

To The WPI Community,

This letter aims to make public the actions taken and the environment created by Dr. Kathryn Moncrief. Dr. Kate, as she is usually called, is the head of the Humanities Department and the director of the play put on by the theater department every B-Term. The vast majority of students pursuing a minor in theater, a theater humanities depth, or a theater MQP must work with her, as that play is a necessary project for their degree. To get a better idea of what the experience of working with her is like, I reached out to some of these students, who provided testimonials. Through the accounts of these students, it is clear that Dr. Kate has taken advantage of her position to make the theater environment unwelcoming and unsafe for many members of the student body.

As a director, Dr. Kate has also taken on the role of intimacy coordinator whenever an intimacy coordinator is needed. This means she is in charge of choreographing potentially sensitive scenes, mainly those that involve contact between actors. Usually, this is done by a separate person, as when the director takes control there can be a conflict of interest. An intimacy coordinator's job is to ensure the actors are safe and comfortable, a director's job is to produce their creative vision. When these two clash, Dr. Kate has always chosen the director role. This has been a repeated concern even after it was made abundantly clear that this caused great discomfort among students. As one student who worked on a play with her puts it "[Dr. Kate] refused to hire an intimacy coordinator for the show[...] which made [the actors] very uncomfortable because this was a project production and she was both giving intimacy advice and a grade for the project." This fear of speaking up due to potential academic risk is very prevalent and very dangerous.

Even in cases where an external coordinator was hired, it was not handled well, such as in the case of a fight coordinator on the B22 production of *Sense and Sensibility*. This was a person who was personally vetted by Dr. Kate, and as she said repeatedly, one of her close friends. During this production, a student reports that they were inappropriately touched by this coordinator. They reported it to the production manager at the time, but the fight coordinator stayed. As they put it “I was forced to continue to be in further rehearsals with the fight coordinator, and I had to specifically ask a fellow student [...] to watch the rehearsals because I did not feel safe.” Not only did they continue in that production, but for the next show that required a fight coordinator, Dr. Kate brought in the same person. This shows that it was not a single lapse of judgement, but a consistent decision to work with someone who made students feel unsafe.

Dr. Kate also has problems dealing with students from marginalized communities. In her most recent production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* she took steps to “make it gay” without considering the implications of the changes she was making. As one student puts it “The intent as given seemed like hollow representation that was filled with ignorance [...] I believe *midsummer* went well in spite of Dr. Kate, who was not equipped or ready to handle queer representation in a proper way.” In this case, the actors were able to use their own experiences as members of the queer community to salvage the play. However, this can get more egregious when there are not enough members of the community to push back, such as in one student’s account “I was the only Black or Brown actor in the production (I’m Brown; there were no Black actors), and she wanted to have me act as every animal in the show, even when it didn’t make sense feasibly.” This led to a rather ridiculous situation, not only because of its insensitivity, but also because there were too many roles for one actor to play. It required other students stepping

up and volunteering to fill some of them. Neither of these situations should have been left to the students to fix. They were the director's responsibility, but Dr. Kate did not do anything to help.

Students have been afraid to stand up to Dr. Kate due to the position she holds. They are well aware that she determines their grade in a production that is essential for any student pursuing a minor in theater. These fears are not helped by the attitude she treats students with. Multiple people gave reports of her publicly talking about students behind their backs or treating students worse because they talked back to her. In collecting reports for this letter, I have talked to multiple people who had testimonials, but were not willing to give them for fear that Dr. Kate would figure out who said it and their academic status would be thrown into jeopardy. This does not create a safe environment. This creates an environment that will only get worse the longer it lasts.

This is not the first time a report has been filed regarding Dr. Kate. Attached to the end of this letter is a document that was compiled three years ago by a group of students who wanted to make a change. That document was only shared internally, which led to it being swept under the rug. This letter aims to finish what that one started. Students should be able to feel safe in theater, and the only way that will happen is if Dr. Kate is no longer in control of it.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Student

APPENDIX: PREVIOUS REPORT

Document Concerning Dr. Kathryn Moncrief's Behavior in *Sense and Sensibility*

The following document was put together by two students concerning Dr. Kathryn Moncrief's behavior as director in the faculty-run and academically bearing production of *Sense and Sensibility* in B-Term 2022. The document contains written accounts and screenshots from students concerning their experiences working with Dr. Moncrief on this production. (Note: The students often refer to Dr. Moncrief as Dr. Kate, as that is how she has asked to be addressed.) Many students have asked to remain anonymous, so this document will avoid using the names of the students involved. The students provided their written accounts and screenshots with the option for anonymity through a google form. No changes have been made to the written accounts and screenshots other than minor fixing of structure and blacking out of names for anonymity.

