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Poppy Norton-Taylor

Mary Murphy

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POPPY NORTON-TAYLOR

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Theatre and Dance
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Mary Murphy

April 2016

By signing your name below, you affirm that this work is the complete and final version of your paper submitted in partial fulfillment of a degree from the University of Mary Washington. You affirm the University of Mary Washington honor pledge: "I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."

Mary Margaret Murphy


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary M. Murphy", written in a cursive style.


04/28/16

*Performing Poppy Norton-Taylor in
Noises Off*


submitted to the Department of Theatre & Dance
in fulfillment of THEA 482: Senior Project

<http://poppynorton.umwblogs.org/>


Mary Margaret Murphy


Gregg Stull, Project Advisor

AWARDED HONORS IN THEATRE, 2016


Gregg Stull, Chair
April 22, 2016



UNIVERSITY OF
MARY WASHINGTON

Department of
Theatre and Dance

Poppy Norton-Taylor

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Poppy Norton-Taylor: Assistant Stage Manager for Nothing On.

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The Beginning

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on August 27, 2015

Tonight we had our Read Through of the play. First thoughts are of pure excitement; with everyone in the room the enthusiasm was tangible. Second thoughts are of a slight terror- we have a three weeks. The play is highly physically demanding which means the scripts need to go from our hands as soon as possible. I need to fully befriend my character without hesitation. I need to figure out her spine; everyone has a spine-it's what he or she is built around. It is the thing that makes them tick or keeps them going till the end. Who is Poppy? What does she want? Why does she want it? Where is she going? Where has she been? These are only a few of the questions I need to hold at the forefront of my mind. Dialect will also be an important part of this play. Important in the way of ease, not in the sense of "this is a play that has a dialect." It must be second nature, and fast. That's the challenge to make a habit of something in a short time. So it is pertinent that I utilize every opportunity to rehearse my accent. My roommates have been warned and I have successfully ordered my dinner with an accent. So here's to driving my roommates absolutely bonkers and convincing more cashiers. And here's to my dear friend Poppy Norton-Taylor. Cheers.

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One Response to *The Beginning*



Anonymous

August 27 2015

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Team Building

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 7, 2015

We spent our first Saturday rehearsal doing team-building activities. The initial activity involved us tossing a ball and calling out each other's character names. This helped get to know the character names as well as the actor's characters names. It also helped with concentration, especially when multiple balls were tossed into the mix. The next exercise we did was a game called "this is a what?". We passed around an object informing each other of what it was, 'this is a what?' -'a sardine' -'a what?'- 'a sardine' until the object made it completely around the circle. This was beneficial for attentiveness and also the usage of the word 'what' because it supposed to be pronounced with an 'h' in front of the 'w'. Then we built a complicated Lego house; first without directions (which was extremely difficult) and then Dalton (playing Lloyd) received the directions. He directed us in the building of the house and we became much more successful. It was all very fitting. The last thing we took part in was the constructing of a giant domino course. It was both humorous and a bit frustrating when we would accidentally knock over the dominos. But we were all in it together and we all wanted to succeed. Everyone took it seriously and wanted to reach the end goal. We all wanted to figure out the best way to go about building the course and we learned as we went. We became a team, working together for one solid goal. This will help us immensely as a cast, we all want to work together and help each other out. We are here to learn and create all of us together, as a unit. And I know we can and will create something wonderful.

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Stumble Through II

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 7, 2015

A stumble through is a great way to get a feel for a scene. But there is also a reason it's called a "stumble through". Act II as a whole is the most complicated Act. I had a previous mapping of myself during this act but there are a lot of moments where I have find where I am. As the process progresses you learn a lot about your character, but it is nice to have a general idea of what to do and why do it. It is a good outline and you strengthen objectives and make more discoveries as it goes. One thing that struck me after this particular stumble through is the notion that Tim and I are a direct team. I am there to help him and make his job easier, I am his assistant, I am there to make sure the show runs smoothly. These are all true for an Assistant Stage Manager but I am also faced with the obstacle that I found out I am pregnant that morning. It is struggle of Poppy the Assistant Stage Manager and Poppy the person. This is intensified when I see Lloyd, I know I have duties to be fulfilled and a show to run but I also need to inform him of my/our circumstances. I need to go through and mark where I am Poppy the person is figuring out her own life and Poppy the Stage Manger is running the show. I have a lot to work on in Act II, I think especially when it comes to finding my place.

