DEVISING IN THE PANDEMIC: TRAUMA AND A DRAMATIC REDESIGN OF A YOUTH THEATRE TOUR

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Z402 Youth Theatre Tour was designed from a critical performative pedagogical positioning (Weltsek, 2019). Here learning emerges from how individuals and communities perform their emergent identities as they cross literal and metaphorical socio-cultural borders. Z402 resulted in a 100% student created new play, parallel workshop, and study guide. This new play was based solely upon the students' perspectives, voices, and ways of being. The design used devised theatre, the use of improvisation and games, to create a new play versus a solely written approach. The new play dealt with healing in the face of suicidal thoughts. The course addressed four Indiana educational licensing requirements; student technical, artistic, educational, and class practicum experiences. In March 2020, due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the University instituted obligatory Online instruction. Students redesigned their stage play into a virtual experience using Zoom and integrated their emotional struggles due to pandemic isolation. The live play, slated for three schools, is now accessible to a large virtual audience.

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WHY DRAMA IN AND AS EDUCATION

Contemporary drama education curricular design and research focus attention on the intersections amongst emergent youth socio-cultural and emotional identity (Weltsek& Koontz, 2018; Perry, & Medina, 2011; Van de Water et al., 2015). Skills and theatre production, when introduced, are seen as a means for youth to further explore their sense of self within and through community. This educational approach to drama grows out of critical pedagogical theory and practice and situates all learning as a socio-political event that involves a dialogic navigation of multiple ways of knowing and being (Ellsworth, 1989; Friere 1995; hooks, 1994).

How Drama Facilitates Critical Self and Socio-Cultural Reflection

Educators who use this approach locate emergent youth identity as central to all learning. What this means is that learning occurs when youth are engaged in the dynamic tension that results when they make sense of themselves and the world. The use of drama and theatre strategies—such as improvisation and roleplay as ways to devise the play—become ways to engage a diverse student community (gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, language, etc.) in critical reflection upon a multiplicity of complex social issues and within the experimentation of possible ways to take action in and on the world (Perry & Medina, 2011).

Designing Drama Through a Critical Multimodal Lens

The design of socially relevant devised theatre requires that each dramatic interaction is provoked through a real-life issue. To do this, various multimodal arts events, from drama, to visual arts, storytelling, and dance, are activated and viewed as engaged critical multiple literacy practices (Harste, 2014; Edmiston, 2014). A critical multiple literacy framework for the design of devised youth drama is essential as it provides a theoretical lens and practical framework through which educators may view and instruct upon the constituent arts practices. Through this framework, we question when, how, and why a youth uses a particular

modality or art form. This is then viewed as socially relevant individual literacy, which registers as identifiable, definable, and able to be articulated. The use of drama and theatre as a critical multimodal literacy practice opens up spaces for youth to engage in intense critical self-reflection that insists upon the use of different modalities to explore and tell a variety of culturally located stories and lived experiences.

PROGRAM AND COURSE BACKGROUND

Z402 Youth Theatre Tour is the second course in a series of six courses of a newly developed Secondary Drama and Theatre Addition Licensing program. This 20-credit program was designed to provide undergraduate preservice and in-service education students the opportunity to experience and become knowledgeable with the essential aspects of drama and theatre—by, for, and with young people—from history and theory to design and production. Students who pursue the Theatre License Addition are training to either teach in public or private secondary education or work within drama and theatre education programs in professional, semi-professional, or amateur theatre companies.

DEVISING PROCESS AND STUDENT-DESIGN FOCUS, PRE-PANDEMIC

Z402 is the second half of a two-semester course designed to open up a space for students to explore complex socio-cultural issues with an eye on individual and collective critical reflection and growth. The intent of this two-semester course is to introduce the drama education students to a wide variety of devised and applied theatre strategies through an experiential model with the ultimate goal of creating an original play for production within local high schools.

