

Evaluation of a winters tale

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The winter's tale is a play about a king made jealous by alleged adultery which eventually leads to the death or misplacement of his entire family. But you already know this. We tried to take this Shakespearean production and, to an extent, modernise it. Instead of a Royal Family there's a "family" perhaps based around the idea of Mafioso but I think this idea was dropped because there is little evidence in the final production of Mafia-esque qualities.

The play also included qualities maybe sometimes considered cliché but loved by the audience this is of course fairy tale qualities for example a narrator performed by a childlike character, certain sound tracks around pivotal moments in the play, the general light heartedness of some characters. Act 1 My slow decline into madness and superfluity Time rollerblades on stage, sits down and reads from an old book about a story of two boys who grew up together and eventually became best of friends. The story is based around Leontes' jealous rage, which is aimed mainly at his best friend's betrayal rather than his wives.

The lines in the second half of the play often speak of reconciling with his good friend after his wife died, which showed that maybe what was most important to him was his relationship with his best friend. Two of the main protagonists Polixenes and Leontes are beckoned on stage by Time's speech in which they play as if children with sticks, Polixenes eventually takes Leontes' (my) stick and starts a syndrome where Leontes assumes paranoia that Polixenes or perhaps everyone is trying to take things out from under him.

Originally there was a dance number that was about 5 minutes long but it evolved into more of an entrance tune where the audience gets their first glance at the actors playing. I had several different directions than the rest of the cast at this point, I don't dance for example. I felt that Leontes (playing host) would instead lead the dancers of the second half and mingle. This is the only part of the play that I felt Leontes was truly relaxed and not at his usual level 10 stress level.

Though a long dance might have been a good addition to the play here, we felt what we did was better for our cast. The dancers then scatter into small talking party guests. Polixenes speaks of his epic return home verily. My character (Leontes) at this point tries to persuade Polixenes to stay, I first read this as a kind gesture that most normal people would say when someone says I'm leaving. But the belligerence of Leontes could show a rather possessive attitude towards his friend, or perhaps a Napoleon syndrome to which he derives joy from controlling people.

Polixenes and Hermione (my wife) touch each other inappropriately (to Leontes) to which Leontes has a fit. The soundtrack for this section was the sound of a whirring spinning top to increase tension, I felt it helped me to break the silence and start at a higher stress level without looking ridiculous for suddenly shouting at the audience. The tension raises more and more until I burst out and start metaphorically mangling one of our loyal servants Camillo, to which every actor in the background sneaks out the corners of the room.

I find at this stage that I should raise the tension to a high 9 and shout at Camillo due to the shortening of words used in the iambic pentameter and obvious inclinations in the language which would suggest that Leontes was getting considerably upset. At this point I was planning on breaking the plastic cup in my hand to show the audience how stressed Leontes' was, but this is impossible unless we change the cup that is to be used to a thinner, more breakable one. Act 2 Revenge against the child and wife, leading to eventual foetal position

In this scene I'm a raging bull in a china shop. I take the boy away from my wife and imprison her. At first I found it difficult to remain angry with so little lines in-between large speeches in which Hermione is toneless we worked through several ways to show my anger at this point. At one point we had me pacing back and forth, but it didn't work for me to weave in-between the other actors, so we decided that I would play it in a more bipolar manner in which most of the scene I am standing expressionless but with some considerable outbursts.

This eventually evolved into a full out fight between me and harmony, where she is shouting, and I am responding with equal aggression and at the point where she backs down and says, " I wish never to see you sorry," I would spit at her. Act 2 scene 3 Woe is me We originally started the scene with me laying on the ground in the foetal position because we wanted to show my tiredness when I spoke of Leontes' developing insomnia.

But this was a staging impossibility because here I had my first costume changed and I couldn't get on stage that fast. So we changed it to me

walking in with a robe in a tiresome manner. I felt at this point, that I wouldn't break down the 4th wall again as I did with my last speech, instead I would seem to be talking to myself. Eventually Paulina my other most loyal servant arrives to announce Hermione had my babe and to stop Leontes from continuing this accusation against his wife.

Of course Leontes rejects the babe and determines it should be left in the wild. Paulina in this scene shows more dominance than in one of the performances I watched previously, I decided to react was to make it seem like I was letting her get away with it, until she hit a nerve to which my character would show his famous anger problem and shout at her, to which Paulina decided it would be best to lower her tension and slowly build back up.

The actor who played Paulina and I decided that maybe there was some sexual tension between them which would show why he lets her to walk all over him, so we decided to play it that way by being overly aggressive in a more instinctive way which would portray sexual tension. At this point I decided that Leontes may have now known that he was wrong in his accusations against his wife but he set forward a string of motions that couldn't be stopped even if he wanted to, if he declared himself mistaken he would seem foolish among the peons and this is something that he couldn't have because of his enormous pride.