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Dialect Work

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 7, 2015

On Wednesday I had my first dialect lesson. When I rehearsed my lines with Helen I was out of tone. This is something for me to focus on. I will not have a microphone so it is pertinent that I can be heard, and being in tone is much better for my instrument. I need to work on making my mouth a larger reverse megaphone; so I have a larger opening for my vowels. I also will find moments to call when I am stage-managing. My accent is more lower class than RP, which actually would make sense. As a stage manager I would not have the same vocal training as the actors, so my way of talking can be a bit lower class. There are times where I will have more of a true RP dialect. For example when I make the front of house calls, RP would translate better and be more professional. There are a few words that I misplaced emphasis such as 'Seldom' and 'circumstances'. I have a few things to work on and being in tone is an absolute priority.

In Uta Hagen's book *Respect for Acting* she talks about how the "foreign accent" should not be foreign at all. It should feel as natural as possible. She says she would watch movies with people who talked the way she was supposed to talk. I thoroughly enjoy BBC so I will be more conscious when I watch a show or movies. In addition, I nanny three days a week and often read for at least two hours while nannying. I mentioned to the mother that I needed to rehearse my accent. I asked if I might occasionally read with the accent. She was thrilled and told me that I may speak with my accent the whole of my nannying time. I have never felt more like Mary Poppins in my life.

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Stumble III

Posted by [murphy3](#) on September 13, 2015

Stumble though Act III. This is the last leg of the tour and possibly one of the most stressful shows Poppy has ever had to stage-manage. The actors are fighting more than ever. Everything is out of her control, I am backstage with Tim and we are both at a loss. The actors are not calling for lines so I cannot just give them a line without being asked. Tim coerces me onto stage at the end and this is the first time I actually make an appearance in front of an audience with this show. Although I am terrified, I go along with it.

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Working Act I

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 13, 2015

Though my character work has helped me formulate objectives for my lines and movements, there are still so many questions to be asked and answered. These questions are going to be so helpful in opening up ideas about my character that I might never have considered. My primary objectives right now are to learn how to be more independent in my process, to ask more thought-provoking, intelligent questions about my character, and to arrive at the strongest answers. Reading and re-reading the script has proven to be the best way to discover Poppy's layers and applying those discoveries in rehearsal too.

About rehearsal: we spent Saturday working Act I, which helped me realize the importance of establishing clear relationships among the characters that make sense and can be applied to later events in the play. I had previously mentioned being more 'flirty,' but I have decided that 'infatuated' is a better word to use. There are people that you 'fall' for, without knowing why or how this spell-like hold came about, you just know it's there, and sometimes the more unfounded and imaginary the relationship, the more exciting it is for the one whose love is unrequited. This is because her imagination is more promising than a 'real-life' relationship, which only intensifies her feelings. Unrequited love can turn into an obsession for attention, for being noticed. All in all, in Act I, Poppy is completely and utterly infatuated with Lloyd. However, his cruel quips and jabs force her to come to terms with reality, if only briefly, for she soon finds her way back to 'Cloud 9' as quickly as she's been dragged down.

Poppy knows her place and it is not on the stage. It is away from the spotlight, the actual stage is the actor's space. She must get her jobs done and do what is necessary without disturbing the actor's process. She will do anything and everything - not only because it's her job but because Lloyd needs her. He may not want her, and he may dismiss her but Poppy takes solace in the fact that he does need her. Although, Lloyd personally doesn't make Poppy feel important, the fact that she is needed does.

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Do it for the Sardines

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 18, 2015

Last night was a week until opening. We have worked hard to get where we are but we are not there yet. We have a lot to do- a lot of little things to work on. But the little things are crucial, the 'little things' become big things. Every cast I have been in here I have adored, but this cast especially makes me want to push myself further and do better. I want to create the best theatre possible with them. We are a team and must function as one. We are all so fortunate to have been given this opportunity, the opportunity to work on such a hilarious and incredible play together.