Student A

Role: Actor

Written Account:

I am Diagnosed with Tourettes. Rehearsal 11/10/2022 I had a tic attack. Tic attacks for me only occur when I am under a lot of stress. I had not had a tic attack in about a year, and a tic attack this severe in a few years. I was able to find a quiet space and take a break, but I was definitely not able to continue rehearsal. I was also eventually able to head back home. During my break, Dr. Kate had come to check on me 2 times. Each time, she would say that if I wanted to go home, I could, but if I felt ok enough, I could rejoin the rehearsal. It was obvious she preferred the latter option, and each time it felt passive aggressive, like she was expecting me to also prefer the latter. I was not in a state where I felt comfortable physically rejoining the rehearsal that day, and the Production Manager and other cast members agreed. I only felt comfortable leaving that day because one of my fellow cast members had brought out my bag to where I was sitting, and that the quiet space was in a different room that rehearsals were in. I was afraid that if I had to reenter rehearsals, even just to grab my stuff, I would have been pressured into staying at the rehearsal by Dr. Kate. In general, Dr. Kate would be passive aggressive towards/about any cast member missing a rehearsal for any reason during rehearsals.

Tech week 11/28-12/3 I had gotten sick the weekend before this. Because of this, I had to miss that monday, and wore a mask the next day. I was not comfortable telling Dr. Kate about this, but I did tell the Production Manager. The PM and I decided it would be best for me to wear a mask on tuesday, as I didn't want to get any other actors sick so close to the show dates. Tuesday was also the day there was a professional photographer. I was asked to take my mask off for a few scenes for pictures sake. There was one scene I was comfortable not wearing a mask, as I was able to distance myself from other actors. At the end of the rehearsal, Dr. Kate forced me to take off my mask for the group photo and to redo certain scenes for promotional pictures. Luckily, no one else got sick from this, but I still did not feel totally safe.

Student B

Role: Actor

Written Account:

Throughout the production, scheduling was not communicated well. Especially early on, actors would be sent rehearsal calls the day of the rehearsal; the calls were particularly unclear. One rehearsal, due to the unclear call, I thought I was called later than I actually was. At the time of the rehearsal, the assistant stage manager informed me that I was called, and I promptly apologized and ran to rehearsal. I have an Anxiety Disorder, and this triggered a panic attack. When I arrived at the Little Theater for rehearsal, I was having so severe a panic attack that I could not be involved, so I went into the Green Room (in the basement of the Little Theater) to calm down. While I was calming down, I could hear Dr. Kate upstairs making passive-aggressive comments regarding me such as: actors should come on time ready to rehearse, the other actors should warm up while we wait for everyone to get ready so as not to waste more time than we already have, and in general comments about professionalism and coming to work. She also repeatedly sent the assistant stage manager down to urge me to calm down and come up. Her comments and the stage manager repeatedly being sent to hurry me only made my panic attack worse, and it lasted about 20 minutes. I rarely have panic attacks that severe or last that long, unless under immense stress. She also refused to do scenes that I was not in while waiting for me, although actors were called for multiple scenes for that rehearsal that I was not in.

I also heard her make passive-aggressive comments about other actors when they had to miss rehearsal. One actor needed to miss rehearsal due to work, and she made comments to the stage managers in front of the entire rest of the cast about her frustration with them not coming and her gripes with their lack of professionalism. This also happened on multiple occasions when actors were late.

In addition, Dr. Kate did not prioritize consent in the production although claiming to. On multiple occasions, she did not enforce the rules that she had set for actors touching other actors. She in addition did not maintain any standards of consent in fight calls, which led to the fight coordinator, a professional hired by her, touching me inappropriately during his instruction. I felt uncomfortable bringing it up at the time or to her due to the power dynamic and due to her lack of advocating for the consent of the cast throughout working with this fight coordinator.

During Tech Week, I was sick for two days. Both days I was asked by the faculty of the production to wear a mask. On the second day however, there was a photographer and about halfway through the rehearsal, I was asked to take off my mask for the photos. I expressed that I was uncomfortable doing so, as I was in close proximity to other actors when speaking. My discomfort was respected until the end of the run through, when she asked we take off our masks for some still shots. I accepted as I believed I wouldn't be talking during the still shots. She then insisted I did recite some lines while in scene, so therefore not distanced from other actors.

