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Twice is Nice: An Exploration of Ambiguity in Playwriting and Performance in Theatre

A Senior Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Graduation in the Honors College

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Educational use of this paper is permitted for the purpose of providing future students a model example of an Honors senior thesis project.

This spring semester, with the help of some excellent actors and crew, I directed and designed a bit of an experimental dramatic production in the Black Box Theatre. Two 10 minute plays were performed in two very different ways. The reason I decided to do this was that I've always been fascinated with the ambiguous nature of scripts in theatre. There have always been multiple ways to read a script before the play is even cast. However, when putting on a single production of a script, there is typically only one chance to show a single interpretation to an audience. Often, the audience is unaware of all the different possibilities for completely different shows there once were, since they can only see the finished product. On May 4th, 2016, I presented the audience with a unique opportunity to see how different two productions that use the same script can be. The two scripts that I chose to use were *Bride on the Rocks* (by David Wiener), a story about a bride, Andrea, that was stood up at the alter who is now drinking, in her wedding gown, and talking to the bartender, Lloyd, and *Fuck Tori Amos* (by Caitlin Montanye Parrish), which is a conversation between an older sister, Audrey, and younger brother, Geoff, mere hours before the sister is sent to rehab for her apparent alcoholism. Using the tools I have learned over the course of my Brockport career in the areas of acting, directing, and design, I would exploit the ambiguous moments in the text, capitalize on design elements that were never explicitly given in the show, and of course, lead my actors (Nicky Sudyn, Noah Boss, Sasha Flint, and John Prothero) in very different directions as the rehearsal process progressed.

In deciding what direction I would take these two plays, two different times, I first had to find my actors. Many people chose to hand pick their casts for their senior projects, asking the people they have worked with their entire college career if they would be interested in doing one more show with each other, and I completely understand that decision. Why would you want to risk the quality of your show when you could just as easily know exactly what you're getting,

and you know you will be working with people that are almost guaranteed to get along together? I decided to take on this risk, and hold open auditions for my show. The decision to hold open audition wasn't an easy one, but it is one I am glad I made. In the future, I intend to direct shows at the high school level, where I will have no control over the kind of talent that I will have to work with. By holding open auditions now, I could simulate this kind of high school scenario. I was excited too, by the prospect of making cuts. Not in a cruel way, and certainly not because it would be an easy thing to do, but because it is the fun kind of challenge. There were four available roles, two male, two female, and it was an exciting thought that it would be up to me to find not just the overall best actors and actresses, but to find out who fit the best together.

Four people showed up to my auditions. Two male, two female. More than a little disheartening to be sure, but I had a full cast. At the very least, I got to decide the pairings, see which guy and which girl went best together, right? Wrong. I took a look at their class schedules and availabilities. My options were very limited, and it became clear very early in the casting process that I would have to accept the pairings of Nicky Sudyn and Noah Boss, and Sasha Flint and John Prothero. I feared that this lack of choice would catch up to the show, but ultimately, each actor had their own strengths and weaknesses that helped make each performance unique in a way that only aided the end goal of the project. To make four unique plays, I needed four unique actors.

The first actress to walk through the doors at auditions was a familiar face, Nicky Sudyn. Nicky had actually been my lighting designer for a previous show, she was a theatre major, and had been in three shows on the Main Stage. A junior, she was far and away the most experienced member of my cast, and in many ways, was my strongest actor in general. She was the only theatre major in the cast, and that meant that during the rehearsal process, I would be able to

speak in theatre jargon without having to double-back and explain what I meant. She was incredibly calm in rehearsals, and was willing to follow my direction without hesitation. Nicky paired especially well with Noah, acting in rehearsals as an example of warm professionalism. Her interpretation of the character Andrea (*Bride on the Rocks*) came from an interesting place of anger more than sadness. She created a character that often approached her situation with a certain amount of resilience. The jilted bride wasn't folding, so much as she was done with the world as it was, angry that of course, it had to happen to her. Her defining moment in her take on Andrea was when she began to mock her own mother. After a few rehearsals in which the delivery of her lines didn't seem strong enough, I remember we had a "Eureka!" moment in which I told her to forget about the show for a moment and mock her own mother. From then on out, her character became more fleshed out, and obviously inspired. I tried not to ask too many questions about that.