So what I portrayed was him getting rid of the 'evidence' (the child) that this babe was his and his wife was not an adulterous. We staged this originally as 3 men in a semi-circle standing outside my door, like a defensive position to

stop outsiders from entering, but because the three actors were all taller and bigger than Leontes we felt that this took away from my characters tyrannical look and instead made me look like an angry midget and in no way threatening.

So we changed it to two men on either side of the stage and one man (Paulina's husband) standing near the room entrance. When Paulina entered they would stay in the same position but I'd move closer until she leaves and one of the servants would get down on his knees with the baby to beg me not to kill it, this is a two pointer, 1. He went down on his knees to lower himself to show the audience who has the most power 2.

Getting down on ones knees is a sign that you submit yourself to the person to which they could do what they want, for example when people pray in most religions they kneel or lower themselves somehow to show they 'submit to god' I also researched and found that some animals do similar things for example a dog will roll onto their back to submit to the stronger better dog, in this case me. This was soon followed by everyone getting down on their knees to show I was in power.

I found it was more effective than the previous staging because it lowers the presence of the other three so the audience knows where they should be focused in that scene. Which in this case was me. We did several staging effects to show this for example in Act 5 (more on that later.) Act 3 The scene in which Leontes' life is pretty much destroyed This is the court scene Hermione pleaded not guilty to which Apollo's oracle agreed, but Leontes put off the oracle as falsehood.

I decided that at this point Leontes already was pretty sure that he was incorrect in his accusation but couldn't say so because it would be shameful, so he insults the great Apollo by accusing his oracle of falsehood to which Apollo killed Leontes' son in repentance. At this point I feel that Leontes is shook, yes, but isn't fully broken until he hears news from Paulina that his wife died.

But I changed my mind and decided that he should be more shook up about his son's death so I, instead of remaining seated, would stand and when the news was delivered I would fall back in my seat with a dumbfounded look on my face. Leontes is shattered and loses his aggressive energy that he had throughout the play. Some directors at this point afflicted Leontes with a disability to show how affected he was from these events, e. g. in Act 5 you saw Leontes with a stroke, or in a wheel chair.

We thought that perhaps it was more important to stick to the theme of the play and make Leontes lethargic and childlike which shows by the next stage directions. Act 5 Le Finale This act starts with a very lacklustre Leontes walking on stage, sitting centre stage playing with the toy his dead son played with so long ago, this was the same spinning top which went off whenever Leontes would get angry, this is symbolic because what was once a part of his anger he was now rolling around in his hands and finally it was taken away by Paulina which adds to Leontes' fear of having things stolen from him.

Paulina is shown constantly reminding him of the dead two, Leontes at this point I felt was very weary of her repetitions and explains that he knows (in a

very practiced tone which is how I suggest this isn't the first time they have had this conversation) that he killed his wife and son and that he didn't need to be reminded anymore of it. Polixenes son comes forward and addresses Leontes with his new 'wife' which Leontes soon finds out is not his wife but lover, and on top of that isn't of noble blood.

When the servant says her speech about how Camillo and Polixenes was here I felt Leontes should break down pathetically and hug Paulina which showed symbolically that she was now in charge of Leontes like a parent which added to his child-like demeanor. Time enters and explains how the events unfolded, how Polixenes' son is marrying a daughter of a noble because it turns out it is Leontes' daughter which seemed to solve all the problems at the time.

Originally our director wanted us to spin on stage as if, "out of a story" but with the male actor's lack of grace scrapped that idea and decided time would instead interweave between the actors as they mimed her speech. We did the same weave that we did at the beginning of the play, maybe to show a growth of the characters and the soundtrack I felt added to the fairy tale theme.

The ending starts paradoxically, as we enter the art museum hosted by Paulina in search of the statue of the queen, the statue is eventually awakened and stands to which I have the hardest part to act in comparison to my previous scenes. As a group we all had different ideas as to how the scene should go. We thought of it as a hug between Hermione and Leontes showing her forgiveness but a lot of us felt that perhaps Leontes shouldn't be

forgiven, not yet. We tried to have it as a hand touch and Hermione runs and hugs her daughter but it seemed anticlimactic.

We eventually worked out that a hand touch to Leontes touching Hermione's face to show his disbelief followed by a hug to Perdita Hermione's daughter would show that she felt more inclined to greet her daughter. At this time Leontes steps aside as Hermione leaves his embrace and hugs her daughter. As an actor at this point I felt awkward because in this situation in real life, I would probably also feel awkward. I decided that I would look at her still dumbfounded by the fact that she is alive once again.

The last speech I make is to tell Paulina that though her previous husband died, she should take another by my consent which is Camillo, Shakespeare then breaks down the fourth wall by having Leontes make a vague reference to the fact that they were in a play, " perform'd in this wide gap of time since first we were dissever'd hastily lead away. " The dissevering is from reality into this play. When I say wide gap of time I shoot a quick glance at the narrator Time to show that perhaps he knew that this was a play or to show that maybe he was wiser than what he originally appeared to be.