Student C

Role: Actor

Written Account:

In the show I at times had to do some potentially dangerous choreography. Traditionally this sort of choreography is practiced slowly at the start of any rehearsal or performance in which the actors are expected to do it at full speed in order to ensure safety. Kate Moncrief repeatedly forgot to include this safety practice as part of rehearsals and expressed annoyance at having to set time aside for them, despite their necessity in ensuring safety. In one such practice during the week of the show she insisted that I start at full speed in the practice run of this fight sequence. I informed her that I was not comfortable with this and after some back and forth she acquiesced. During that same practice run myself and two other actors were having difficulty being safe in the scene and so I suggested we slow it down. Kate Moncrief then told me I needed to stop undermining her and that I wasn't allowed to say we should slow down (even though it was my and another actors safety at risk). That same day she also yelled at me for taking time when she wanted me to be doing something else to ask about water for the show as I needed to have accommodations in place so I did not dehydrate.

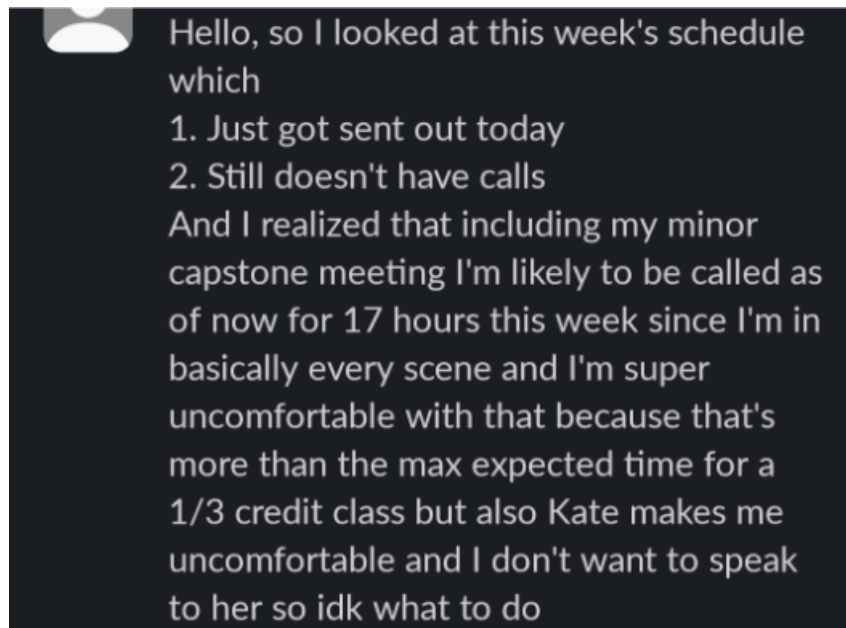
Kate Moncrief also claims to be well versed in consent and intimacy directing, yet repeatedly ignored actor's boundaries including my own. I expressed multiple times to her that I and another actor were not comfortable kissing and yet every time it came up she would insist that we try it before saying no and that our fears weren't valid because "it's not a real kiss." This also happened while she brought only the two of us actors and herself into a storage closet where we had no one to witness this or advocate for us which was extremely unethical of her to do.

Kate Moncrief was also extremely disrespectful of actors time and health, speaking badly to the rest of the cast about anyone who was late or absent (even when it was excused). We were asked to block off 4-5 hour chunks of time everyday for rehearsals which then wouldn't take up that entire time, though we were also just as often made to stay late. This infringed upon students jobs, extracurriculars, and other projects essential to graduating such as my mqp. None of these were considered acceptable reasons to miss any part of rehearsal and I was specifically told that because of my role in the show that I could not miss rehearsal for any reason. I was also told that it was a good thing that I had spent a gym class in which i was supposed to be participating instead walking around the track reading lines and that such dedication to a show is what was expected of me (I did make it clear that this was a for credit class and was still commended for prioritizing the show).

Additionally she got angry at students for needing to take breaks for medical reasons including at one point where I damaged the cartilage around an earring and was in extreme pain and was given only a couple minutes to try to recover before she told me I needed to get back to rehearsal in a way that was so harsh that I spoke to another faculty member about the scene afterwards which they agreed was not fair to me but they felt they could not do much about it because of the position Kate Moncrief holds. Her wielding power over others and making it

uncomfortable at best and impossible at worst to discuss concerns with her was something I felt and saw a lot of throughout. She agreed to let students go to an important club meeting in which I was running for a position (which I had informed her about) but then refused to let the students in the show stay long enough at the meeting to vote, despite only needing 10-15 extra minutes and having another faculty member try to advocate on our behalf. She allowed show members to take small items such as playdoh that they had found from another club and when she was told that they were not for us and that they had been paid for out of pocket by a student she said that it was fine and that she had done nothing wrong and didn't seem to care at all about the effect on the club or the student who had bought these now used items.