Building Community and Discovering Common Trauma

The first half of the two-semester course (Z305, Theatre for Young Audiences) was designed to engage the students in embodied community building. The students came to the first day as a group of strangers. Each brought their own set of personal strengths and insecurities. The first half of the semester was spent using drama and arts-based learning strategies to break down the emotional, social, and physical borders between students, ultimately creating a sense of community. The first strategies were drawn from the work of

FIGURE 1. Students' individual mixed medium creations contemplating race, gender, and class.

such critical drama educators as Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed (1985), Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton (1995), and Cecily O'Neill (1995) for Drama in Education, as well as the improvisation strategies of Viola Spolin (1963). Each strategy used drama to challenge the students to personally reflect upon and collectively work through complex socio-cultural issues. For example, in one of the first multimodal arts-based strategies, the students were invited to create three-dimensional arts pieces that represented how they understood their sense of themselves as raced, gendered, and classed (See Figure 1). This first strategy was designed to start the process of critical self and social reflection using the arts as conduits to and for the expression of those reflections.

As a way to break down the actual physical walls and support the students to become more comfortable with their bodies in time and space, the second half of this strategy invited the students to incorporate their mixed media pieces into living statutes or tableau (See Figure 2). Using their bodies as individual pieces of a collaborative sculpture, the students wove their stories into complex dynamic community narratives. This initial strategy opened spaces for critical reflection, as well as began the process of using embodied images for the purposes of communication — a fundamental convention for a theatrical production. More, these embodied and socio-emotional engagements opened

the students up to each other and formed a community of complex and vulnerable individuals.

This initial strategy was followed with a series of embodied and multimodal engagements. Each strategy continued to challenge the students to think in more complex and meaningful ways about how they saw themselves in, of, and as an active participant in and upon the world. The final strategy of Z305 was designed to bring this group of strangers together as a creative collective. The impulse was to locate a common issue across the students' lives that would become the central theme of their original play. In the role of playwrights, they were invited to write a two or three-paragraph monologue that shared a story that was deep and personal, but not so personal that they would be uncomfortable sharing and having it critiqued by the class. Of the eight students, seven wrote monologues that shared their individual experiences with either suicidal thoughts or actual attempts to kill themselves. The eighth student wrote about gun violence. The common issue of teen suicide was apparent and became the central theme for the play to be written the following semester.

This group that had only three months ago been complete strangers had become a complete community of support, empathy, and care. Z305 had become a safe space where they could openly share some of their deepest emotional joys and sorrows. It was also a physically safe space where they moved freely in and around each other's bodies, seeing their physical self as a way to further connect and communicate.

Exploring Trauma and Script Creation

In Z402 the focus moved to create an actual script for eventual production. Briefly, the play took place in a dorm room where a group of first-year students gathered to play a game of Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). Each character had various personal issues they were dealing with, from suicidal thoughts to coming out as transgender, to lacking parental support for their chosen career path. Each character developed a D&D character that was the antithesis of their lived experiences. For example, the character Merely was struggling with being transgender and coming out to her friends and family—her D&D character was Jarekk, a toxic male warrior always ready to fight. Similarly, the lead character Ben was suicidal but played the role of the Dungeon Master, the person in a game of D&D in charge of everyone else's fate. Ben's character also played a wide range of incidental D&D characters, each designed to be strong and loved.

To assist us in our own exploration of the trauma of suicidal thought and attempts, the group reached out to several campus centers as well as a professor who specialized in trauma education. The writing of the play now moved from solely being something to present to an audience and emerged as space for the students to explore their own healing — a means to transform their trauma into personal growth. It was the realization that this experience was an opportunity to heal that motivated the group to frame their play within notions of healing. The group felt that there were several theatrical productions out there that approached the topic of teen suicide, such as the Broadway musical Dear Evan Hansen" and the Netflix series "Thirteen Reasons Why", but none that looked at how to heal with the unfortunately common trauma they and their peers lived with.

FIGURE 2. Embodied physical collective interactions expanding on the prompt of race, gender and class which incorporate the mixed medium arts pieces.