Nicky's scene partner, Noah Boss, was everything you could want from a rookie actor. He had natural comedic timing, he wasn't afraid to try new things in rehearsal, and above all else, he was an incredibly quick learner. A double-major in Anthropology and Mathematics, Noah was determined to keep theatre in his life after high school, and this freshman's determination to do what he enjoyed most presented itself in his general enthusiasm that he brought to every rehearsal. Standing at roughly 6'0" and weighing in at an alarmingly low 145 pounds, he also has a very unique build. His physicality seeped into his acting style in ways that I could easily capitalize on. He was tall, but his body shrunk on stage when his character was nervous. His gangly limbs amplified every jittery motion that he made, and his height allowed him to kneel behind the bar in *Bride on the Rocks* (a small touch, but a necessary one). Noah's most common mistakes had to do with volume, and how much he was actively trying to affect

Nicky throughout the scene. Both of these problems are extremely typical for young actors, and while I believe that both of these areas still need improvement, it has been amazing to see how far he has come since he first auditioned. His turning point during my rehearsal process came relatively early, thankfully, when I had the actors participate in an exercise in which they passed a ball to one another as they performed the scene. The goal is for the actors to make sure what they are saying is directed at the other scene partner, and to make sure that what they are saying is landing. It has quickly become one of my favorite exercises as a director because of the success it had during this rehearsal process.

Another big fan of the ball drill was the fiery Sasha Flint. The second freshman in the cast, this was Sasha's first play at Brockport. She was originally cast in a different play this spring, but fortunately for me, the play was cancelled. After the cancellation, the biology major was looking for new theatre work that she could really put her back into, and she jumped on my auditions. Admittedly, she was not the strongest actress when she walked through the door. She rushed through her lines often, and I had to give her the same notes at a greater frequency than I would have liked. However, I will never complain about an actor or actress that is so eager to please, and is so happy to be acting. It was a joy to be in the same room as her, and her bubbly-bordering-on-hyper personality helped brighten rehearsals when they were slipping into a monotony that I was desperately trying to avoid. Sasha, as an actor, helped me realize that effort and enthusiasm are preferable to talent alone. An enthusiastic actor will work hard to improve, and enjoy improving, and that kind of friendly environment invariably leads to growth. Which is important, because Sasha and John were the pairing that needed the most work.

John Prothero, Sasha's partner, was a puzzle, shrouded in mystery, wrapped in an enigma, trapped inside a Rubix cube. I still do not know if he actually enjoyed this experience or

not. He is a senior, but this is his first theatre experience since taking a few theatre based electives, so I have come to understand that he enjoys theatre. He asks me questions about how to become more involved in acting, which means he is still exploring this new creative outlet, but his general monotone led me to believe he was not having fun, or was, at the very least, uninterested. His monotone speaking voice bled into his acting style, and I often found myself pushing him to use his upper register when acting, if only to get a modicum of tonal variance. However, his flat read persisted throughout the run of rehearsals. Early on, I had to accept this as a two-sided shortcoming; he was unable to change, and I did not have the skills as a director to help him improve. However, I did find a work-around that allowed me to maintain the integrity of the project as a whole. John and Sasha were unfortunately outclassed by Nicky and Noah, so I modified my approach. I would allow John and Sasha to take their plays in whichever direction they found most natural, and I would work on improving their strengths. Then, on days where I was working with Nicky and Noah, I would pull them in a direction that varied significantly from Sasha and John's interpretation of the script.

