

I learned that when you go from the script to the stage you have the freedom to add in stage directions that are not scripted. This can add to a production although I think proper timing is essential. For example, some added stage directions in Black Comedy were funny but the constant repetition of them took away from the humour.”

This is a good reflection because it gives specific information about what she has learned and why.

“I also learnt that however you interpret the play when you read it may be completely changed after seeing the play. When reading Fnashen I felt it was very long and not eventful and I could not for the life of me remember the characters names. When I went and saw the play I could connect to the individual characters and it was dramatic and intense throughout. I really enjoyed going to the production and seeing the play in a new light.”

This is a good reflection because the person shows growth and change relating to a specific event. She highlights an event and the way she felt before and the way she viewed it after.

“The bulk of my learning this week, then, comes from critiquing my work in comparison to that of the others, which I had always been told was something to not do because everyone is different. But I think in this situation, it is a good thing to compare my writing to that of the others because it will help me improve my work. This, in turn, will not help just me, but also my classmates because I will be offering them more substantial pieces to work with.”

This is a good learning reflection because she is making a claim about the quality of her work and how she has learned to improve it with the comments of others.

“This past week I have learned to be more aware of biases when going into a play - my own and others' included. Going over the different programs this week helped me realize that biases can shape your experience of a play. The director of Black Comedy's choice to emphasize the 60's made for a different experience to those audience members than if it had been set in present day. Also, the fact that the other class seemed to know about that choice helped them shape a playgoer's guide that was completely different from ours.

“This made me wonder about how, as an audience member, arriving at the play beforehand and sitting down to a play could potentially have gone four different ways here, all shaped by other people's choices about the production. There were the possible choices of doing the play straight, and sticking mostly to the script, versus their choice of adding the go-go dancers and the extreme 60's influence. And then there was our more dry, academic playgoer's guide versus their more lighthearted version. In any of these combinations, I think I would have walked away with at least a bit of a different idea of the play.”

I think this is a piece of learning because this person analyzed the act of comparing the two different versions of Playgoer's Guides, and then discussed how different choices have different results and how her experience as an audience member is directly influenced by the choices of others.

“The last thing that caught my attention, was also during the Q&A session, when the actress playing the woman in Merge said that “character growth doesn’t actually stop even after the play closes,” and this reminded me of how a piece of writing—a script, in this instance—is never really “finished” even after it’s been published. As a creative writer, I’ve known for a long time that a piece is never really finished, but it hadn’t occurred to me that just like the script, the actual embodied character evolution doesn’t stop once the play is done being produced. This was particularly enlightening because I had never made the connection between the characters as extensions of the ever-changing script so clearly before!”

This passage displays a connection between the experience seeing a play (and talking to its actors) to personal experiences. I thought this was an example of learning as this person was not only able to make a personal connection to the play, but also discussed why this experience was enlightening and changed her perception of characters and scripts.

“ . . . it was during my critical viewing of LaBute’s play that I realised just how much I had learned about theatre over the course of the semester. I found that this experience caused me to reflect on how comfortable I had become with both the scripts we were required to read for class, and interestingly, I was also taken aback by how my being

informed as to the outcome of the play no longer detracted from my viewing of a play. In fact, in the case of LaBute's *Autobahn*, I believe this theatrical knowledge enhanced the experience: it made me aware of the actors' potential for improvisations and unexpected surprises. This final play-going experience was also intellectually informative because it provided me with a concrete example of how simplistic a set could be. What this knowledge – gained through this viewing -- provided me with was a firsthand experience as to just how insignificant a set could be to the overall quality of a production – this claim of course relies on the prerequisite that the script's lines are delivered by an actor with the capacity to play the given role in question."

I think this is evidence of learning because this person compared how his play-going experience changed from the beginning of term to the end of the term. He also discussed a new realization that the lines are perhaps more important than the set of a play and how this changed his perception of seeing a play.

"Looking back at the production of *Heart's Desire* I learned that taking the work too seriously can sometimes hinder the enjoyment of it. ... We don't always get what we want in the end result when we see a play that shows us what we read."

*In this entry the author pointed out something that I found as well with *Heart's Desire*. Actually reading a play beforehand can be informative, but can also "spoil" our perception of a performance of it, especially if the director's interpretation differs from our own.*

"This week I have learned the importance of careful reading. For example this week I read the play *Hearts Desire* and it is very repetitive and I found myself skipping over the parts that repeated themselves. After doing this quick reading I went back and looked at some of the lines that were repeated and I found that some things were different like punctuation marks. While punctuation marks may not mean much when read in your head, they certainly make a difference when this play is performed. A punctuation mark can change the whole tone of a line or a scene."

*This is another thing that I encountered with *Heart's Desire*, and in this learning journal entry the author identifies something they had done, and how trying it differently yielded better results.*

"Then, however, it was brought up that their playgoer's guide could've been for a different audience. It might have been targeted at a high school audience or something, whereas ours is directed more at a university level. I had never thought of that before."