The scriptwriting involved several western design processes such as storyboarding and mapping the trajectory of the characters' growth across the play (See Figure 3). Along with the western style processes, we engaged in more arts-based work. For example, one strategy aimed at character development asked the students to listen to music their character might indulge in during a transformative moment filled with struggle. They were invited to play with objects and or arts materials while they listened to the music. The impulse was not to interpret the music through artful playing, but rather to allow their creative energies to flow freely and let the materials become a conduit for their character's emotions and how the music affected their state of mind (See Figure 4). Other strategies included scene improvisations, tableau work, poetry writing, and visual design.
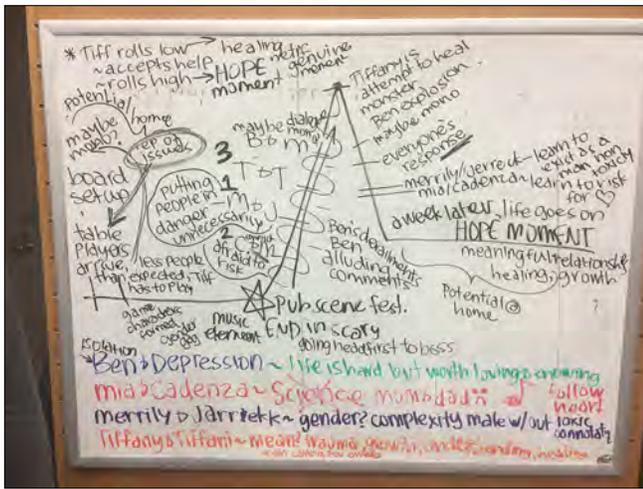
FIGURE 3. Student storyboarding and mapping of character trajectories.

Finalizing the Story and Script

In order for the college students to feel that their play design would actually resonate with the high school audiences a focus group was formed at a local high school. Prior to the focus group the college students decided to ask three general questions:

1. What topics would you like to see addressed in a play?
2. What don't you like about the plays that are designed for your age group?
3. What are your most pressing concerns about leaving high school and entering college?

The data from this focus group became manifest in the script as settings and contexts, and also helped the actors design the specifics of the backstories of various characters. For example, analysis of the data found that being on their own was a space of tension and exhilaration. Similarly, it became apparent that social anxiety about entering into this new space was high. Also, the data showed that the first few weeks ranked high as a defining period with a lot of pressure to establish their sense of self and how they were perceived by others—this provided context for our play. It was also discovered that the high school students in this focus group put a great deal of importance on creating friend groups through party going, club joining, and attendance at other organized or casual social events.

The college students took all this information, and the play "Nat 20 to Heal" was created. The play was finalized and re-hearsed. Costumes, lighting, sound and sets were designed. Schools were contacted and performances scheduled. Then came the Pandemic.
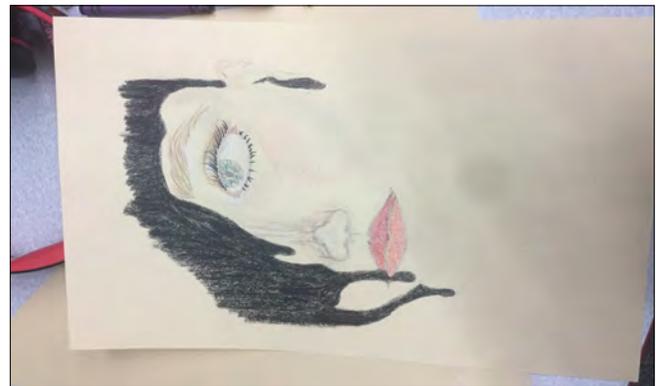

FIGURE 4. Three examples of arts-based character design.

DESIGNING A DRAMA IN THE PANDEMIC

Trauma, novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and Relevancy

After a year and a half of working face to face, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic struck. The mandate for all classes to be on online left the students devastated, despairing, and wanting to cancel the production. Along with their confusion in the sudden educational delivery shift, fear of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and disappointment in not being able to tour their new play, the group wondered whether they should redesign their script to directly address the reality of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Abby, a first year Elementary Education major taking the course as an elective explained.

> I don't know, do we have to make it so on-the-nose Covid related or could we adapt it digitally without necessarily tying in Covid, or do you want to tie in Covid? (Recorded class session).

Abby's concern was that the play could actually do more harm than good—further explaining that, "I don't know what the word for it is, but it's like it's good that art can be distanced from your present situation" (Recorded class session). For Abby the play could be a form of escape for the students who saw it, allowing a moment to think about something other than novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for a while. Elaine, a first year Secondary Education major enrolled in the license addition, shared:

> I understand why we would tie in Covid, but does that make it not accessible after Covid? Or do we have to go back and rewrite this after this whole pandemic is over just so we can have it accessible to other audiences? (Recorded class session)

Elaine's desire for the play to have relevance, post pandemic, was common across the students. They wanted their piece to have a more universal and timeless theme, one they saw in the healing from the trauma of suicidal thought and attempts. Connor, a third year Theatre major, offered an alternate perception and explained.