Gregg has talked about 'giving' and how important it is to be giving our fellow actors something to work with. It is such a beautiful gift (and essential) to give another actor something to work off of. Although we have all been working extremely hard the time is passing fast and we must give it everything we've got and more. This last week requires complete and utter focus. As Gregg phrased it, it's time 'to light the fire' so let us light the fire and prepare for fireworks.

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Interviews with Stage Managers

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 18, 2015

To get a better understanding and perspective on what it is like to be a stage manager I asked three very busy UMW stage managers for a few moments of their time.

This is some of what I learned:

Actors are fragile but they're also not, you have to treat them a bit more gently than you would your team. They must feel that everything is okay. Many actors do not like to be out of the loop- but they also must be kept calm so wording is extremely important. The mood of rehearsals and shows are set by the stage managers, it is important to check in with the actors to make sure they're doing well. You also need to be able to balance people. You will be dealing with all sorts of different personality types. Stage managers must be flexible, they must be able to think fast and come up with solutions. There's a problem? Okay, problem solved. A common thread throughout the stage managers was you must always anticipate but never assume. This is a very fine line. A major job of a stage manager is to think of possible problems and preempt them.

Your management team is your ally. An ASM is not an assistant to the stage manager you are a unit team. Work together and communicate well to make sure everything runs smoothly (something that Poppy and Tim lack in Act II and it's evident). There has to be trust present. You always take accountability and never blame. You address problems without accusation. You have to figure out logistics, in addition to being able to juggle many things at a time you must always be available mentally and physically. Different directors will work differently with their management team. (In rehearsal Gregg once mentioned that some directors treat management like the employed help)

All in all, I learned that being a stage manager is a selfless position. They do not do it for applause; it is a pretty thankless position. The list of responsibilities of a stage managers is endless. Sometimes even if something is 'not your job' technically- it becomes your job. You have to be extremely prepared; this is a job that does not accept procrastination. Basically, being a stage manager is hard work and they are incredible human beings.

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Anticipate but Never Assume

Posted by [murphy3](#) on September 18, 2015

While working Act II I realized I have some specific characteristics to work on. Stage management is being calm, but also full of energy. It is not that stage managers don't get stressed, it's that they don't show it. They have this demeanor that everything will be all right, so Poppy is forever hopeful. I have my objectives big and small. The grand objective is that I get this show up and running. Especially as a stage manager I have the smaller objectives that I need to check off. The things I need to accomplish for the show to go well. In this act things are not going as planned, many problems arise but I cannot play it gloom and doom- because it is boring, unrealistic and the audience will check out. They will know what's going to happen before it even happens. No one is on the edge of his or her seats- because everything has been given away. It is far more interesting to wonder what is going through a persons mind. The creator of *Finding Nemo*, Andrew Stanton once said in a ted talk "the audience actually wants to work for their meal. They just don't want to know that they're doing that. That's your job as a storyteller, is to hide the fact that you're making them work for their meal." I believe this is applicable to plays as well. So why as an actor would I give them everything? People say one thing and mean something completely different. They hide their true feelings and that makes layers, it makes people interesting. As a stage manger no matter how scared I may be on the inside I would not be 'gloom and doom'. Doty may not be ready to go on...but she has never missed an entrance before. So she will probably go on- but then again I must prepare incase she doesn't. It is a balancing act. I have a separate post more in depth about my stage manager interviews but a common notion between all of them was 'anticipate but never assume.'

In this act there is a huge internal struggle for Poppy. She literally just found out she was pregnant that morning. This is completely life altering for her. Although she had been skeptical for the last month and a half this was confirmation. Poppy is having the most stressful day of her life- but she is determined to be the best stage manger she can be and leave her own troubles at the door. She has a show to run after all. So she places her problems behind her...and then she comes into contact with Lloyd. "I didn't know you were here!" she proclaims, hopeful that he is her knight in shining armor coming to save the day. She has been trying to get in contact with him without success - in this act Poppy is torn between running the show and informing Lloyd of the circumstances at hand. As the show goes on the stakes get higher because once the show ends Lloyd could leave right away leaving Poppy where she was before- a one sided conversation on answering machines.