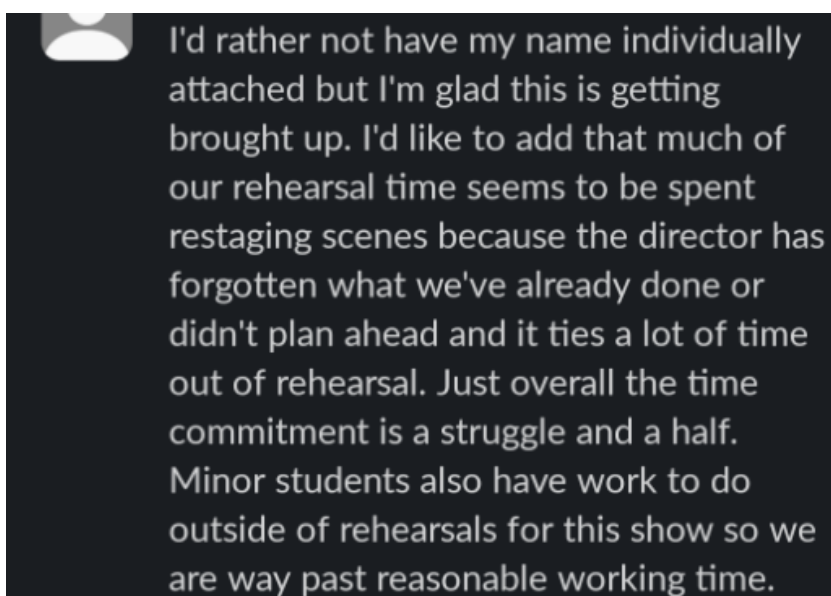
Screenshots:

A screenshot of a text message on a dark background. On the left is a small, circular profile picture of a person with dark hair. The text is white and reads: "Hello, so I looked at this week's schedule which", followed by a numbered list: "1. Just got sent out today" and "2. Still doesn't have calls". The text continues: "And I realized that including my minor capstone meeting I'm likely to be called as of now for 17 hours this week since I'm in basically every scene and I'm super uncomfortable with that because that's more than the max expected time for a 1/3 credit class but also Kate makes me uncomfortable and I don't want to speak to her so idk what to do".

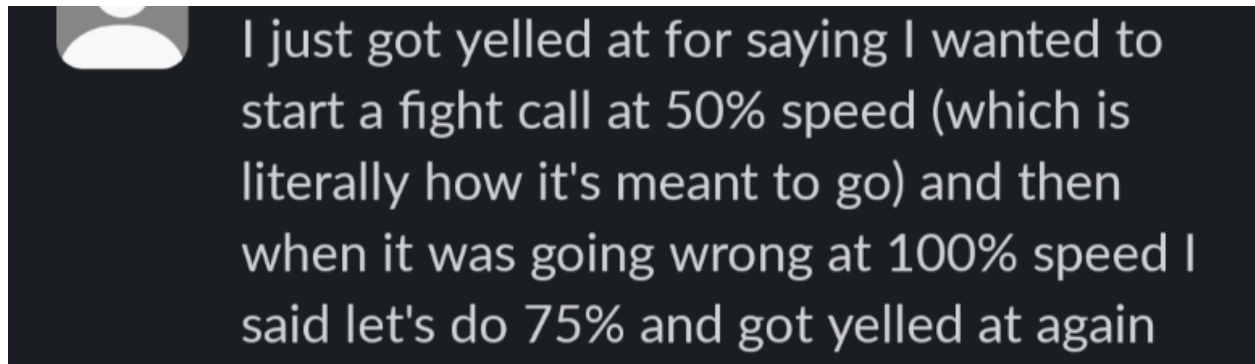
Hello, so I looked at this week's schedule which