> Here's my thought, we're writing a show based upon trauma, and working through trauma we're going through a collective trauma right now. And so, to talk about like, serious, serious things, and like not address this serious elephant in the room, I just feel like that there would be like a serious disconnect between us and the kids. (Recorded class session)

Conner's position was that this play was going to be shared now with a group of youth who are living within the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and addressing it would allow the play to have greater immediacy and in that way making it more relevant for the audience.

I suggested they think about the musical "Rent", produced in the 1990's, which centered on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. "Rent" remains relevant—although specific in its focus on HIV/AIDS, while central to the narrative, allowed the complexity of the human condition to be explored. In a private conversation amongst themselves, Elaine made the compelling argument that swayed the group and explained:

> I may need to retract my statement about it overshadowing like our other complex issue in the fact that this virus has made everyone on edge and a little bit more bold. So it may work to our advantage why all of this conflict is happening so fast when you (The Characters) get to know each other.… if we can find a way to work that in, that makes that make a little bit more sense because I know we were talking about how quickly we got to some of the conflicts and how that didn't seem natural. (Recorded class session)

Elaine's point was that the initial design of the play was flawed. The tension and conflict which propelled the plot forward and directed the dialogue felt unnatural and came out of nowhere. Her socially derived observation of the ways that the quarantine added anxiety and caused many to lash out provided the group with the perfect justification for the characters' immediate dive into complex personal issues. This redesign added context and truth to each character's reveal of their deep inner feelings, from meeting online to getting in arguments, coming out as transgender, and confessing suicidal thoughts.

Synchronistic versus Asynchronistic: Creating Authentic Glitches

Once the students decided to redesign the play for a virtual platform and add elements of the pandemic, their attention shifted to which sort of format they would use: synchronistic or asynchronistic. One pressing problem that would define their choice emerged—how an online production could be as powerful as live theatre. A major obstacle for this transition from live to virtual was the physicality of the play—specifically, they were concerned with not being able to make physical contact with one another. As Elaine explained:

> There's just a lot of physicality in this play and we're going to lose it. So I think that makes this need to remake our writing a lot stronger because I know at least for me, I was reliant on the facts that you feel like, I can physically act, right, and that makes the words more powerful. And so now we have to make sure words are super powerful.

They worried that there would be a loss of depth if they could not use their entire bodies to express emotions or at best be limited to their faces, upper bodies and hands. Physicality also presented problems in terms of the interactions between characters originally designed to be in the same location working within the context of that location. Now characters had to be redesigned with the quarantine in

mind and rely on separate individual locations being joined within the common virtual platform to provide meaning and context to particular scenarios.

The physicality of the play also affected the staging—or how people and scenes transitioned from one moment to the next. The live play had been designed to incorporate multiple transitions amongst and between scenes. Not only was the virtual platform one central location, but how characters also entered and exited became complicated by the capabilities of the various platforms available to us.

Choosing a Platform

The university had been using Zoom for all its classes. The students were comfortable and familiar with how it worked, yet they were also very aware of its limitations. The option of switching to Cisco WebEx was briefly considered. Our comparison of the two platforms found them incredibly similar. Both offered Online video conferencing, the ability to record sessions, some sort of breakout room, capabilities to block unwanted users, and a system to chat. One difference that stood out in WebEx was a transcription function that doubled as a closed caption feature. Zoom required that someone type the Closed Captions. Although the transcription and Closed Captions feature would have allowed the students to make the performance accessible to those with audio needs, Zoom was selected. The students felt there was already enough general uncertainty in their lives, specifically in their education. It was a common experience that all their professors were scrambling to make sense of virtual learning, by cutting and adding meetings and assignments as needs and difficulties emerged. The idea of trying to learn a new platform was simply overwhelming.

Once the group settled upon Zoom, the discussion revolved around the reliability of the platform. We were only one week into quarantine and the students' impression of Online Learning was that, aside from the isolation, the worst element was the constant interruptions due to glitches, freezes, or disconnects. When translated to a synchronist theatre experience there was simply no way to guarantee that the performance would not be interrupted. There was also no way to authentically plan for and design the glitches, freezes and disconnects into a real time performance.

