

Drama and theatre studies – practical-coursework

[Entertainment](#), [Theatre](#)



In my AS theatre studies course we have studied, Antigone a Greek tragedy by Sophocles and, Yerma by Federico Garcia Lorca which is a Spanish play based in the countryside of Andalusia. Both plays have their main characters female and both surround around the "injustice" they have been through the main reason being men and the patriarchy society they're in. So from both the plays we've studied we get a feeling of a "battle between the sexes" they both create the idea of women "fighting back".

This was our group's first inspiration for our devised piece we decided to base our play around the treatment of women and the unity of women coming together to fight against men, because of the unfairness towards women. This idea of all women against their men gave me the idea of a scene from the production of Chicago the musical, where all these women are together in jail for having killed their husbands/boyfriends in a variety of ways and they all sing of how "He had it coming", making it the men's fault.

I thought this idea of fighting back but then justifying it because these men are "cruel" and so deserve punishment, this could also be used in our play. This scene is a musical scene they are all singing and dancing, it's also quite creative in that it starts off with simple sounds that each woman makes to represent her "story" for example one woman keeps repeating the word "pop" you later find out when she explains her story (in song) that her man kept making that pop sound with his gum and that's what irritated her into shooting him dead!

When each woman says their word (or sound) it goes around again from the beginning and they kept repeating it over and over and faster each time that

it started to make a beat and that's when the song started. This influenced us into doing many things for our play such as having an unrealistic scene where we could have music and dancing and also if we had the female characters that have had the injustice done to them if they each had one word to describe them and then like in Chicago have them repeat it in a climax of a scene. In Chicago they all come together and dance in unison etc... so we began to think of having those individual stories of each woman but then in the big climax having them come together to get revenge in "unison". Therefore the basic plot that we gathered for our devised piece is that there are a number of women who have been treated unfairly or unequally by men they are in a relationship and so they all get their 'vengeance' by coming together and punishing them all in an extremely unrealistic way. The group came up with ideas of using something like "voodoo" or magic to be their fight back.

Because when we thought of "powerful" "evil" women it made us think of "witches" and that casting a spell could be their way of getting men back!

Research Chicago- Item 1 (enclosed) In this scene of Chicago these women are in jail they all sing about how they killed their husbands and blame them for their death. The imagery of all these women uniting as one and dancing in unison, that'd be useful for our play, instead of keeping the women as individuals even though they all have different stories and are different people, make them come together, become one and fight back.

Also it shows the feisty sexy side to women shows them to be strong not just sweet and caring as they are stereotyped to be, so we need to portray this.

It's almost like saying every woman has a tigress in them and you push her then it will be unleashed and she will fight back! Arab men and domestic violence- Item 2 (enclosed) From this article you can see the main reason these Arab men were abusive to their wives was because of their patriarchal society.

This I feel is down to insecurities of when they are not feeling like they are in " power". But these statistics show that they are " against" it, it's almost like they don't realise what they're doing, and some blame their wives for them doing it. This helps me to understand my character because I know that he uses certain mechanisms to save himself from blame and feeling guilty. I'll use this in my acting, id be trying to make excuses and to justify my reasons for beating my wife. True story domestic violence Tanya Grey- Item 3 (enclosed)

This could be put into both my character and Priya's, because we can use examples of things that had happened in this story of abuse and put it into our story. For example one scene in our play when the husband comes home and the wife is terrified just hearing his footsteps; this was real and had happened to this woman in the article. From this we made our stylised version of it, the footsteps and other actions are exemplified by a thudding sound that will be made by one of the actors off stage, and as he gets closer a heart beat rhythm starts showing how scared she is.

And also in one scene the husband suspects his wife is waiting for another man (cheating) because she's got candles and is relaxing, this again comes from the real life story of this couple where she was relaxing and having a

bath and he accuses her of waiting for a man. The reasons for them doing things can also be put into how we see our characters and then this will help us to understand them and so be able to "be" them (Stanislavsky's magic IF), for example his reasoning is jealousy wanting to have power and she stays with him at first because she finds this strength and power attractive, before she realises that he's actually dangerous!

Stanislavsky's Emotion Memory- Item 4 (enclosed) When trying to be and feel like our characters we have to literally feel what they are feeling to be able to act to the best potential, this theory of Stanislavsky's allows an actor to do this by bringing similar personal feelings of the actors into their acting. So for example when Priya is acting extremely scared she had to remember a memory of when she felt really scared and then put all those gestures facial expressions etc into the acting. This of course is quite difficult because you're not in that situation; you need a lot of focus and determination to carry it off well.