Now that I had my actors, and I knew what direction they were going, it was time to work prepare the technical side of the show. The use of technical elements is probably the most subtle way to introduce ideas about a script to the audience, conveying ideas about the performance without ever saying a single word. Using things I have learned through my four years at Brockport, from both classes and hands-on experience in actual shows, I was able to help bolster the ideas in the actors' interpretation of the scripts in the areas of set, costume, and lighting design.

Lighting has been a fresh endeavor for me this semester, as prior to my Senior year, there was always someone involved in the Theatre Department that could hop onto the computer that controls the lights, turn a few knobs, adjust a few sliders, take a quick look at the fully-lit Black Box theatre, shake my hand, and leave. To me, lighting was a thing of witchcraft. Luckily, a well-timed independent study with Professor Paul Schreiner showed me that lighting was not black magic. Prior to diving into designing for my own project, I was the Master Electrician for both of Brockport's Main Stage shows, *Vanities* and *Assassins* (by Jack Heifner and Stephen Sondheim, respectively). Under the supervision of Paul Schreiner and the department chair, P. Gibson Ralph, I hung light fixtures in both the Black Box and in the department's typical performance space, the Tower Fine Arts Main Stage Theater. From the outside, this may seem like a remedial task, in which I'm just an extra set of hands. However, it was in these moments, working far above the stage, physically placing my hands on the things I was beginning to understand, paying attention to both Paul and the chair of the department's lighting sensibilities, did I come to understand and appreciate the lighting aspect of a production, and everything it could do for a show.

There are many subtle nuances to lighting that I have come across in only one semester of study, but the three main principles of lighting a stage can be boiled down to direction, brightness, and color. While color is infinitely interesting with the way a cool blue or a soft amber can paint an audience's view of a scene subconsciously, it is also not an ideal tool for every venue. On a typical raised stage, as the Main Stage, the audience cannot see the floor, which means they also cannot see where a light lands. Since they are watching a show closer to eye level, this means they see what color a light paints the air, the actor, and the set. This allows the audience to absorb what a color means more so than the shape of the light as it hits the floor.

While this may sound rudimentary, it becomes a huge problem in a theater such as Brockport's Black Box Theater, in which the audience is very close to the stage, and sits in an elevated position. If the audience can see the floor, that means they can see the circular shape of a colored light hitting the floor. In short, this makes a contrast on the floor that, no matter how hard you try, resembles polka-dots. Not an ideal situation. Something that is supposed to only affect the audience in the back of their minds is thrust to the forefront, and the audience is no longer immersed in the story. The first show I worked on, *Vanities*, avoided this problem by eliminating color all together during scenes. In designing the lights for my show, I decided to follow suit. No color on the floor. This left me direction and brightness to use as tools while I was deciding what message I was trying to send in the four separate shows.

In *Bride on the Rocks*, I was featuring two very different relationships. In the first play, which featured Sasha Flint as Andrea, the jilted bride, and John Prothero as Lloyd, the bartender, I was trying to create a more intimate atmosphere, while also creating the impression that the bar was not the classiest establishment. In terms of lighting, the solution was simple: keep the brightness low. When operating our lighting system, the designer has the option to set the light at a levels from 1% to 100% intensity. For the opening show, I kept the lights at around 65% from almost every angle, and I used every available light source I had at my disposal. This created a world that the audience could see as intimate, but also, from a pragmatic standpoint, kept the actors well lit. Even though it was low light, the audience could still see the actors' very important facial expressions, which helped make the message we were attempting to send even clearer.

The second show of *Bride on the Rocks*, performed by Noah Boss and Nicole Sudyn, featured an extremely bright lighting, covering the whole stage. This is known as a wash. The

idea to light the second play in this matter was actually inspired by a short story I had read many years prior, *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* by Ernest Hemingway. In it, an old waiter speaks of the need for those who are lonely to have, as the title suggests, a clean and well-lighted place to go to at night. I felt the sentiment was fitting for a show about a jilted bride and a bartender with three failed marriages. In contrast to the previous scene's lighting, this show did not offer the same intimacy. The characters do not fall in love, and the bride (who was wearing a rather bright, white dress, artificially adding to the amount of light on stage) is clean, and highly visible. The design, in this instance, creates a platonic environment between the two characters, and the audience does not expect a romance to begin, as it may have in the first run.

