

Performance Reflection

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I'm realizing that there are few spaces where I can truly be outspoken and transparent with my personal unsolicited thoughts and opinions. Particularly, because the acting profession, to an extent, often calls for neutrality — as a means to believably embody multiple characters and perspectives. However, with this specific assignment, I experienced a freedom to release myself from the silence I practice (or impose) daily in the entertainment industry — and unapologetically unleash my stream of consciousness.

I challenged myself to do exactly what we preach with our clients – to be in the here and now. Instead of generating or searching for something interesting to investigate, I chose to center the attention on my current situation — one that I am still navigating today.

I'm a sucker for a metaphor, so the concept of my performance came quite naturally. Themes of power dynamic, hierarchy, compromise, cost, and collateral were at the forefront of my art and heart — ironically, the same themes which run parallel to the content of the play I reference. I knew that I wanted the audience to experience multiple levels of consciousness — the same variables that I'm grappling with daily. This is why I chose two layer music, dialogue, visual art, text, and shift in environment. The performance needed to match the complexity of the impasse.

My experience was both frightening and refreshing. As I was flailing around as a live muted puppet, I experienced flashes of how proud I was but also of how real this is. My mind tuned out the voiced dialogue but tuned in to the faces of the audience as they received it. It was as if they were the performance and I was the witness.

What surprised me was how tight my chest felt during the peer feedback. Listening to other people interpret something so personal filled me with both appreciation and rage. I noticed how easy it was for others to focus on the narrative they chose to see and which parts they shied away from. I kept wondering what the feedback would've been if they hadn't known me for the past year—a clear indication of the difficulty (or questioning) that comes with separating art from the artist.

One would think that it would be difficult to hear a classmate ask to use pieces of your performance for their own. But the real difficulty came when hearing another classmate speak up for me in my moment of vulnerability. The fact that's such an intimate moment was interrupted solely for the desires of another makes me cringe. But the decency and consideration that had to be taught in that moment by that brave advocate shattered my heart. Teaching others how to be decent is exhausting. Granting exceptions feels like a copout for accountability. Making space for the privilege of others is hard. And I'm not interested in doing anybody else's work except my own. But time and again I find and knowingly place myself in spaces that will test my tolerance.

I'm not quite sure how this particular performance could be further explored. I could only imagine ways it could've been done differently. When I think about doing some thing beyond what I did, I worry about doing too much work for the audience. I worry about making the performance more palatable for my peers. Perhaps I could've re-entered the room as my future self to share what I've learned having gone through the production. Perhaps I could have performed that I've reached my level of tolerance and have therefore removed myself completely

from the project. Perhaps this performance is too close to home to experiment with. Perhaps I'm afraid I'll conjure into existence an unwanted outcome.

I believe that when we share stories we create space for community and conversation. So perhaps that's where this moment could be further explored. Perhaps audience members could add to the chaos of what it means to be strung and unstrung — by adding their own slips of paper to the collage.

I remember thinking to myself that even though I'm experiencing all of these internal challenges, in approximately 20 minutes I would be returning to the place of their origin. I kept thinking 'why do I go back' — back into a room that doesn't feel safe?' And I realize it's the same reason why we do anything: because we hope that this time things will and can be better. Perhaps we might be the missing ingredient for the needed change. Perhaps we are better equipped to navigate the unsafe spaces better than we think.