounds. Someone might bring something to the metaphorical table that may end the devised piece.

#### **d. Developing Style and Structure**

In my opinion, the explorative and research phases lead to the likely identification of genre, style and form. There is no easy solution or formula for the identification of the appropriate form and style. However, through practical explorations, some patterns stand out. These styles and forms are totally unexpected while others seem not to work at all. In order to make my piece to benefit from the depth and clarity of communication, I focused on specific styles and forms.

Director's created works are often based on their own adaptation of the genre. To illustrate this point, I created the work and looked for a genre that I feel would communicate this thought more effectively. I let my work make the decision to find a more suitable genre. As we explore, create and devise the performance, there are a lot of different types of Drama that occur. But as the process progressed, it became obvious to me on how I wanted to tell the story.

A strong connection exists between the selection of genre, style, and form and the development of the structure. It is best to get the group moving during the exploratory phase rather than sitting down and discussing. To understand how juxtaposition of materials can affect one another during performance, the materials must be used in a specific order.

In making any decision, we need to apply the following principles:

1. The opening is engaging and strong.
2. Characters are developed in depth, along with the idea or theme.
3. A strong ending that reinforces the overall message of the performance.

The structure of the story basically came from a very simple plot. Through exploration and more discussions during the rehearsal process, the structure was developed better. Collaborative ideas helped in developing materials to support such simple structure. There are instances that the proposed scene does not work and so the importance of having a lot of materials came about. When we were developing the structure, there were instances where we had to alter the scenes to find a much better sequence. During the study, we explored the significance of the material from different angles and explored how different structures have an impact on it. Until such time that we arrive at a conclusion, and that is to stick to the current structure which we found to be much better. We then developed it even more.

So, it is also important that we keep an open mind when devising theater, so if an idea doesn't work now, keep it for future rehearsals. If a moment on stage isn't working out, you can just pull something from the ideas that you have set aside earlier. In any case, dismissing something without trying it first is counterproductive.

Despite continuing the exploration, much focus is being placed on communicating with the audience. While continuing the development of the structure, we also considered the audience. It is important that they be triggered at the same rate and not get confused. As far as form is concerned, I personally think the idea of leaving the audience confused is intriguing. I made sure to polish the visual and movement even more. Every aspect was carefully designed and provided with as many points of view as possible to make the piece more engaging.

## **f. Refining the Performance and Rehearse**

It is essential to give enough time for the performance to be refined. During this phase, you will be able to develop the practical skills in producing a fully formed performance. To refine the movements, spatial choices, even the elements used; the original purpose and objectives could serve as a guide. The actors must be sensitive to the ways in which their movements support the aims and objectives as well as how they establish the characters, the place, and the themes in the piece (Orti, 2014).

For Graham and Hoggett (2014), this is an important part of the process for this is the phase where the director has to be the outside eye to give the performance its final shape. Not all that have been created will be brilliant but by watching the work from an outsider's perspective, things that were not apparent earlier will surely appear.

Since this is a non-text based project, it is important to work on making the movement, spatial relations and choices thorough. As well as the characters and its relation to other characters. More importantly, the elements and the props used must be carefully designed to avoid creating complex meanings. This will avoid subsequent tension and contrast to the meaning or the message of the piece.

A good example is the transformative box. It has to be a lighter one for it will be transformed into many other set changes. The weight and size of the final material was bigger than what we expected and so we have to find ways on how to make it at least easier for my actors to carry.

We are always reminded that props and costume changes had to be practiced during rehearsal. This will lessen the chaos once the final props and costumes arrive. And it's true. In my experience in rehearsing the final materials, it's indeed a lot more different. We have to block a lot of scenes, adjust so many movements to make it work. Some had to be changed while some parts required more effort from the actors to get familiar with it. Sometimes they would even need more energy and force to give what we expected for the performance.

Several pacing approaches were explored for movement skills as we adjusted. It takes time to go through each moment and make systematic decisions about movement and non-verbal

communication. Often, it's intuitive on my part to make a lot of these decisions. I give actors total freedom with regards to their instincts and adjudicate whether it works or not later.

During rehearsals for the final performance, ample time has been dedicated to it. Instead of making major alterations to the piece, we were focused on honing the performance during this stage. This is the time when technical elements are integrated. A soundtrack for the performance is already selected, while lights have been installed for the performance. The designers actively participated in previews and meetings to ensure that their contributions complemented the ideas and concept of the piece. Their design contributions were also assessed later. This was done a month before the final performance with the aim of establishing audience response, leaving time to make any appropriate changes.

According to Thorpe and Gore (2020), the theater is not dependent on the notion that there is a 'main part,' but instead relies on the fundamental understanding that everyone involved in a show is equally important and can contribute in a number of ways. It is facilitated by the Director such that creativity can blossom in devised theater by blending different sources. It is the director's role to encourage actors and designers to respond with their imaginations. Furthermore, since so many people's ideas can be incorporated in the project, it is likely to lead to a higher level of personal engagement.