Now, in the second set of shows, platonic, brother-sister relationships are laid out explicitly in the script. So, the question I asked myself was "outside of intimacy, what kind of message can be sent to influence the way the audience interprets the scene?" I only had one major idea, seeing as I could not capitalize on the use of color. I decided I would use light to isolate a character. In the opening show of *Fuck Tori Amos*, three lights come up on Audrey, played in this scene by Sasha Flint, drinking a bottle of wine on the couch. The lights act as a spotlight, only lighting the area she is sitting in. The rest of the scene is in complete blackout. The goal here was to create an environment where she was completely alone, on an island of light. Then, when her brother, Geoff (John Prothero) enters, he flips a light switch, and the lights are raised on the whole room. The light switch was meant to be a way to introduce new light to the show in a diegetic manner, to avoid pulling the audience out of the play, asking questions such as "Where did this new light come from?" The entrance of Geoff, paired with the new light that both characters now share, makes a quick suggestion that Geoff is saving his older sister, Audrey, from her current state of isolation.

After this simple but effective technique, I made the decision to use the fourth and final show as something of a control when it came to lighting design. I set all thirty-six available lights to 75%, which is a very typical level for the Black Box, and let the actors work inside of a stable, predictable light design. When I made this decision, I did not think the lighting would affect the story all that much. However, upon critical analysis, I found that it does send a small, but important message. When the lights come up, Audrey is once again drinking alone on the couch. However, when Geoff enters, it gives the impression that he is passing through her space. This creates a possible reading of the play in which Audrey has significantly more control of her situation than we see in the first show. She's not as alone, as isolated, in the beginning as her counter-part in the previous interpretation of the show.

Before beginning this project, costuming was yet another area of theatre that I had an extremely limited amount of experience in. I don't dress well enough on a day to day basis to even pretend I have a natural eye for what "looks good." As such, I have always tended to take the simplest approach to costuming in the past and use it in its most basic utility, which is to provide an audience with given circumstances. This is an especially effective use of costuming though in a project where my ability to create a set is limited. There are more creative ways to experiment with costuming, and one day, I hope to explore them. For the sake of this project however, I thought I shouldn't try to be overly creative for fear of hurting the overall performance. Now, upon critical analysis of the shows, I realize that costuming is going to say things about characters, whether the director wants it to or not.

The first shining example of this comes in the very first *Bride on the Rocks*. The message was originally so basic. Lloyd, the bartender, is in a red flannel, unbuttoned, and jeans. It's a typical bar, he is laid back, and there isn't anything fancy going on here. But that also tells us

that this bar is not typically associated with anything like a wedding. This actually helps tell the audience more about the bride, Andrea, whether they realize it or not. By making this bar something of a hole-in-the-wall, it means that Andrea had to seek this place out. In her wedding dress. Surely, there would have been family members that wanted to help her out, so where are they? She seems to have run away from all of them as well. All of this information without ever saying a word.

In contrast, the second *Bride on the Rocks* takes place in a fancy hotel. It is worth noting that this is actually the recommended setting in the script. Again, I used the dress of the bartender to help show this. Noah, as Lloyd, wore black dress slacks, nice Sunday shoes, a white button-down shirt, and a black bow tie for good measure. All of this would have been enough, but something unexpected happened when he finally got into his outfit and it ended up barely fitting him. Noah is a tall, skinny, borderline gangly kid, and his just too-short sleeves and pants made him look like he was struggling to be this clean-cut figure. His hair, which we gelled down heavily and parted of to the side, only compounded this sense of squeezing into a job his character, Lloyd, might not have been born to do. I could never have planned that on my own, and admittedly, it was one of the happiest accidents to occur while putting the show together.