This could help me also in scenes where I have to be aggressive and angry if I just think of the last time I was very angry and imagine being my character and what I'd do in that situation. Feminism/Ann Oakley- Item 5 (enclosed) Our play in a way represents feminism, women fighting against men! Ann Oakley is one of the main feminist writers, these quotes show her views on why men are the way they are (patriarchal society). Again I can use this to understand the thought paths of my male character; she believes they are violent because they see it as "masculine" because that's how men are presented in their society.

So my character may feel like it's his "duty" because he is male to put everything in "order" (by forceful means). Again these are his reasoning for doing the abuse. I could mention these kinds of reasons in my monologue. Theory of why men abuse- Item 6 (enclosed) Again this gives the familiar reason that men abuse because they want power, but it also explains why women tend to stay with their abusive partners, which is because some women may be very dependant on their husbands, financially and if they have children she feels she can't be able to give them what they need.

Also another reason not mentioned is that women that are in love with their partners just don't want to leave them because they love them and expect them to change one day. Priya's character will also need excuses for why she is with him and they'd be dependency and love. She can portray it in her acting by trying please him, not getting him angry, always doing as he says etc... Health and safety 1. Stacked chairs There are many chairs that are stacked in corners it could be dangerous if they were to fall on to someone it could injure them so we made sure to keep them away from us whilst acting.

There are also some chairs with attached desks which are quite heavy and some aren't extremely stable. So again we need to make sure they aren't in our way when acting. 2. Board on wheels This board can be pushed on to someone's foot or may fall on someone so is also dangerous to us so we keep it away from us. 3. Floor slippery If we have slippery shoes the floor is also quite smooth so it may be easy for us to slip and hurt ourselves. 4. Lights If the lights are a bit wobbly they might possibly fall on someone, so we made sure they were fixed on securely.

They made sure they had safety chains so that even if they fall they don't fall to the ground and so don't hurt someone or get damaged 5. Trailing wires: there are wires on the floor that can easily be tripped over, we made sure they were pinned to the sides of the wall and don't come anyway near our acting space (stage). Shoes: They can be a problem if they are high heels or platforms if some were to accidentally trod on some one it could hurt them quite badly.

Rope scene: This is when the women are strangling the men with ropes, we had to use a technique that our dramateachertaught us of the person who was being strangled would actually be the one in control of what happens not the other person, so the other person is holding onto the victim whilst they are moving around and acting as if they're being strangled. Abuse scene: There is a part where I am supposed to have slapped Priya but instead we make a noise and my hand doesn't touch her face she just moves like I had hit her.

Helia's necklace: There is a scene where Helia's character pulls off her necklace and drops it on the floor, this could be risky if the beads were to fall off and they scattered because someone could slip on them. So she will pull them and drop them gently but looking like she's doing it with more force.

Development of the play and my role When we had decided on the ideas of what we want in our play, using different ideas from some of the plays we've studied, as a group we all sat and discussed the next step which was the actual story-line of our play.

This came quite easy for us as our main inspiration was about the oppression of women and how they are " mistreated" by men in a patriarchal society (mainly based on Yerma and Antigone). And we knew our climax has got to be about the anger and revenge of women, when we were talking about this I mentioned the jail scene in Chicago the musical where all the women were bitter and vengeful of their men, they had all murdered their husbands and were proud of it, they justify why they did it, from this we thought of the play being about proving the point or justifying how women are treated badly by men.

So this brought us to the idea of having one man that had used a number of women and so is cheating and lying and not valuing their relationships but then these women figure it out and join together to get their own back.

Finally after deciding on this idea we started trying out a scene we realised many lessons were being wasted by us just talking and thinking about what to do rather than trying out things to see if it works or not.

The group were too focused on figuring out what or how these women will get their " own back", we came to the conclusion that the only way to do this was to have it as an unrealistic scene. I started to think of how we could do this and I remembered a scene from my favourite TV show Friends where the three main female characters wanted to get rid of everything of their ex's and phoebe the gypsy type character told them to throw everything that's theirs or they gave them into a fire and that's a remedy of letting go of their man.

I liked the symbolism in the idea of the fire and their personal items representing them, when I told this to the group we then came out with the idea of making the "come back" a fire "voodoo" scene! This way we could represent the women's anger and frustration in a strange way as if it's driven them insane and they just need to let it all out and this is their way. And the good thing about theatre is we can show this in a stylised performance and make it completely out of the ordinary.