1. Just got sent out today
2. Still doesn't have calls

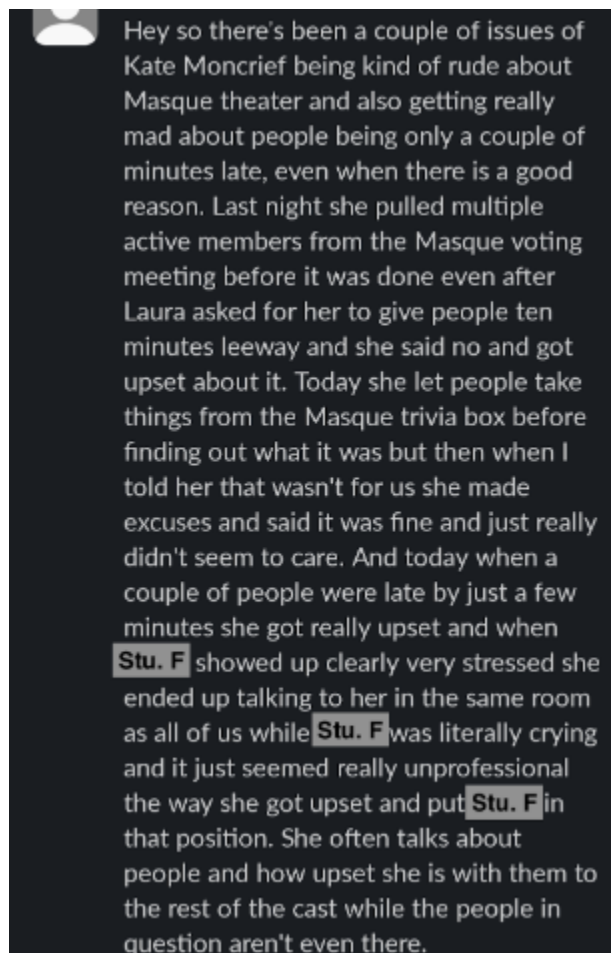
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A screenshot of a text message on a dark background. On the left is a small, circular profile picture of a person with dark hair. The text is white and reads: "I'd rather not have my name individually attached but I'm glad this is getting brought up. I'd like to add that much of our rehearsal time seems to be spent restaging scenes because the director has forgotten what we've already done or didn't plan ahead and it ties a lot of time out of rehearsal. Just overall the time commitment is a struggle and a half. Minor students also have work to do outside of rehearsals for this show so we are way past reasonable working time."

I'd rather not have my name individually attached but I'm glad this is getting brought up. I'd like to add that much of our rehearsal time seems to be spent restaging scenes because the director has forgotten what we've already done or didn't plan ahead and it ties a lot of time out of rehearsal. Just overall the time commitment is a struggle and a half. Minor students also have work to do outside of rehearsals for this show so we are way past reasonable working time.



Pictures 1-3: The above screenshots includes Slack messages from Student C expressing their concerns to the Show Liaison, a student in the show whose job is to resolve conflict and communicate concerns to show management.



Picture 4: The above screenshot also includes a Slack message from Student C expressing their concerns to the Show Liaison. This also includes their perspective on the story concerning Student F (Stu. F). Student F's account of this experience can be found on page 11 later in the document

Student D

Role: Actor

Written Account:

In the early audition process, we had to fill out an audition form with our comfort levels with various topics; intimacy was one of the topics. I mentioned discomfort with kissing. On a Monday rehearsal on Nov 14th, I was told that we would practice the kiss when I felt comfortable. I had no rehearsal on Tuesday, but on Wednesday, I was told that Dr. Kate had changed her mind and we'd be doing the kiss on Friday, regardless of my wishes. Both people involved in the kiss had clearly expressed discomfort with it by this point, but I felt that I could not just say no if my wishes could be overruled the next time we get together. Due to issues with time management that I'm certain others are going into, we didn't end up choreographing the kiss until tech week. Dr. Kate was my mentor on theatrical intimacy in the A-term show, and instructed me that all scenes of intimacy and actor's changes in boundaries must be reviewed nightly. No such review happened throughout the entire tech week process, and when we finally choreographed the kiss (in the form of being on the cheek and not the lips), there was an expectation from Dr. Kate that we would change our minds and do the kiss that she wanted. We were specifically told that "we'll see if you're comfortable tomorrow", despite us telling her on four occasions (the 14th, 15th, 17th, and about 20 minutes before she made that comment).

I also have a job on campus that requires me to work some Tuesday nights. As I did not receive a full rehearsal schedule, or even a weekly schedule for the first weeks of rehearsal, I did my best to schedule around the most important rehearsal days. Dr. Kate did not allow the stage managers to schedule rehearsals based on our actual availability, she took the shortcut of using our Workday availability. I am also a senior who is doing his MQP, which also does not appear in my Workday. I had more freedom for MQP scheduling, but my Tuesdays were non-negotiable. I told the stage manager of my work schedule for the duration of the production as soon as I noticed a Tuesday night rehearsal that overlapped with my work. Once again, we were informed of rehearsals on very short notice. Despite this, I was told the next week, when I also had a work Tuesday, that I was expected at rehearsal and should have been there. I had given more than a week advance notice for this specific absence. I later heard from other student actors that Dr. Kate had criticized me openly to the rest of the cast when I was not at rehearsal.

This is a relatively minor complaint. After a dialect work session, Dr. Kate told us that the coach had described our work as excellent. She then said that she tried to downplay our work, saying it was good "for a college production", even though the coach stated that we were excellent even by her standards from working at a prestigious arts conservatory. For some reason we were supposed to take this backhanded statement as a compliment. This is yet another example of the pattern of Dr. Kate insulting students' work.