One costuming idea that I will take credit for, however, is the choice to put Sasha in a pink, somewhat preppy outfit during *Fuck Tori Amos*. The only character description offered in the script is that she is somewhere between the ages of 16 and 18. Other than that, we are meant to use context clues, such as her possible alcoholism, as a means of constructing what this girl might look like. Again, I usually only use costuming as a tool to create given circumstances (perhaps foolishly so), but here, I found a more intriguing question: how does given circumstances effect the way the audience understands a character? If the typical audience

member were to construct a mental image of a teenager with a drinking problem, they would almost always create some dark, brooding, and rebel of a young girl. I decided I wanted to challenge this stereotype, or even see if it would make a difference if I did.

In order to challenge the stereotype I had to use the finally ten minute play as a control group once again. Nicky Sudyn would be put in black jeans, and a black and grey Baja Hoodie, which is colloquially known as a Drug Rug. However, to balance this costuming choice, the scene itself did a better job of fleshing out her character, with all her insecurities and fears. She wasn't an angry rebel like her pretty-in-pink counterpart. These differences became a commentary on each other, and from my perspective, challenged certain expectations we have of people who find themselves in certain situations. These two costuming designs were made to force the audience to think, and to provide a more interesting framework for the actors to work inside.

On the topic of giving the actors a proper framework, set design was another piece of the puzzle that did not go neglected in this experimentation with interpretation. Set design is the one area of design that I actually do have prior experience in, and that experience has paid dividends this semester. In the two other full length plays I have directed (*The Green Room* by Stephen Foster and *Election Day* by Josh Tobiessen) I have been tasked with creating a full set inside the black box. To my sensibilities, this generally means I set out to create a box set while still leaving three sides of the stage open for viewing. In other words, I am most pleased with a set when I can put a wall on the upstage-most point. Unfortunately, due to several outside factors, including constraints on manpower, budgetary concerns, and guidelines set by the Theatre Department for senior projects, I could not use my back-wall technique on this particular four-part show. This was probably for the best in the long run, as I was trying to create separate

spaces for each show, and having the same back wall would have ultimately blurred the lines from one set to another. Instead, I had to rely on my sets to help create given circumstances, as well as provide different obstacles to the actors, and as always, send messages to the audience about how we interpreted the script.

As previously noted, Sasha and John did not perform *Bride on the Rocks* inside a classy establishment, in contrast to Nicky and Noah, who performed in the bar of a high-class hotel. However, during performance, each bar was composed of the same exact eight acting cubes stacked four cubes wide and two cubes high, draped with a blackout curtain. The curtain was used predominantly to hide the distracting fact that the cubes were all different colors, and simply looked unprofessional in a way that I could not ignore. I would have to find certain small symbols that could hint to the audience about the location that surrounded the bar. For take one, the hole-in-the-wall, I decided to put a card table in the downstage-left corner with a couple of chairs that weren't pushed in. For added measure, there was a lovely layer of dust on top of the table that was there when we pulled it out of storage. I decided to keep it, it was a nice touch. In contrast, the second time through needed to give something of an immaculate perception, a difficult task when your bar is eight wooden, splintering cubes and some drapes. I decided to use some greenery in the downstage corners of the stage, and they did their intended job quite nicely. In addition, they were relatively small, and helped keep the playing space wide open, which paired nicely with the bright lighting. This also did well to contrast with the original show, where the table made the playing space feel smaller and cramped.

If the set of *Bride on the Rocks* was an opportunity to play with given circumstances, than the two sets of *Fuck Tori Amos* were an opportunity to play with obstacles. Both sets used the same furniture (a couch, a loveseat, and a chair), except in the first show, the couch was featured

prominently in center, and in the second, the single-seat chair was featured center. This second set up helped produce one of my favorite moments across all four scenes. The chair allowed for a moment of isolation in the center of the stage, and during a monologue by Audrey, she was allowed to have a very lonely moment, until Geoff moved into the space behind the chair to embrace his sister. In contrast, the first version of *Fuck Tori Amos*, with the long couch prominent in the center of the stage, created more opportunities for the characters to share spaces while still being able to maintain their personal space.