The "revenge voodoo" scene was the first scene we tried out, Dee volunteered to be the guy, the rest of us were then to be the angry women, Dee was defiantly on the ball that lesson I think she worked better when actually physically doing work she came up with the idea of having the guy wrapped in rope and each woman had a piece of it in their hand and they were all tugging at him so that he was moving in different directions, and she also thought of a rock song that was appropriate for this scene.

But then when trying to move on from there we realised it was far too complicated to do the individual stories of each woman with that one guy because there were simply too many women, that's when we thought of having three couples and this left out an actor (Beatrix) we thought of just having her as a mystical character, a devil like creature that likes to stir things and will be in the background of most scenes but invisible to everyone and the final voodoo scene will have been planned by her, she had brought the women together and put it into their heads to do the voodoo ritual.

We started talking a lot about the voodoo scene we wanted dancing and light effects etc... But we were wasting a lot of time just discussing minor details

that can be dealt with later on so we all decided to just split into our couples and work separately on our individual stories and scenes, which would come before the voodoo scene, then near the end of the lesson we'd come together and tell each other what we'd done.

In my couple I am the man and Priya my wife, we discussed reasons for how and why this relationship broke down it had to be of course the husband's fault and so a reason to why she's against men and wants revenge, when thinking of a patriarchy society and the problems with this I immediately thought of how man like to claim "ownership" over women and I remembered this film I had watched called "Enough" and it was about this man who was so obsessed with being in control he beat his wife just to make him feel like he had power over her.

I told Priya about my idea of using domestic violence as the story of what happened between our couple, at first she wasn't so sure, she said it'd be difficult to portray someone beating someone and it may turn out to be too much like a "soap opera". But I tried to convince her we could make it work so she agreed to give it a go.

When discussing with the other groups we then had our three reasons why these women are angry with their men, ours was he abused his wife, Dee and Ema had decided Ema was to be a young 14 year old girl that was raped by Dee a 22 year old man, Helia and Elizabeth got their idea from Yerma, Elizabeth was the husband in this relationship and Helia the wife, she was desperate, almost obsessed with wanting a child but Elizabeth's character isn't interested.

In the prison scene of Chicago (mentioned in "inspirations" and "research") they all chant one word which describes their story of what happened between them and their men (why they killed them). This made us think of giving a word to each woman and then in some of their scenes everyone else could whisper that word at certain times. Priya is "Abuse", Helia is "Obsession" and Ema is "Innocence" these words all have an "S" sound quality which I think gives it more of an impact and gives it a mysterious atmosphere.

Being a Muslim I wear a headscarf and I thought I could use this with the character, because I am a man I could put the scarf in a way that it represents a turban and so obviously this helped me to shape the character, because wearing a turban he could be an Asian, Persian or Arab, but being part Arab myself I thought I'd probably find it easier to be something that I knew about.

Being an Arab man then made me consider putting on an accent, to make it a little more interesting and then I thought of a background story between me and Priya just by knowing my character a little more. I thought that since I was being an Arab and Priya being English this would of course be a big culture clash, and being part English and part Egyptian myself I also knew about having a culture clash, and then this could be the reasons for him being insecure about their relationship and then leading to trying to control her by physical means.

In the English culture it's much more normal for women to socialise freely with men but Arabs do believe in socialising with both sexes but aren't as

lenient, They feel women should be protected and are seen as precious and need not always be on show for men to look at, so in the culture it's normal to have segregated gatherings.

But if Priya's character isn't of course accustomed to this she will find it normal to talk to guys in the same way she talks to girls but to him in his culture when a girl is very chatty to a boy their immediate thought is she fancies him and if he is an insecure controlling type of character this will irritate him and make him feel even more insecure and then he will feel he has to stop her. This is what I will use as my purpose for beating her. Acting as my character is quite difficult for me because I'm extremely feminine in the way I walk, talk, my gestures etc... and being a man everything needs to be changed, I tried watching men in the street just to see how they hold themselves and move when they walk. But because I'm quite slim and small it's hard to move like someone that has broader shoulders and a larger physique. I also find it difficult to put myself in a man's shoes but using the techniques of Stanislavsky I try to understand my character in order for me to be him, everything he does should be for a reason (action for a purpose).