I was not supposed to play a gossip in this production; my official role offer was only for Edward and Robert. I was told that I would be a gossip, with all the extra work that implies, simply because Dr. Kate had not properly cast the show. She did not include enough actors in the

cast, despite having a sufficient amount of auditionees. The specific scenes I appeared as a gossip, as well as other actors' assignments to the gossip roles, were not finalized until tech week. Final casting is supposed to be determined before rehearsals begin. Because the roles were so nebulous that even the director, Dr. Kate, did not know who was what gossip and when, actors including myself had to attend many rehearsals where we had no work to do. Students were working 20+ hour weeks on this show, even students who were receiving only 1/6 credit, because the show was managed so poorly.

In productions where there are moments of stage combat, there is supposed to be a "fight call" where fight moments are run twice, once at 50% speed and once at 75% speed. I learned this procedure from Rob Issacson and Cliff Allen, two individuals certified by the Society of American Fight Directors. Rob was actually the fight choreographer for *Sense and Sensibility*. Dr. Kate continually ignored proper fight call procedure, having fights run only once at full speed. The reason this is unsafe is that actors will speed up in the performance due to stress, so running fight calls below full speed is supposed to ensure that they do not perform at unsafe speeds in the actual performances. In addition, lighting changes should not be happening during fight calls unless they are to the actual lighting of the fight scene. When I told the production manager that this was unsafe, she told the director, Dr. Kate, to pause until the lighting board operator was finished with adjustments. Dr. Kate chose to tell the actors to keep going.

Student E

Role: Actor

Written Account:

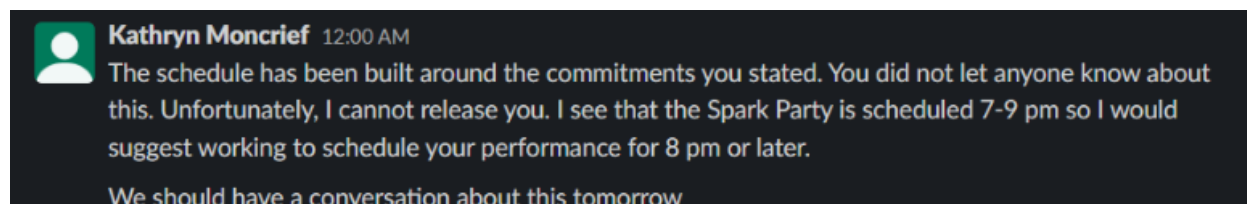
Most of the time I was called for rehearsal I just sat around and did nothing. For almost every single rehearsal, I had to miss another prior commitment to be there, to the point that I basically had to forgo a bunch of different organizations which I am heavily involved in for the term. I was never asked about commitments, and if I ever brought them up, I was told that I had to skip them because this production was an academic commitment, no matter how far in advance I brought them up. I am underloading this term and because of the unreasonable time requirement for this production it has been the most stressful term I've had so far at WPI.

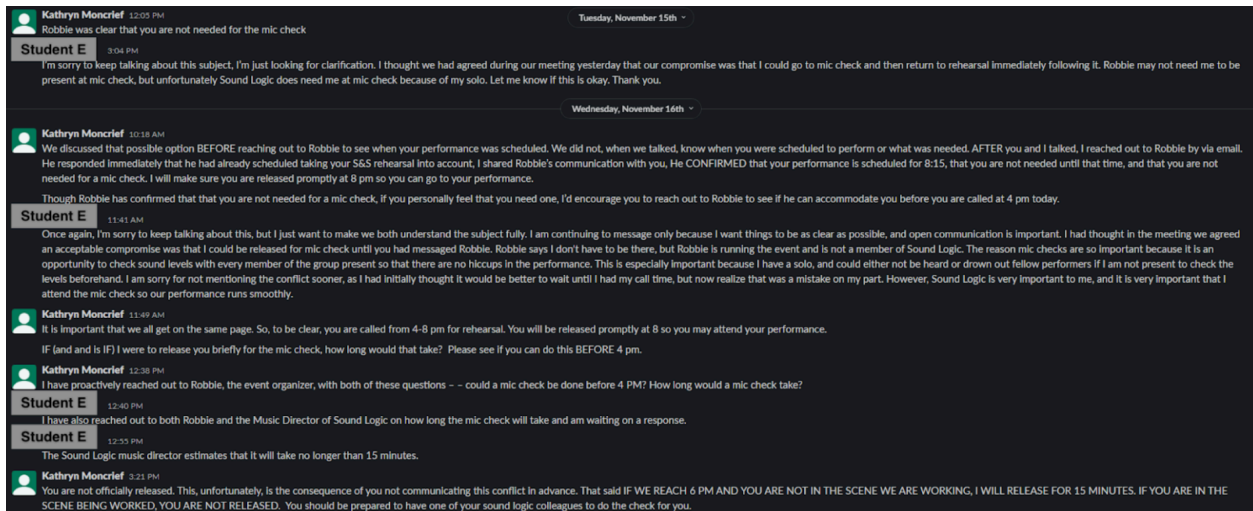
The biggest issue was when I had an a cappella performance. I reached out to Dr. Kate less than one hour after the rehearsal schedule was sent and was met with general hostility.