Clearly, we would not be able to prevent a freeze or a disconnect even if we recorded the play. However, coupled with the difficulty of planning entrances and exits that helped move the story forward, an asynchronistic approach was seen to be more manageable in so far as it would allow the students greater ability to edit captured footage. The students felt that the glitches and freezes that would occur during the recording would provide the authentic feel they were going for. The idea of multiple takes would allow the

students to select not only the best acting moments, but also the best or least interruptive glitches.

Editing Software and Expertise

When selecting an editing software, the first consideration was expertise. Only one student had any experience with editing digital recordings and that with the help of her mother. As fate would have it, due to quarantine, the mother was home and agreed to help. The university tech specialist reminded us that we did have access to Kaltura, however the mother was only familiar with WeVideo. WeVideo is a home movie maker that is used by many educators due to its ease of use. The software may be used for recording or editing. As we were using Zoom to record, the ease of footage upload was appealing as was the possibility of recording directly into WeVideo for a dance sequence.

Staging

Once Zoom and WeVideo were decided upon, the students were able to rework the design of the staging. It was crucial to know which virtual platform and editing software as each brought with them their own possibilities and limitations. As mentioned earlier the lack of being able to move in 3-dimensional time and space made the students focus their redesign upon manipulating the virtual world. Their main goal at this point was to create what appeared to be an authentic Zoom meeting, in so far as they did not want to use WeVideo to create any effect that could not be achieved through Zoom. For example, the original script relied heavily upon the use of the stage convention of the monologue. A monologue is a moment when a character, usually alone, expresses some deep internal thought that is essential to the character's and play's development. The idea that the monologues would have to be lost for realism and authenticity on the Zoom platform created the following dialogue.

> Hana: I just had a thought in relation to Ben, he's not going to be able to do all his stuff by himself anymore. Like
>
> Abby: Like the little aside comments and things.
>
> Reb: Like the monologues we can't really do them unless like we did cheesy dramatics, but I don't know how well that would come off.
>
> Abby: So how do we make it clear that Ben is struggling without those things?
>
> Connor: We'll have to set it up from the get-go.
>
> Reb: Yea more like subtle work, I think. Because like, I mean, I guess if you run it and keep all those like in their head, things. We could like put like a filter or something on the rest of our screens where like wearing black and why and we all like stay frozen or maybe we turn our cameras off. But I feel like that would be really cheesy and weird. I don't know. If I don't know, can we delete our name entirely

so that if I do this, it's just a black screen. Cuz I feel like if we did that, that could be like that. You have to, but if we want our character names on there, that we would have to go between having our character names there, the bleeding up. But if we're going to edit later, we could edit that out and just edit out having a name on there with like Photoshop or whatever or whatever program we use.

Connor: No the only other option that I could think of is if we wanted to add something in the middle, something like a, like a a frickin' monologue or something. Then the only other option that I could possibly think of would be like there being like a server malfunction and like everyone gets booted except for Ben.

The interaction amongst the students is one of the strongest indications of the pedagogical value of the redesign. This type of intense consideration of theatrical convention, mixed with a desire to use what they had and make something new rather than try to replicate a live performance, stands as a hallmark of their work. There is a long list of possibilities offered by the students from using filters, to blacking out names, to exploiting the frequency and reality of disconnected ZOOM meetings. What ended up being the deciding factor was their need for authenticity. To that end they dropped the convention of the monologue as it did not ring true to their sense of what was real.

BRINGING THE REDESIGN TO LIFE

Rehearsals

The actual technical production process led to a variety of artistic discoveries. The process for live production involves multiple rehearsals that focus on, not only solidifying acting moments, but also intend to work out staging, sound and lighting. In the redesign to the virtual platform, we eliminated two of those elements, sound and lighting. These were removed from the design of the play to give the feeling that this was a peek into an actual Zoom meeting between first-year students gathered to socialize through playing a game of Dungeons and Dragons. It was felt that any light or music needed to be as unplanned as real life would be, based upon the individual characters sense of self. As rehearsals went on the use of music was dropped as it was seen as a distraction to the playing of the fictional game. Lighting simply became whatever light the students had in the actual spaces from which they were Zoom-ing.