## **f. Challenges of Creating Positive Environment**

It's also important to understand that not everyone is used to being asked for their ideas or opinions. So even if it is a collaborative project, not everyone readily speaks up or offers their ideas. Some are more comfortable being told what's expected of them onstage and they just run within those boundaries. Instead of asking the actor right away about their ideas of the scene, I would ask them to just perform or execute their ideas presented. On the other hand, there are actors that blossomed in the devised environment. In this case I encouraged them to partner up with a performer who wasn't active so that they can learn from each other. Devised theater isn't for everyone. Sometimes coming up with ideas from scratch gets frustrating. This opportunity has to be used to encourage a positive and nurturing environment. Constant reminders to the actors--that nothing has to be perfect, and that the goal of a devised theater piece is to enjoy the journey as well as the destination and the learnings, has to be given.

Aside from gaining mastery of a range of directorial skills, my biggest challenge is incorporating the fundamental tasks required during my process in devising this project. I have been introduced to the concept of leadership and communication in directing. This section will contain my self-assessment in terms of my challenges in creating a positive environment for my theater collaboration.

Breaking down barriers, creating goodwill and encouraging artistry are just a few things that I wanted to achieve in my theater environment while doing this devised project. For me, achieving these will surely inspire creativity. When a positive environment is established at the very beginning, there is less chance of misunderstanding and the ensemble will feel well respected and safe, they can be more willing to take creative risks. When ideas are flowing and building upon one another abundantly-- between me and my creative team and cast, I am free to tap into my imagination and so are they. The following are the characteristics of positive collaborative environment according to Burgess (2019), in her book on collaborative stage directing:

### **Physical Safety**

We give the highest priority to safety. Rehearsal time must be set aside to test any sort of thing related to safety. Everything that needs to be rehearsed should be done under the safest conditions, using appropriate equipment and most importantly, with the help of an experienced consultant.

The first scenario was when my lead actress fell off the table. We were rehearsing a scene where her face was totally covered by thick bandages. Her body was wrapped in long white strips of bandage and as she was being pulled by members of the ensemble from different directions on stage, she fell. Because the bandage and mask were all over her face, we were not able to hear her shouting for a halt.

Second scenario happened a day before the final performance. We were doing a “cue to cue” on stage when I decided to change the stage direction. Instead of my actors dancing on stage I decided to move them downstairs instead. This happened without realizing that there’s a prop on standby downstage. At that time, we were also experimenting with how to light the stage, it was dark and you cannot really see the prop. When I asked my actors to try out the movement, she bumped her toes into the prop edge giving her a cut. Fortunately, the stage managers have a medical kit on standby and they helped her out.

Actors should never be bruised or get minor cuts as a result of the stage direction, but it happens because of poor planning and also taking for granted some safety concerns. To ensure that these incidents will never happen again, as a director, I always remind them first to be careful. I would always ask if they are comfortable doing the particular scene in that particular moment especially during our technical week. I always make sure that props and sets are not in the way of my actors to prevent accidents. Whenever possible, adjustments are made.

## **Mental Safety**

A physical assessment should not be the end in practicing safety. Psychological conditions and situations must also be considered by the director. Unfortunately, there are times when an actor may bring emotional baggage into the rehearsal hall, causing disruption to the positive flow. It is understandable because of our current situation--that we are all working in three different productions all at the same time. Some of my actors and collaborators are directors and choreographers too. Therefore, a lot of things could be on their minds at all times. While there are times that compassion and understanding will help in guiding the group to be productive, there are times when I have to call off the rehearsal so as to give my collaborators their own free time to think and reflect. I don't want them to feel like they are being forced to attend and participate in my rehearsal because this might ruin the positivity that I had worked hard to create. If this happens, I made sure that when the next rehearsal comes, we will finish double to what was scheduled.

## **Respect**

The ultimate goal is giving and getting respect within my collaborative environment--the production meetings and rehearsal studio. To show respect, I intently listen to the ideas of the designers during production meetings while showing my desire and willingness to collaborate. I also believe that a simple "thank you" goes a long way in demonstrating the respect I have for everyone in my production team. I always reflect on the fact that the project will only be successful when we all work together. As a student director, I also benefit in working and learning from these teacher-artists.

I make sure that I also show the same respect to the ensemble. Aside from showing it through my decisions and guidance, I highly value their opinions in matters involving the project.



From their character preferences to the stage direction. In the spirit of collaboration, I offered them the freedom to express their thoughts about the project as they see fit.

Sometimes it can be difficult to accept other people's ideas when they don't immediately mesh with your own. However, it's important to remember that everyone comes from different experiences and backgrounds. Someone might bring something to the metaphorical table that may end up being a huge part of the devised piece. With this, I always bear in mind that I have to be more open-minded in order for this process to work.

### **Free Flow of Ideas**

In addition to achieving a free flow of ideas, I wanted to achieve innovation and creativity. By setting up a safe environment for my creative team and actors to take risks, try new approaches and even fail; ideas can grow and thrive. The actors develop a sense of ownership in the process, emanating from their own freely flowing ideas.