We ended up having a one on one meeting after exchanging some midnight slack messages. In the meeting, she repeatedly told me that it was my fault for not communicating the conflict in advance. I probably apologized about ten times and she still wouldn't let up that it was my fault. I brought up during this meeting that she made me feel uncomfortable bringing up conflicts, to which she responded that I should, because this is an academic commitment. By the end of the meeting, we agreed that I could leave for mic check, come back, and then leave for the performance. Almost immediately after the meeting she went back on this saying that I was not allowed to go to mic check. I've attached some stuff from our slack conversation.

The funny thing is that day of the performance, I left to go to the a cappella mic check, at which point she told me that I needed to be back by 6:30 or there would be consequences, and then came back before then but still wasn't needed until around 7:30. I was able to attend both mic check and the performance without my attendance even being necessary for those parts of the rehearsal, so essentially she made a huge mountain out of a molehill. I was needed for less than a half hour of a four hour rehearsal.

Screenshots:





Pictures 5-6: The above screenshots include conversations between Student E and Dr. Moncrief concerning the conflict Student E described in their written account.

This student decided to update us once given their grade and submitted an addition to their written account:

Got some interesting feedback from Dr. Kate's grading. Especially love the note about communicating conflicts proactively and how throughout the rehearsal process she continuously told me how I was doing such a great job memorizing lines and growing in my role. Aside from the scheduling things you already know about and the missed cues, none of this feedback was actually brought to me during the production. I would love to see her grading feedback for other actors because I have a lot of reason to believe that she gave me this grade almost solely because she personally does not like me.

Screenshot:

Production Role	
Criteria	Ratings
Engagement attendance, timeliness, participation, communication, collaboration, meeting deadlines, solution-oriented approach	Comments Attended rehearsals on time, learned blocking and dancing in a timely manner. Struggled to communicate scheduling issues proactively. Little engagement with rehearsal process. Did not memorize lines in a timely fashion. Rarely collaborated or offered solutions. 16 / 20 pts
Deliverables accuracy, rigor, nuance, polish, promptness, consideration, completeness	Comments Frequently did not pay attention during rehearsals, including final dress rehearsals which led to missing cues and entrances. Completed the role. 16 / 20 pts
Growth self-awareness, reflection, asking for help, responding to feedback, skill building, improvement	Comments Implemented some written notes but did not seek feedback. Growth as a performer was limited 8 / 10 pts

Picture 7: The above screenshot contains the feedback Dr. Moncrief gave to Student E.