Green Screen and the Fictional World

One of the devices of the play was a shift from the real world to the fictional world of the D&D game. Each character had their alter ego in the game. These alternate egos were designed to allow for alternate discourses to appear that would offer opportunities for self-reflection and critical personal
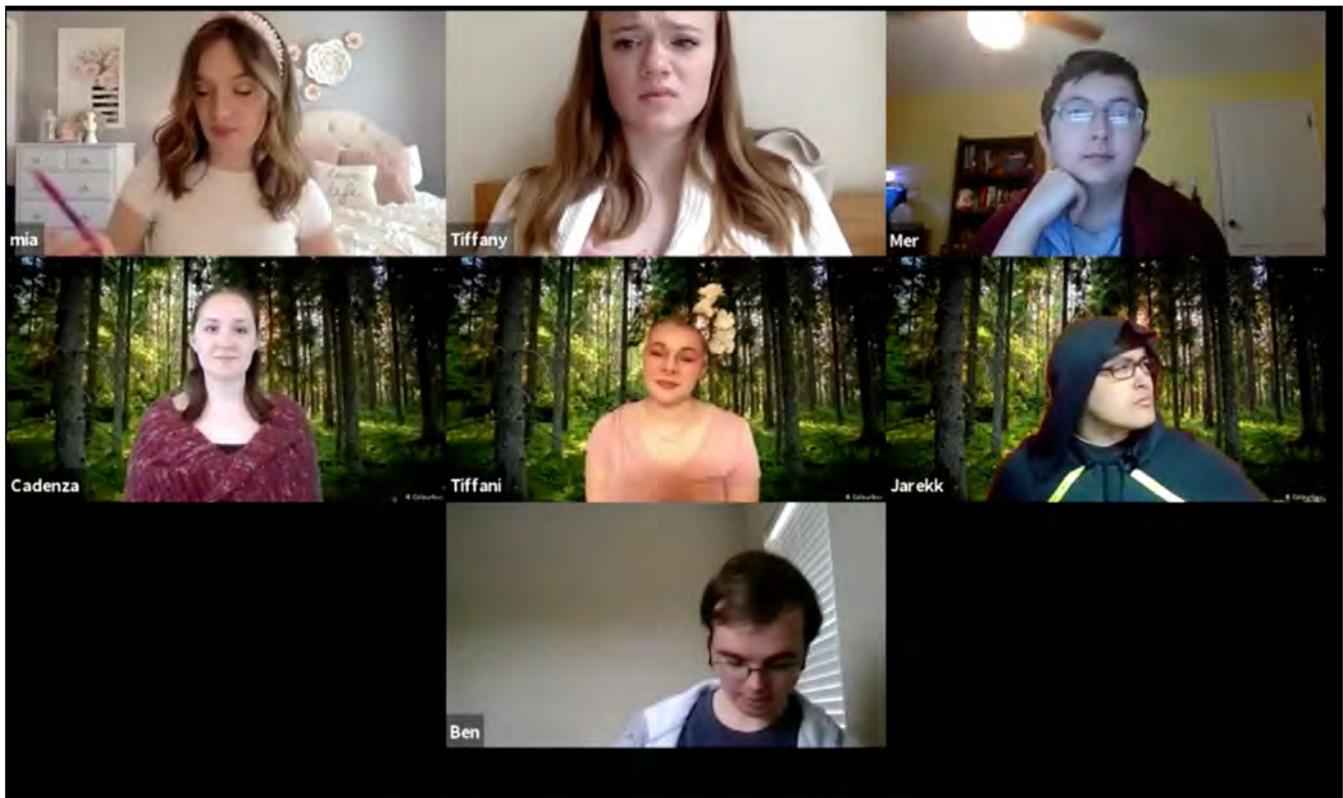

FIGURE 5. Real life characters with their fantasy alter egos in Green Screen generated backgrounds. From upper left to right; Mia, Tiffany, Mer, Cadenza, Tiffani (notice the disappearing head), Jarekk, and Ben.

change and growth. Whenever these alter egos appeared, the students wanted this moment to embrace fantasy and disrupt their adherence to truth in the overall design. It was rationalized that this juxtaposition of the real world with the world of the D&D game, although disrupting the sense that this was actually happening, created a type of playful rupture within the very intense dialogue. This rupture was positioned as a pause, a moment for audience members who may be empathizing with a particular character or character's stories to step back and consider an alternate narrative.

