Alice Mahon

Senior Project Proposal

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A Dedicated Performance: Exploring a myriad of established methods of acting

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For my senior project, I will perform a diverse program of monologues and scenes that my favorite actors and actresses have performed that have had a great impact on me, with at least three different acting method approaches. I want to be able to develop a tool-belt of methodology within the art of acting. This project will honor what I have already been taught, and allow me to build upon my current understanding, as well as push me to create a larger product of what I am able to discover. In order to accomplish this, I will need an acting mentor, a team of committed and passionate actors and actresses to assist me in scenes, and a particular group of individuals to form a devised "production team," mainly consisting of a stage manager, a publicity coordinator, and a select few designers for necessary technical elements (TBD.) Outside of personnel required to complete my vision, I will need funds to fill requirements of technical elements, such as props, costumes, and publicity.

This project in particular will allow me to dive deep into the acting methods that I am not currently able to study intensively in any course offered at this university, and overall prove to myself that being an actor is what I truly would like to spend my life doing. While I have taken/am taking acting classes at this university, we have never delved very deep into specific

acting methods. Acting 1 with Mariah gave us the basics of applying actions and tactics to acting, and Acting for Film and TV with Tom gave a basic understanding of method acting, or Stanislavski's method, as well as a few others. Upon learning that these methods are so deeply-rooted in classical and modern acting, I found myself striving to research them further than the curriculum intended; acting methods piqued my interest. With this project, I want to be able to further develop my toolbelt of methodology, and be confident in what I have learned in order to utilize it in my real world experiences. Going forward, I hope to learn more about what it takes to approach a role from different perspectives, and furthermore allow myself to be better prepared for roles to come.

My goal for this project is to mimic the long process of memorization and acting work that goes into eventually performing a number of monologues and scenes from several different methodological approaches in order to gain realistic experience and understanding of a rehearsal and performance process that will prepare me for acting in the real world, in addition to honoring and highlighting the actors and actresses that helped me discover my own love of performance. I want the same pieces of theater and film that changed my life to be accessible to an audience full of people that I care about and have helped me become the actress that I am today, and hopefully watch me grow into an even better one after I move on from Quinnipiac with my degree. I want to be able to put myself into parts that exemplify my talents and strengths that I have otherwise seen myself cast in roles that don't necessarily capture my full ability as an actress. I want to create a piece of theater that is so diverse in the work that my favorite actors and actresses have worked on. I want to create a piece of personal and vulnerable theater that helps to break away from my "comedic relief" type-cast and is not only a project that helps me prepare for a future in the entertainment business, but also allows the people around be to understand how the art of

theater and acting can have a major influence on an impressionable young woman. All in all, I want to be able to prove to myself that I can take different approaches to different pieces, and feel confident in my ability to do so.

I want to explore the process of a massive acting journey. More specifically, I want to immerse myself in the audience's reactions. In addition, I would like to give myself the opportunity to become a vulnerable and open-minded figure on-stage and off, as I research different acting methods and approaches in order to give the best possible and diverse performance. By the end of the Spring 2023 semester, Mariah and I will have discussed and planned out the best possible presentation method for what I have learned- this "final performance" remains up in the air, though I do have an idea as to where I would like to go with it.

<u>My research question:</u>

1. *What acting methods work for me? What acting methods don't work for me? Would it be beneficial to apply different methods to different pieces? In what ways?*

I imagine that this question will be most beneficial to this process. This process, in addition to intense research, will be a long rehearsal process that explores three different approaches to three different pieces. In order to complete this process, I will have to do a large amount of research on methodology and acting in general before I even begin the selection process of performance material. This will be a massive research project, and as an outcome, I will have produced a detailed bibliography and notation of my studies. Then, I will delve into the selection process, where Mariah and I will cast me in three roles that we find fit me well, but also challenge me in unique ways. This is where the vigorous rehearsal will come into play. I plan on

rehearsing on my own of course, but also meeting with Mariah at least once a week, and then more frequently as the spring semester goes on. As we develop these pieces with different approaches, I will continue my result of acting methodology. If I find that something is going well for me, it will be noted in my research. If I am struggling with something or have questions about a specific method or piece, I will continue to experiment and study and make notes in order to keep a running record of my experiences with the selected acting methods.

I want to research several acting methods and approaches, such as the Stanislavski method. Most notably, I would like to become more comfortable with my own acting approach. As a result of taking courses during my time at Quinnipiac University, I have found that my best acting comes as a result of allowing myself to recall experiences that draw near to the work I am reading form, allow myself to feel the emotions that come from those personal experiences in order to create a realistic and honest reaction and moment to an audience. On top of this, I have acquired a good amount of training in practical aesthetics, which has become my general "go-to" when working on material. Based on previous research that I have done, I have found that my initial method comes closest to the Strasberg method, which I plan to study the most intensely. While I have had experience in the film and theater industry, I want to be able to add to my experiences in a way that is tailored to my talent specifically. My experience will help, but having people on my production team who I am close with will push my limits in expectations and team work skills. With all of this in mind, I will be developing a bibliography of methodical information and sources that will further my understanding of three acting methods. These sources will be a collaborative collection with input from my professors, other staff, and peers within the theater community, inside and outside of Quinnipiac University.

Currently, my production team consists of Christina Stoeffler as Producer and Publicity Manager, Tahiya Bade as Sound Designer, Emma Bender as Props Master, Haley Organ as Costume Designer and Wardrobe Head, and Jane Rosales as Stage Manager. My mentor will be Professor Mariah Sage, who will act as my acting advisor and general performance director. I feel that Mariah will be the best mentor for my project as I have been able to develop a close relationship with her, in class and out of class. Mariah knows me well as an actress and a person, and has successfully proven and pushed me to the point of improvement.