The technical aspects were all prepared, and the actors were cast, but how did we prepare? An examination of my directing on its own is undoubtedly the main point of this project. After all, I wasn't trying to push the limits of my set building capabilities, or challenging my creativity in the realm of costuming. At its heart, to me, this project was a direct measurement of my abilities as a director. I tried to keep my approach as textbook as possible, but textbooks are not the real world. Every show is a unique experience, and due to the unique nature of this endeavor, I was able to ply my trade in four different ways.

Bride on the Rocks with Sasha and John was probably the toughest play for me to crack. The script leant itself to romance, and that was the interpretation that Sasha and John began to gravitate toward immediately in rehearsal. The technical designer aspects of that were fairly straight forward. However, I had never directed a romantic comedy before, and I could see the warning signs early on in the rehearsal process that this was going to be difficult. The main problem lied with the performance lied in chemistry. Sasha and John have limited experience as actors, and even in high school, Sasha never played a romantic role. These two were strangers, and their off-stage personalities didn't exactly create sparks. They were friendly enough with each other, but it was clear to see that there was an awkward amount of space and silence

between them. To combat this, I attempted to make rehearsals as silly and light as possible when working on *Bride on the Rocks*. For example, at one point during the play, Sasha's character, Andrea, drunkenly stumbles into Lloyd (John). At this moment, the characters are supposed to find themselves in an accidental embrace, which they hold for half of a second too long before they compose themselves and separate. Unfortunately, Sasha and John struggled, as most new actors do, with touching another actor, romantically or otherwise. After a very awkward twenty minutes of watching these two crash into each other in a way that was reminiscent of two very cautious middle-schoolers at their first dance, I decided it was time to try something different. I pulled out my iPad, found the first video on Youtube under the search "tango music," let it blast, and without telling either of them what I was doing, grabbed John and danced around the room with him. His face went beat red, and Sasha doubled over in laughter. As I felt John start to ease up and even chuckle a little as we returned to the starting point of our dance, I let go and grabbed Sasha for another lap around the room. The roles reversed, John couldn't help but shake his head and laugh as Sasha began to get more and more into the dance. Finally, as we started to pass by John, I grabbed his hand, placed it in Sasha's and sent them on their own lap around the room. I was delighted. It was the most natural movement I had seen from either of them up to that point. They finished, we all calmed down, and we jumped back into the scene. There would still be some hesitation that I admittedly could never get them over, but the improvement was there. We were at ease.

The second largest obstacle between Sasha and John was trying to get them to match energy in *Fuck Tori Amos*. John was doing a very low energy flat read, and Sasha was bouncing off the walls, usually in some kind of alcohol fueled rant about things that seemed non sequitur to the issues at hand in the play. At first, my instinct as a director was to push John to match

Sasha. I tried numerous little tricks. I had him do push-ups, jumping jacks, and sometimes squats before the scene. No dice. I experimented with pushing pace. His diction began to suffer more than it already was (a problem that, sadly, I would never be able to fix, only slightly improve). Then I realized that his flat read could be an asset if I attempted to play Sasha's character against it. So, I changed her character goal. For one rehearsal, her objective on every line was to "shake" John's character, Geoff. Instantly, the scene took on a different dynamic. It had more purpose, and because of the nature of John's interpretation juxtaposed with Sasha's new goals, John became a much more integral part of the scene.