The larger technical issue became the actual green screen. The students were quarantined in their homes with limited access to material and or funds to acquire materials. This limitation also became a moment of artistic discovery as well as a moment to experiment with the technology. Big on the list was selecting the proper backgrounds for the designated scenes. Artistically this was a rather simple process as there were only four shifts with very definite requirements. The background needs were a rustic wood, an old-time tavern, a castle gate, and an inner chamber. Once the backgrounds were chosen, free versions located, and size proportions agreed upon, it became a matter of individual green screen backdrops and rehearsing how and when students put them up.

Green screen options ranged from bedsheets, to walls, to pieces of plywood. One challenge that presented itself was that several students did not have the proper color and were disappearing. It became a matter of trial and error, until all but one student found an adequate backdrop. Maya played the fun loving, kind, and generous fantasy character Tiffani, the alter ego to Abby's domineering, dismissive and self-absorbed real-life character Tiffany. Maya could not find a backdrop that allowed her to appear, with her head always ebbing in and out of focus fully. Rather than allowing this phenomenon to derail the use of the Green Screen effect the students made the artistic choice that this character, a fantasy sprite would not necessarily need to always be

in perfect focus and the quality of dissolving in and out of reality was perfect (See Figure 5).

Entrances and Exits

One aspect of theatrical design that helps define the flow, pace, and ultimately the meaning of the play are the ways in which characters enter and exit the stage. In our redesign we looked at the Zoom screen as our stage. We had the option of running the play in Speaker or Gallery. Speaker view places the image of the person speaking on the screen, and Gallery view places all the speakers on the screen. One complication with speaker view is that, unless all participants except the speaker are muted, the images of random participants pop up from time to time due to ambient sounds. As our play required dialogue, it was unwieldy to attempt a full-cast muting and unmuting—we often needed two or more images on the screen at once, we chose to use the Gallery view. Unlike a live play where the actors can enter and exit at specific places on the stage, when in gallery view, Zoom's program defines where people are placed on the screen, or in our case the screen as stage. For example, if we designed the play for Ben to appear in the upper-left corner of the screen, the program would only allow for that if he were to enter the Zoom meeting first. Each consecutive participant would appear from upper left to right, dropping down and repeating the pattern as members entered. As participants exited, the screen would adjust, moving the earliest participant to the upper left. The Zoom placement protocol required that we plan starts and stops, similar to scene cuts in filming. The process was similar to a sliding puzzle. We had to decide where we would cease recording, have characters exit, and then reenter the Zoom meeting in the order we needed them to appear (See Figure 6) and edit the scenes together in WeVideo.

A final aspect that affected our ability to place actors on the screen as we would have them was the ZOOM protocol to always place the host in the upper center on the screen when in gallery view.

FIGURE 6. Shift from a full cast shot to a four-character shot, required a cut, full exit of all cast and then re-enter in the order Ben, Mer, Mia, and Tiffany to arrive at the above screen image.
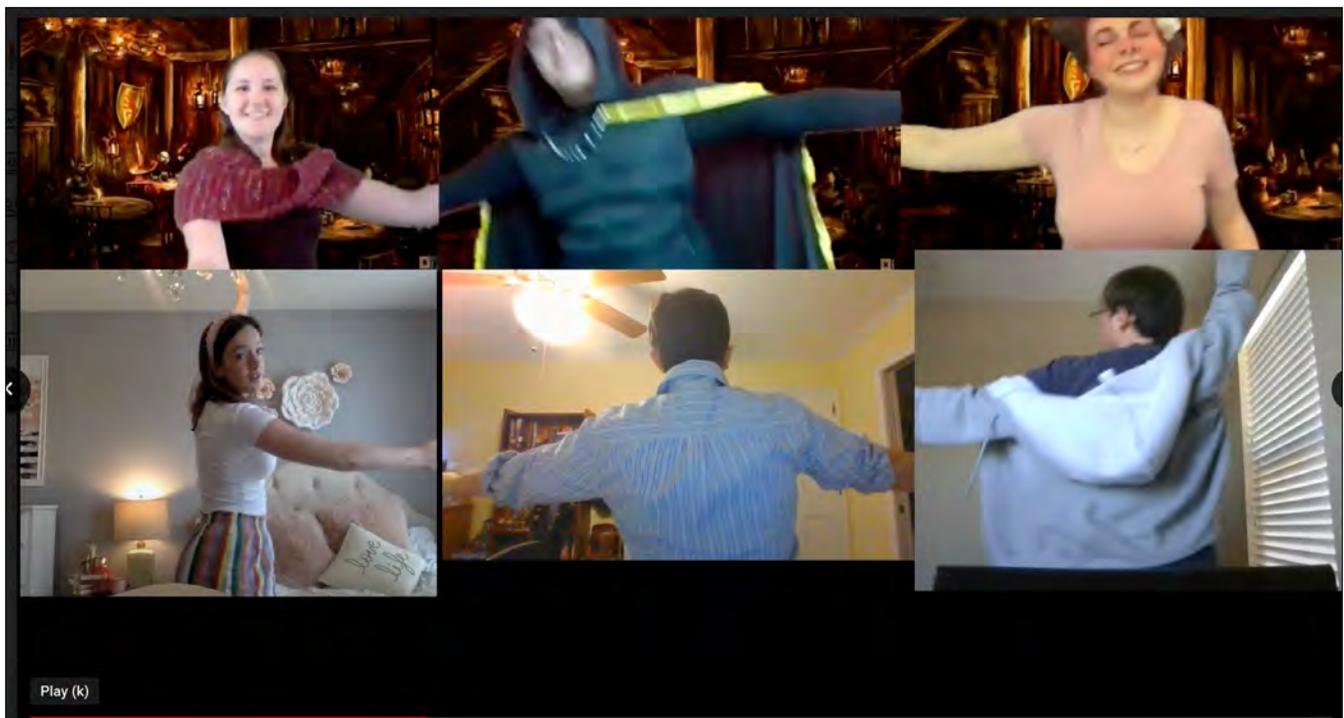
FIGURE 7. Circle dance with full cast edited in WeVideo from individually uploaded shots.