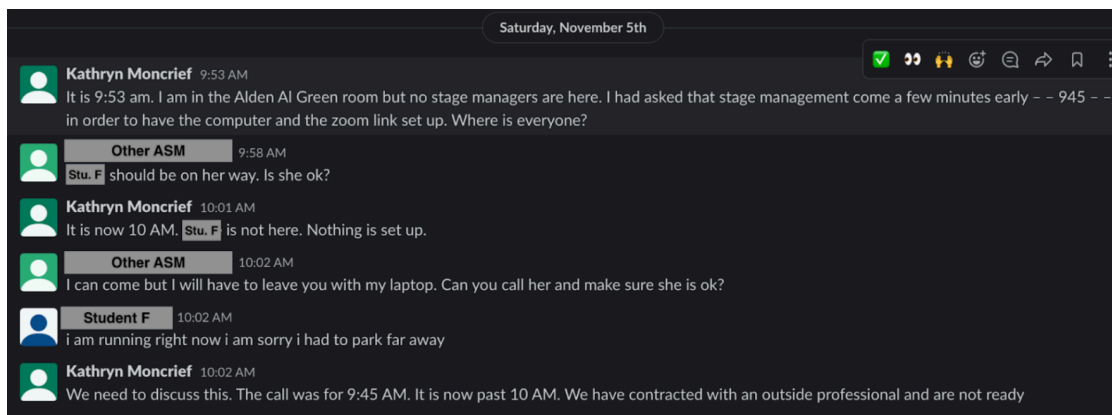
Student F

Role: Assistant Stage Manager

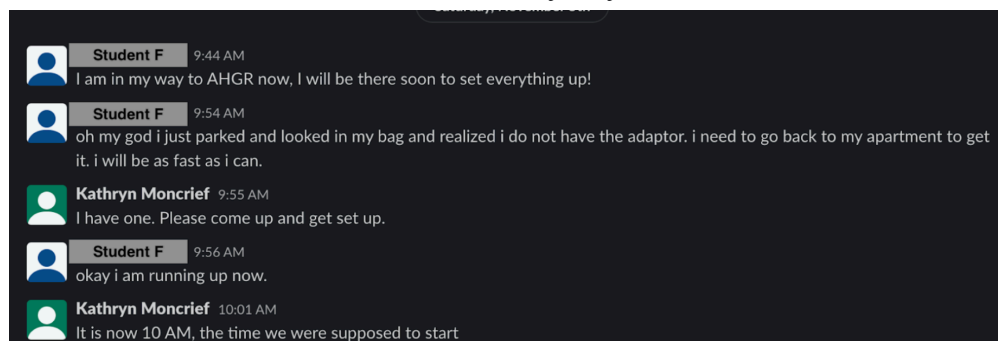
Written Account:

This was an interaction had between a channel between the SMs and Dr. Kate, and then a channel with only me and Dr. Kate. I was running late to a rehearsal and had communicated with her about it, but the response remained unnecessarily harsh. I understand that I was late and that it was my responsibility to be on time, however I had communicated with her, and I was met with a response that made me very uncomfortable. My job was to set up a my computer for the zoom call, and I had forgotten the adaptor that I needed, and had forgotten that she had a spare, so I turned home to get one as it was necessary for the call to be projected. Additionally my only job at the rehearsal was to set up the zoom, and I had nothing else to do for the rest of the rehearsal and was told I could go to do homework, which makes me question why it had to be my zoom, and why someone else could not set it up and a new link could be sent if I was running late and was not needed for anything else. The zoom was opened at 10:10 and the meeting was officially started at 10:15.

Screenshots:



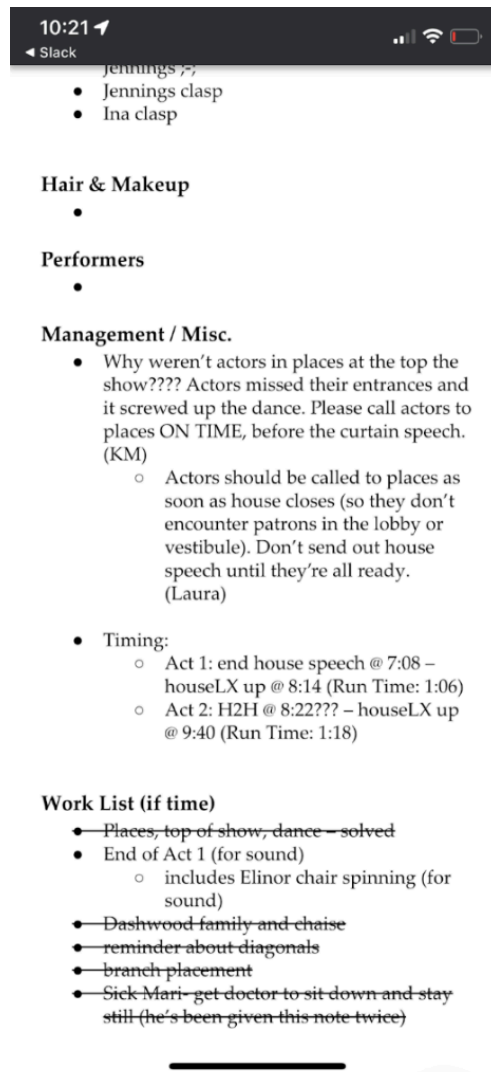
Picture 8: The above screenshot includes Slack messages in a channel consisting of the stage managers and Dr. Moncrief. The name of the other Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) is blacked out for anonymity.



Picture 9: The above screenshot includes Slack messages between Student F and Dr. Moncrief.

Student G

This student did not wish to share anything specific to their experience but felt it necessary to bring up the following screenshot:



Picture 10: The above screenshot is of a document for run through notes (a run through being a rehearsal in which the entire play is rehearsed start to finish), which are public to the entire production. This run through, there was a mistake and actors were not queued to go on in time. Multiple production members have expressed their concern over Dr. Moncrief's tone in her note concerning this. Note: the abbreviation "(KM)" indicates this note was written by Dr. Moncrief.