Nicky and Noah, in contrast, played against and with each other exceptionally well. I had to pull them in a different direction to prove the main idea of my thesis, and luckily, they understood that could mean that I had a more direct hand in their character development than a director typically would. In their rendition of *Bride on the Rocks*, they also had the original instinct to create a romantic scene. I remember the quizzical look I received from Nicky when I explained to her that there would be no kiss at the end of her scene, despite the stage directions that were written in at the end of the script. Nicky is a good soldier though, and after a few runs, she began to see the amount of freedom she was being offered, and she took the play in rather angry direction, which gave plenty of new angles to Noah, who fell into his "nervous bartender" role shortly thereafter. I found myself embracing his take on Lloyd, who was wilting under the weight of Andrea's anger. It was another golden accident, because it allowed me to turn a weakness of Noah's into a strength for that particular scene. Noah was an extremely quiet actor, and here, even though his vocal projection needed professional tuning, I could use his tonal sensibilities to help him build a character on his own. Mix the gentleness of Noah's voice with

his rather endearing physical jitter, and Noah's version of Lloyd becomes so animated and bashful, in amazing contrast with John's idea of the level-headed Lloyd.

Speaking of character contrast, Nicky and Sasha could not have had more startlingly dissimilar in their interpretations of Audrey in *Fuck Tori Amos*. To my delight, Sasha immediately took to a quicker pace of a character, portraying an Audrey with a bit of a temper, and somewhat of a rebellious streak, despite her pretty-in-pink appearance. I spent many rehearsals trying to pull her to her logical extreme during one of her monologues. I had her slam down her wine bottle, tried to see if she could scream through lines, and eventually, I had her throw her bag onto the ground as hard as she could. The argument could be made that this was a misstep on my part, and that I was breaking from tradition by having her play a mood, but I still stand by this decision. Together, Sasha, John, and I created a moment that was worth remembering inside the play, and what is more, created a set-up to a lovely punch line that John delivers with his perfect deadpan (except for on show night, when he stumbled over his words, unfortunately). This was also a way to send Sasha an important message about her character, as well as her inner monologue, and the ten-minute play as a whole benefitted because of it. Nicky, on the other hand, took a much quieter, slower approach to her character, which forced Noah, as Geoff, to come to her. The payoff here was in the same monologue in which Sasha threw her backpack. Nicky's Audrey sits alone, in the seat at center stage, and as she finds it tougher to tell her story, Noah joins her. It quickly became my favorite moment in the entire 40-minute production.

At the end of all these things, the question lingered in the air after the compulsory applause died at the end of the show: did it work? There were, after all, several things that didn't work. Mechanically, aside from the conceptual goals that I had for the production, there were

several times when the blocking given to the actors wasn't perfect. There were unmotivated crosses in the individual plays that were usually put in place to help aid the concept of the production as a whole, but unfortunately, ultimately distracted from the piece. Diction became a major issue with Sasha and John as well, which was regrettable, as in the show order, Sasha and John always went first, which on several occasions, made the audience wait for Nicky and Noah to say the same line in their performance before they understood what was said in the first show. Some line readings in every show came off as forced, as I tried to bend the actors to fit the conceptual design. Mechanics suffered at the hands of high concept, and it detracted from the quality of the show as a whole. If I could go back and work more diligently with my actors more on things like clarity, motivation, and how they were attempting to affect the other, I would, but these are things that we always seek to improve, through any rehearsal process. Looking back, it also may have been worth the extra effort to find time to mix the acting pairings, because the unfortunate truth was that Nicky and Noah outclassed Sasha and John, and the goal was never to create one production that was inherently better than the other, only different. I'm proud of how hard both sets of actors worked, I saw how much they all improved, and in the end, I think our experiment was a success. We set out to create two different plays, and it I believe we did that incredibly well. The show was a success, and I am taking all I can from it, failures included, as lessons learned. Moving forward, I intend to keep this project in my back pocket. I was given the opportunity to work with many different levels of talent, I was forced to be creative in design with a relatively small budget and limited resources, and I had to come to understand that every actor, every script, and every rehearsal presents a unique opportunity to do something in a way that it has never been done before. Most importantly, I've learned that this is what I want to do, and the director's chair is where I want to be.