Editing and Production

The editing process in WeVideo occurred outside of class and was volunteer facilitated. The process included uploading the Zoom recording into Google Drive, which was then downloaded and re-uploaded into WeVideo. Other than a dance sequence, the method was very direct. The editor went through the full recording and selected those moments from the multiple takes they felt captured the essence of the play and connected them together. In the case of the dance, the students recorded their individual parts directly into WeVideo. This was done because the choreography of the dance was designed to coordinate all the individual students into a circle with their hands held (see Figure 7). Multiple attempts were made in the rehearsal process to coordinate this dance as a group, but internet glitches prevented a smooth recording. Also, the Zoom Gallery View configuration prevented the circle with all of the cast members together.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the experience of redesigning the play with a virtual platform was positive. The most apparent benefit of this particular experience lay not in the learning of a technical skill, but rather within the shared community. Drama and theatre in and as education is first and foremost about youth identity and providing a space for self-discovery, exploration, and action. This group of students had already dedicated themselves to creating a play that dealt with a very serious issue troubling many in their generation: suicide.

The students looked at the creation of the play, not only as an opportunity to connect with their peers through theatre, but as a space for them to explore their own experiences. Creation of the play became a form of healing, of coming to terms with the trauma of either attempting suicide or having suicidal thoughts. It was a way for them to confront the narratives that other popular cultural forms were presenting, deconstruct them, and create their own.

When the pandemic forced the students into quarantine, the redesign process likewise became a space of self and community sharing, discovery, and healing. Perhaps nowhere better was this felt than in Reb, who self-identified as transgender reflected;

> So I mean, I'm back in my room… From my point of view as somebody in that kind of situation right now, it is kind of frustrating, um, like vaguely, just like exhausting to have to go through that every single day, of hearing she/her and this being like, yeah, we're not going to say anything about this cause, this is my life. I'm so tired.

For Reb the experience of being quarantined forced him into a space where he could no longer be himself. At college Reb was able to more fully embrace, enjoy, and share his identity. The pandemic forced him back home where his identity was not welcome. Mer, Reb's character in the play, was going through the same situation: they were not able to come out to their family. For Reb, the redesign of the play, and being able to share those feelings with his fellow classmates, became a way for him to find healing within the trauma of isolation and loss of personal freedom and identity.

By valuing this type of work as essential artmaking during a global pandemic, and taking a critical pedagogical position within our process, we were provided with the opportunity to explore the humanity within design. The design process becomes a way for deep personal and social reflection, where what we design and how we design it are inseparable from who we are in time and space. There is no doubt that the pandemic has changed forever the way we see, under-stand, and do education. Rather than a catastrophe that has destroyed our way of life, this case has shown that there is potential for incredible learning and massive personal growth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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