*Up until the point where Russ said that UNBSJ had envisioned *Black Comedy* to be a "teacherly" assistant for high school students; it had made no sense to me why they had chosen in their playgoer's companion to take the audience members by the hand so much — "this is what a farce is; now here's a glossary." However, as soon as that was said, it became clear that the class in St-John knew a lot more about who this play was directed to than we did, and also decided to focus on the 60s because they knew the theatre were trying to emphasize the "60s aspect" to fill-up the night, because they weren't putting on *White Lies* too. So overall, the entire context of the play itself, who it was for, and what role a playgoer's companion performs as an active piece of text changed, with that new understanding of who the audience for this play was.*

As a result, I thought this learning entry blurb was useful, because it reminded me that I had thought this was fascinating too, and had meant to write about it. It also gave more weight to the realization that "their guide was full of shallow useless stuff; while ours full of deep pompous useless stuff."

"I was pretty critical of the costumes and the lack of accents/Chinese identifiers instead of thinking outside the box. And had I seen *Black Comedy* with all the contextual information of the UNBSJ Playgoer's Guide, I would have seen a play set in the 1960s in England because that is what I would have been told, even if the facts about the '60s were not overly relevant to the plot and themes of *Black Comedy*. I think I just realized how narrow-minded I am."

The fact that the information in a playgoer's companion has the potential to so heavily influence what people think about a play, really reinforces the idea that what isn't said about a play, sometimes means more than what is said.

Moreover, the fact that playgoers' companions quote people of "authority," seems to me to perform not only the function of telling people "this is important, you need to take this seriously"—it can also restrict

people's own thoughts on a production because what is already said by someone important is so well-said that one can think "that's it; I'm sticking to this person's opinion!"
As a result, this post was interesting to me, because it reminded me that those "product placement" sort of celebrity/academic statements about a play, serve more purposes than I had anticipated at the beginning of this course.

"This week was a reflective one for me. On Wednesday, we considered what makes a good response to seeing a play, and on Friday, we compared different versions of Playgoer's Guides/Companions for one play to see of what a good example of one consisted.

"I find that every learning journal is getting harder to write because I feel like I have said everything there is to be said. I think it is because going to a play for the first time and not knowing what to expect is big, but once it gets to the fourth time, even though it's a different play, you know what to expect.

"And I have had the task force and editorial stuff done for a while and I found they were big things to write about to and now I am at a loss for words on what to put in the learning journals."

The reason I chose to focus on this seemingly insignificant entry is because I think it is one of the most honest entries -- for I myself have written terrible journal entries just to avoid saying this exact same thing. I believe it is refreshing -- every once and a while mind you -- to see an entry like this one for it makes me feel better about my own slow times with my journal entries.

"Previous to this class I thought that reading a play before seeing it would ruin the play for me however I have been pleasantly surprised that reading it just helps improve the process. An example of this is that this week I spent a lot of time thinking about what the play Fanshen would be like when I saw it. I developed a lot of preconceived thoughts about how the play should be and how the actors should do things. After seeing the play none of the things that I thought should have been there were however I wasn't disappointed. I rather enjoyed someone Else's interpretation of what I thought should be there and it really helped me see the play in a different light.

"Another thing I learned this week is that your experience at the theater can depend on who you attend with. When I went to see Fanshen I went by myself to the show. I had never attended a play before without a friend coming with me. Going by myself I found that I was more attentive to other audience members around me and seeing their reaction to the things on stage and not just my own."

The reason that I thought this entry was a good example of an individual's growth in their knowledge of theatre was because of their observation on how an individual's perception of a play can change depending on the company they bring. As an individual whose attended every play with company, I never had the chance to view a play by myself but after reading through a few of these journal entries I get the sense that seeing a play on your own can be a pretty good learning experience -- even if this solo experience is only ever thought of in relation to viewing a play with company.

"I liked going over all of the playgoer's companions to date on Wednesday. It helped me understand why Russ chose to leave in and take out certain aspects of our research, and it demonstrated what types of things I need to be looking for when it came time to researching for the task force.

"When it came to the task force, I like that I was able to see examples of good playgoers companions (on Wednesday) and was able to narrow my search for Black Comedy. When I began my research, I noticed that other people on my team already found Shaffer's biography, so I decided to find information on the play itself. I found out that it is usually paired with another play, called White Lies, but I noticed in the Heart's Desire program, all the information about Blue Kettle was left out, so I'm not sure if the work I did is going to be relevant to the editorial team.

"Even though the information may not make it into the program, I thought it would be interesting for our class (or those reading Black Comedy) to know a lot of the background of the play, and not just reviews or biographies. I know that when I researched Heart's Desire, I found the play more interesting knowing it was usually paired with

another.”

This is a good Learning Journal because I like how she expresses how she feels now about the playgoers companions and how going through them helped her understanding of what to put in them and leave out.

“One thing I learned this week is how to more successfully go about gathering information for a wiki. Research for this class is most certainly different than research that I have done for most of my other classes. Russ gave some helpful advice in terms of working as a group to find information "A suggestion: it's just as good, sometimes better, to split up _approaches_ (rather than topics) and see what you find. If you start with questions, you get answers, which may not be always the best thing to get (because they tend to finish things off). "What can we find out about . . . using this strategy" is often a way better way to go about it."