For example my gestures aren't to be as extended and flowing as I would usually do them being female they should be more strong and firm but then by him being Arab also gives him certain hand gestures more than a usual European man would do. Even though I imagine him to be insecure inside, he is the type of character that would never tell anyone that he is insecure or upset, instead he would put on a stern face and hold it all in and also instead

of ever blaming himself or seeing his mistakes he only acknowledges other people's, so everything is someone else's fault not his!

Only by understanding how my character is and how his mind works did I find it easier to act as him. When acting out all our scenes that the couples had done separately, we realised that our scenes were far too realistic and life like which isn't what we all initially intended so we came together and discussed what sort of scenes we want and that they should be done in a similar format etc... We then came up with the idea of having three scenes in every couples section, scenes that are all of different type one realistic, one non- naturalistic and one documentary.

It would just give the play more of a spice because there is quite a constant tone through out, which can be quite dull, so by seeing things from different perspectives we thought would make it more interesting. The realistic would obviously be what happened in their every life then the non naturalistic is their thoughts, their dreams, what happened but done in exaggerated dream-like way etc...

The documentary scene we originally thought of getting a voice of a man played by tape or CD reading out a news report but then we realised Beatrix needed more lines and so gave her the role of reading the reports, she would read statistics on domestic violence, rape and infertile men. And we thought of using Visual aids to make it a little more interesting so having that information on a screen behind Whilst we were talking about visual aid we thought of the voodoo scene having a fire and to imitate the fire we could have an image of fire on the back screen during that scene.

The first scene that me and Priya did which was me coming home and accusing her of waiting for another man and that's the build up of me abusing her, this idea I got from a true story of domestic violence (research). This was what we thought was too realistic and boring but we kept it because when we decided to have the three different types of scenes it balanced it out so seemed ok. We were going to start with the realistic scene but from that research I had done, the true story, I got another idea that we could do.

The woman hears her husband coming home and just by hearing his footsteps gets extremely scared and by making this an unrealistic scene it can be very effective. Making the sounds of his footsteps and everything he does as loud exaggerated thuds, and as I get closer to Priya the thudding then starts to sound like heartbeats getting faster and faster and I put my hand on her shoulder and there's one last loud thud, I've arrived!

We wanted to put this before the realistic scene of our argument but the group had a problem with this because Priya and I had actually already got an unrealistic scene and this would mean we have one more than the other couples. But I really didn't want to let this idea go I felt it would be very good to show the wife's fear of her husband. And so after some convincing I won my case, under the condition we try and merge this scene with the realistic one. Final Evaluation

When we watched ourselves on tape acting our piece, there were many good points I found but also things I felt needed to be improved. Most of our gestures the women's and the men's I thought were very good and to the

point (action for a purpose). Although I found I needed to change my posture at points, my body language needs to be a lot more masculine! Beatrix also needs to get more involved in her character so that she can do more gestures and facial expressions correct to the type of character she is.

She is being a little cheeky and doing some gestures to portray that but we felt there needed to be more so that the audience has some understanding of what Beatrix is. Our tones of voice (men and women) were good and were believable but we need to slow down our pace and take our time when saying our lines. Our stylised techniques such as the toy box scene of when Helia's character dreams of having a baby and we are all the toy dolls that dance around her, this looked really creative. We need to make sure all of us keep those scary toy smiles on so it's even more affective.

In most of our scenes we just need to make them run a little more smoothly and there were some incidences where people didn't know what scene was coming up and the other actors would hint at something for them to remember. This is important that we all help each other out if someone gets confused or forget their lines if we feel out the gap and improvise with it which I ended up doing on the tap because Priya had forgotten one of her lines so I said her line but in a different way so that I was asking it to her in a question and she could just agree to it.

The most important section we need to work on is our ending which isn't complete because we need music and need to figure out the choreography etc... I think it'd be useful to also make a clear definition when it has changed from stylised to realistic to documentary because we are just going

from one to the next which makes it seem a bit scruffy perhaps if for example we had a news report tune before the documentary starts to give it a bit of an introduction.

And in the stylised we could all say the words in canon of the woman that is in the scene (e. g. innocence) repeatedly to give it that creepy atmosphere and making sure the audience know it isn't realistic. Overall the play came along very well, we all listened to each other and took on ideas and decided everything as a group so that we were all in agreement, we really worked together like a team, which I think pays off in our work.

Everyone participated in what they thought of the scenes, lighting, music etc and all the actors had a great deal of respect for each other which made it easier to act side by side and help each other out. There may have been some weaker actors that came late and didn't give as much input into the piece and there were the stronger actors that held the play together, but everyone deserves credit for the amount of work put into the acting of our play.