I plan to fully utilize the experience and education of my mentor during this process. I have taken several classes with Mariah, including acting, and auditioning for the actor, which have both been extremely helpful in helping me figure out where my interests within the major lie. Earlier this year, I met regularly with Professor Sage as we developed some basic acting skills and worked on auditioning techniques, which allowed me to solidify my training on practical aesthetics and become a more prepared actor overall. Since she will be working with me on my senior project, we are planning on meeting regularly (planned for once a week/once every other week) mostly likely on Monday mornings. As the project becomes more intense, we will discuss and plan our personalized rehearsal schedule, in which we will meet regularly (once or twice a week) to workshop three different acting methods/approaches and finalize the pieces for my final performance. Once we have narrowed down which acting methods will pair best with which pieces, the rehearsal process will become more intense. For this part of the project, my main goal is to be able to become familiar enough with each method and apply them interchangeably, and make the audience see clear differences between the selected pieces.

In general, my project will play out through the following phases:

1. Independent study/Research collection/Potential workshop attendance. (Curated bibliography created over the summer of 2022)
2. Selection process/Creation of new material. (Fall 2022)
3. Rigorous rehearsal work with Mariah on separate pieces, each done in the style of different acting methods. (Late Fall 2022-Spring 2023)
4. A performance that showcases the three pieces through the lens of the three different acting methods. This performance, ideally, will consist of talkbacks from the audience as well as a survey that will help me reflect on my final product and help me understand what I have done well, what I can do better, and if any acting method/approach worked better or worse than another. (Spring 2023) [FINAL PERFORMANCE IDEA STILL UP IN THE AIR]
5. Written reflection that forms conclusions about my experiences with each piece and how I might continue to pursue one or several going forward. (After final performance)

My production schedule will follow the following outline:

***Due Dates for research and rehearsal are hard, but performance and techweek dates are subject to change based on availability and space. In addition, the final performance route has not been determined. These dates are subject to change if my advisors and I decide to go a different route for the final product.

SUMMER 2022: (RESEARCH, CREATION OF BIBLIOGRAPHY, WORKSHOPS) *I plan on attending acting workshops during this time is time permits*

June 1st: Begin research on various acting methods (reading, taking notes, experimentation. etc.)
June 15th: Share w/ Mariah a statement of "How to cast me,"character qualities, next 10 years dream roles, etc.
June 30th: Send first draft of bibliography to advisors for comment and reflection
July 16th: Send second draft of bibliography to advisors for comment and reflection
August 21st: Send third a final draft of bibliography to advisors for comment and reflection

FALL 2022: (SELECTION, CONTINUATION OF RESEARCH) *methodology research will continue throughout this phase*

First/Second week of semester: Begin research on influential pieces of theater/film (re-watching, re-reading, etc.)
September 1st: Third/Fourth week of semester: Begin research on influential actors and actresses, brainstorm scene and monologue options/ideas
End of September: Rough list of potential monologues and scenes to be considered for final performance/which actors and actresses will be displayed
Early October: Workshopping and scrapping options for final performance w/ Mariah
October 10th: Final list of three monologues and scenes to be included in final performance
November 1: Final cast list (if any) of other actors for final performance
Late November/early December: Begin workshopping different acting methods/approaches with the three final performance pieces
Before Winter Break: Hand-in updated bibliography of acting methodology to Mariah for feedback and thoughts

WINTER BREAK 2022: (BREAK AND MEMORIZATION)

- Utilize free time to add to bibliography, begin to memorize pieces, consider casting*, hold preliminary production meetings*, etc.
- Begin piecing together monologues and scenes w/ acting methods/approaches

SPRING 2022: (REHEARSAL, PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE)

First/second week of semester*: Production meeting to give updates on script/expectations for production, discuss timelines/scheduling/expectations, etc.
Month of February/March/April*: Regulated production meetings/rehearsals with cast, rough sketches due (only if going performance route)
May TBDS*: Tech plots/Final sketches due, continue rehearsals/meetings, off-book work, tech week + performances

*note on research: My research will not end on any date stated above. Though primary ideas and information will be collected by a date, I expect ideas and approaches to change as a I progress through the rehearsal process of this performance- my research will continue to expand throughout the entire project in order for me to obtain the most knowledge of the given topics to result in an effective performance that captures my visions for the project as a whole. While an initial bibliography will be created, it will be added to over time.

Budget Breakdown:
Total: ~$800
Costumes- $500
Props- $200
Publicity/Miscellaneous- $100

*note on budget: I have not included any budgeting towards set. My vision is for there to be a very abstract and empty set, consisting of a few Quinnipiac Theater provided acting cubes, and an occasional piece of furniture, if I see fit. In the event that there needs to be more money put towards the "set" for my production, I will simplify costume and prop designs in order to leave more money for purchasing second-hand or cheap furniture.

This is a ROUGH ESTIMATION that depends on the pieces of art I choose to include in my project. As of now, I have a good idea of the pieces of theater and film that I would like to include, and this budget is in respect to that initial idaea. While I also have a good idea of the direction that those pieces will go, my overall vision of abstract simplicity is subject to change. As for obtaining these funds, I will be submitting my proposal to the Quinnipiac Parent's fund, which ideally should cover these costs. In the event that I should need more money, I will start a fundraiser with rewards and prizes to raise money for my project. Finally, in the event that only a much smaller amount of money is able to be obtained, I will reevaluate my budget and meet with my production team to adjust to a new, much smaller budget.

Bibliography (to be further developed throughout the entire process)

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