As stated, it's important that we keep an open mind when devising theatre. If an idea doesn't work out at first, what we can do is to keep it aside for future rehearsals. If a moment onstage isn't working out, we then try things from these set-aside ideas and to our surprise, some do work out very well.

### **Productivity**

When a collaborative setting is created, the process is satisfying and just plain fun. Everyone feels productive. Everyone has ownership of the project, and collectively works hard for its success.

As a director, I do hope that my actors will stay in character and concentrate throughout the rehearsal process, particularly during run-throughs. However, some breaks and fun in between rehearsals resulted in forgetting the limits and tend to lose control. These are the bad habits that I observed.

There are times that we are constrained in time. There could never be enough rehearsal time. Considering the fact that there are few productions to work on, there are times we are unable to come up with ideas and wander in aimless directions. When this happens, I always make sure to try to get a scene back on track with a gentle reminder. Sometimes, a short break helps. Ensemble members respond well with gentle prompts. Another thing is setting a goal. At the end

of the rehearsal and the goal was achieved, they felt a sense of ownership and responsibility to the success of the project. Having a goal helps in managing the time.

To make sure that time is not wasted in giving directions that do not work, I had to understand that not all of my directions will be followed to the letter. Since not everyone is used to being asked for their ideas or opinions, it should not come as a surprise if not everyone speaks up or offers their ideas. Some could be just like me--comfortable on being told what's expected of me onstage and running within those boundaries. On the other hand, I may have performers that blossomed in a devised theatre environment. If this is the case, I encourage them to partner with a performer who isn't as active so that they can learn from one another. In this way, I am able to multiply myself and save time.



# Conclusion

This is a process that I find utterly satisfying, and it is so worth doing just for the sheer pleasure of doing it. Ensemble theater, it seems to me, is about realizing this value: being able to discover new ideas, and experiencing the thrill of discovery all together. For me, the most valuable thing about devising a performance has always been the opportunity offered to the directors, ensemble and the whole team. For them to use their own voices and have a say about the world as they see it. Making a show and sharing it with the audience has provided a platform where they can share their ideas, experiences, perspective and questions with others.

It has allowed us to challenge preconceived notions, and enable us to share the power and creativity inherent in artists. The devised theater energizes the conversation around what theater and performance can look like. In thinking about it after completing this process, I have come up with a few things that I could have done to make the devising process more fun, challenging, and engaging. Additionally, I would suggest this to the readers who may want to learn more about how devising is done.

First is to build a strong ensemble. That I would say, I may have failed to do, thus making my process drag a little bit. In my future devising project, I will make sure to set aside some time early on to explore everyone's personal objectives relative to the piece. In building an ensemble, we must have a unified mission statement for the show. Possibly, it might even change as the project moves forward. This will also provide an essential framework against which the director can judge every decision he/she makes in order to ensure that everyone is travelling in the same direction.

Second is to make the whole process personal. The more you have personal interest in the message that you want to communicate, thus you become more invested in it. The performance will be a lot more enjoyable if you enjoy the process and are passionate about it too. My future endeavor in devising theater performances shall still involve doing this. It is something I find quite essential.

Third is to question your objective, always. Another thing that is very essential is to keep questioning every new thing that comes into the piece of theater you are devising. Question its relevance to the central idea of what you want to communicate. For me, it is important to justify

every decision I made in my devising process. I always find a way to make it link to my core objective for the piece I am creating. By questioning every new thing coming into it, you might decide that it can shed a new light on the original idea. Thus, changes will surely come along the way which also needs to be reflected upon.

Fourth is recognizing that there is lots of work involved in simply constructing a plot, then blocking it, rehearsing it, and executing a performance. This is something that I had the biggest challenge in my process. The process of devising will create a performance and get results. However, what I created lacked depth, reflection and challenges. Until such time that I realized it, I already have wasted a lot of time because I have done it over and over. This slowed my process. The best thing to do is to explore the content as much as possible. Create as much material as possible which can be sifted through or piece together to make a performance. Create improvisations, build the characters and then develop images of ideas. This document contains all of the materials you need to perform the piece.

Fifth and last in my personal learning is to never forget your audience. A lot of times it happens in my process, and each time I don't mean it to happen, but somewhere in the process of devising my performance I tend to forget who it was for. Well, it's not that you forget who it is for or start making it for it just for yourself. Indeed, we do make all theatre for ourselves, but we aren't the ones who buy it, watch it, or assess it. It is important to remember that everything you do is for the audience. It must also be understood by the audience, though you may understand the piece of theater better because it is yours.

More so, suppressing the negative voice of my self-doubt is essential in order for me to tap into my personal creative impulse as well as those of the creative teams and actors. By creating a positive collaborative theater environment in my next directing project, or those readers who are interested in practicing devised theater, I will not only develop as a better and more mature director, but I also hope to inspire creativity in my ensemble. To create a foundation of safety, respect, positivity, a free flow of ideas and productivity of both the creative team and actors will set the stage for collaborative exchange.

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