

Opening My Mind To Positivity

For Nueva's 2018 fall production I worked as a performer (actor and dancer), writer, and pod leader for *Asunder*, an original production showcasing student generated music, dance, and spoken word, directed by Windsor High School's theater teacher Brian Bryson and managed by Allison Frenzel. At the beginning of the production process, I was apart of the creative team who wrote the play and wrote my own generated spoken word by researching about refugees in my history class, as well as personally with the director. All the dancers, musicians, and actors collaborated to write the structure of the play, so everyone could understand the tone for the scenes. As a performer I was required to memorize dances, songs, and monologues, as well as bring the emotional value of the character's written to life onstage. When I was incharge of the acting pod while the stage managers were collaborating with other pods, I had the responsibility of making sure the cast was on task, help individuals memorize monologues and understand their characters, and then communicate to the stage managers of our progress made everyday.

Academics were a challenge for me during the production because I signed myself up for too many activities. With three honors classes, an online college class, being in eight classes, and working on two productions at the same time, it became overwhelming at times for me to finish homework. I fell a little behind in my college photoshop class, but after communicating to my teacher, I have been able to make up work and still receive credit. I am used to managing my time and got all my work done in my other classes, so thankfully it did not impact me too much in the end. I could not see any activity I wanted to drop, so at the end of the day I was thankful to enjoy everything I was apart of.

Life has a way to point out the thing an individual needs to work on in multiple directors. This production taught me the life lesson I needed for a while now, that is to be positive in the face of challenge, even when inside you are questioning if you can overcome the obstacle. During the beginning stages of the production, I was worried that we were not writing the play fast enough and we would not be ready for an audience. Instead of spending time writing the script, we talked about the morals of humanity and had debates about why refugees should be allowed in other countries. At first, I thought it was a waste of time, however, in the long run it allowed the actors to understand where the characters we wrote were coming from. As time went on, I became more and more stressed about the outcome of the process and did not see the grow in front of me. Two weeks before tech week, we finished the script and worked on memorizing our spoken word. I feared we would not be able to memorize, and fully understand the words we were speaking with our hearts. I walked around, clearly showing my frustration, anxieties, and lack of trust in the process, unknowingly causing negativity to spread through the cast. However, after talking to the production manager Allison Frenzel, I came to the understand that having a positive mindset will not just put my anxieties to rest, but help others feel confident in the production. After our conversation, I put my best efforts to push through the rest of the production with positivity, ensuring others the best outcome of the show. My joyful attitude helped clear the room of negative vibes for others and allowed myself to have fun for the first time in

the process. I learned that creating something from nothing is a process of fixing and being open minded to new ideas.

This show in particular has taught me the skill of collaboration with many different people. I worked with all the pods; by either communicating to costuming about outfits I need, helping set move pieces on and off the stage during show, or helping the dancers and musicians understand the counts for a song, I was able to understand different people's perspectives and help individuals when needed. In the future, I can use this skill in both my currer and as long as I pursue theater as a passion. I have experience stage managing in the past, but I have never working with these many different types of artist in a room. Many of the dancers I have had classes with before, but I have never have seen them in their element before the production. It was inspiring to watch the dancers do their craft, work together with respect and care, and teach others how to be confident with movement onstage. I never thought I would dance on stage in a high school show and mirroring that idea the dancers did not think they would be singing. The kindness and patience of every member of the production process allowed everyone to go outside their comfort zone. I know in the future to bring an open mind and positivity to anyone who comes my way.

During rehearsals, the people who attended always tried to make some sort of contribution everyday. The process was rough to push to create the central idea, but there was never a time we stood around doing nothing. An insecurity of mine during the production is that I felt as though other groups thought the actors were not productive during school time. However, we were using the time to memorize monologues and write spoken word pieces together. Everyday, I left knowing we got at least one thing done, whether it was working on a scene, dance, or spoken word, looking back we always got something accomplished.

I think the value of the show was made from the collaboration of the students working together, even if we did not understand each other's artistic languages. Although I was an actor, I help communication between different groups because I have had experience in both dance and music in the past and understand their perspectives. I remember there were times the dancers would not know the count of a song, so I would explain the beat for them. Likewise, I was able to express how the dancers wanted for certain bass drops and rhythmic ideas to the musicians when the groups did not understand each other. Having student leaders of each pod allowed for conversations about the show with equals, so everyone was able to speak their truth without fear of being out of place. As a student leader, I did a good job at communicating with the pod leaders, stage managers, and director. Also, there is a bond and respect build between a group who work together, and although we did not know the same artistic vocabulary, we were able to collaborate together understanding that everyone was their with the best of intentions.

Through the process, I was able to adapt and become a positive person to bring up the cast around me. Although at times I felt as though the show might not become its full potential, that fear motivated me to work harder to make the show the best it can be. Just as the creation of the final show was a process, the members of the group should be graded on their change of attitude during the process. The crunch of making the show was stressful, and I would not feel as though anyone should be graded down a point for every mistake they made. There was probably a time I would have gotten fired

for speaking out of turn but there was also times I questioned if the show was worth it, if it was going to get better. I think sometimes I would have gotten fired, but in my conversation with Frezel she talked to me as an equal, not down to as a child. That conversation was a warning, and after I did what was needed to be done to improve.

This show has made me question my worth as an artist and if I should continue to pursue theater. I spend hours contemplating my worth as a grade, was my effort of mental breakdowns, staying at the school until eight pm multiple days a week, losing sleep worrying about the outcome of the show worth a simple ten points in the grade book? I currently do not know what I will want to do in the next show, no matter what I choose to do I would like to continue to collaborate closely with the amazingly talented students of the core. I spent the last two years performing in back to back shows with no rest inbetween. What I need now is a little break, but when the next show arrives I will come back with an open mind.