“This was helpful because I was having trouble finding information on just one aspect of Heart's Desire. Using this technique I was able to look in more broad terms and find overall useful information. Also it was helpful to hear what others in the class, who are more familiar with Churchill, have to say about her and her writing. Searching "Blue Heart" or "Heart's Desire and Blue Heart" made it much easier to find information and choose for myself what might be useful for the Wiki.

“I am looking forward to seeing the STU production of this play. It was certainly very strange and i'm hoping seeing it on stage will help clarify it for me.”

This reflection I found very thoughtful because she does not only described what she learned, she also described what she was having trouble with too.

“For this weekly journal I have chosen to focus on my experience of seeing my last play for the semester: Neil LaBute's *Autobahn*. The reason I chose to focus on this topic was because it was during my critical viewing of LaBute's play that I realised just how much I had learned about theatre over the course of the semester. I found that this experience caused me to reflect on how comfortable I had become with both the scripts we were required to read for class, and interestingly, I was also taken aback by how my being informed as to the outcome of the play no longer detracted from my viewing of a play. In fact, in the case of LaBute's *Autobahn*, I believe this theatrical knowledge enhanced the experience: it made me aware of the actors' potential for improvisations and unexpected surprises. This final play-going experience was also intellectually informative because it provided me with a concrete example of how simplistic a set could be. What this knowledge – gained through this viewing -- provided me with was a firsthand experience as to just how insignificant a set could be to the overall quality of a production – this claim of course relies on the prerequisite that the script's lines are delivered by an actor with the capacity to play the given role in question.

In closing, what this week provided me with was a chance to further utilise and tweak the tools I have acquired this semester in my ongoing journey to further gain a better appreciation for theatre.”

I found this particular learning journal to be well done because it focuses on the influence the play had on the student, as well as the plays connection to everyone's everyday life. He focused on something that not only did he learn, but something that he's going to take away from seeing the production. It improved his learning (going to see the play) and impacted his life.

“This week, my learnings came from two experiences. First one- was reading Fanshen. I said this before but I noticed it gets more obvious as a read more plays. I feel as if my eyes have developed a filter when I read them. There are two conscious listeners in my head. The first one is paying attention to the plot, analyzing the characters, how they compel the story, what is the point being made, or what is relevant about this piece. This used to be the one conscious listener that I had before taking this class. In other words, this part of me is more concerned with the themes of the play itself. The other listener however is more technical. He is looking for the form of the text itself and its potential for a show on stage. This is the part of me that is constantly visualizing how all this that I am reading, will look on stage, and what would be required to make it look like that, and what are the variations that one can find, because with practice you start noticing where the directors can fill the blanks.

“The second one allows me to anticipate my experience of watching the play. If I wouldn't have read the play, there

is a chance I would have known at least the synopsis (whether I heard it from a friend or I looked it up online) something more related to the theme, and no matter how interesting this may sound, if the cast and crew didn't put together a good vision of this script, the show will be disappointing.

"My other learning experience was, by reading a wiki (Black Comedy) without being part of the informed audience. This was an excellent opportunity to analyze, as part of the audience, what I will like to hear about a play I know nothing about. So when reading all the information I found extremely interesting the fact that there is an interesting play with the lights. This is something particular about this play that it is technical but it definitely has an impact on the theme of the play, and what is intriguing about it, is that the director is the one who can make a decision on how to make this work towards whatever the theme is. I don't even know what the theme is, and to be honest, I don't know if I want to know until I watch it. It made me think, because when writing playgoers companion we always want to cover background information because it's essential, and we assume that theme almost always falls into that category, but no. In this case, I am thrilled to go watch (although I am not L)just by knowing the particularity of the play and maybe a little information about the plot.

"Being an audience made me realize what a thin line there is between giving out a really good piece of information, and giving away information that will take away from the experience of watching."

I found this particular learning journal to be well doing because it demonstrates how the course has developed her knowledge and understanding of being an informed playgoer. The more plays that we go see, and the more we look into the plays, the more we will understand the importance of knowing as much about the play as possible before going into it.

"this week i learned alot about the task force, and how disorganized then can get. After this experience i do not not enjoy working in groups. I thought our group was going to all work good togeather and get all the work done but that was not the case. only two of us were there to present for both days so that took away alot for presetations becasue we did not have much to talk about.

"while doing the task force though i learned alot about neil and his play. he seems to be a very interesting man. i enjoyed learning that he enjoys everyday conversation becasue i look at the play in total different way now becasue of this. you kind of no how he came up with the unique idea of the play. i look forward to seeing the play next week.

"This week i was also a part of an editorial team. this was quite difficult as well. we all worked good together and everyone got there work done but its hard to decide whats important for a playgoers guide and what isnt."

I considered this to be an important learning journal because it discusses the struggles we've had to face in the class, as well as what we've taken away from it. It is always difficult working in a group, as we found out with the Fanshen taskforce. It is important to stay on top of your work not only for yourself, but because you're counting on your group as much as they are counting on you. She also discussed what she learnt about researching the play.