Posted under [Working Act II](#)
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Tech and IDR

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on September 28, 2015

Tech week has been an absolute rush; consequently, I will be playing catchup with my postings.

After the first run through, I was scared. We made it through the entire show without holding...but it was not where it needed to be. I felt I had a lot to do, but all of us were so determined to do whatever it took. This cast is so uplifting and encouraging of one another. We want to push each other to be the best artists we can be. I want to be my best and they want to be their best. Because of this every time we ran through the show it we gained a few leaps closer to where it needed to be. I say leaps because if we only took steps we would not be able to make this show the show we want it to be.

Act II is an extremely complicated act- there is so much going on. You have to be both focused and immersed completely in the moment. There needs to be a strong sense of urgency throughout the beginning of the act. Something that helped me was using the body NRG of radiancey. That excited bubbling up feeling- anticipation. I needed to work on raising the stakes (if I don't get these actors on stage there will be no show) I also had to keep in mind that just because something is pressing or urgent does not mean, 'talk faster'. Talk sooner, not faster. I need to be understood and intelligible. What is the use of hard work if you can't even be heard?

I must admit there was a point I became a bit lax in my vocal warm up. I quickly realized that I absolutely could not do that. Along with a body warm up- I have to do a full, thorough vocal warm up. I have to warm up my voice properly not only so I am audible, but for my vocal health.

Throughout tech week we have all grown an incredible amount and I think I have personally connected with Poppy more quickly and intensely than the previous weeks. I went through a period where Poppy was this person that was a separate being from me. The more time I have spent with her the more I have noticed our similarities and have made some new discoveries. There are times where I understand her so much better than I ever thought I could. She has these moments where she realizes what's happening in her own life. There are times where we have the task at hand and we handle it. We get busy running around and we do the things we need to do, constantly distracting ourselves. Then the chaos stops and we are faced to stare our own monsters in the face. There are moments when it all becomes too much, and there are moments to be strong. Discovering different levels of Poppy is a privilege.

Going into the IDR I was so excited to have an audience, and audience is such a necessary entity and even though I still felt there were things to improve upon- I wanted spectators. I wanted the conversation, I wanted that relationship. And I'm excited to see how this run goes and how I will continue this growth which I have felt so deeply.

After IDR: I'm not sure how large the audience was, but they found this play funny! This IDR was important because it helped remind me of a few key things. Ex: the importance of concentration in the world of the play and that our play will get slowed down quiet a bit because of laughs. Which is great! Watch for laughs and have a sense of awareness but never anticipate them. The level of commitment must be raised and our internal energy can never drop- the interactions from the audience helps to create a complete otherworldly energy.

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Performance I

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 2, 2015

Preshow. AHHH. I cannot believe it's here. It feels like it has been so long and gone so fast at the same time. Nerves are here, but that's okay. I think nerves are good. They are nerves of excitement not fear and I will allow for their energy but I will not allow them to control me. I will leave them at the door and play Poppy. I'm confused...didn't we just have our first read through yesterday?

We huddled together as a cast before going on- FOR THE SARDINES.

Post show: God that was so fun. I love this show, I love this cast, and I love everything and everyone who has put their time into this production. I had the best time tonight and I cannot wait to do this again tomorrow. I am so pumped for this run. The audience was amazing and I am so proud of my cast mates, the stage management team and run crew for doing such an incredible job. We have come so far and I cannot wait for us to keep getting tighter and better and putting on the best show we possibly can! I want to be the absolute best I can be. I want Poppy to be represented fully.

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Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 6, 2015

Poppy Norton-Taylor

Who am I:

My name is Poppy Marie Norton-Taylor. I am twenty-three years old and I am currently living with my parents at their estate in Lymington, Hampshire. My entire family loves the theater; I have been attending for as long as I can remember. My grandmother has taken me to the theatre every time I was home on holiday from boarding school and even through my university years. I love to read plays; the words are what I love the most. Then to see the words come alive on stage is exhilarating. I also thoroughly enjoy writing. I love to dance, and do have some formal training- I don't think I could act because I get nervous talking in front of people. But when I dance, I feel as if I can still tell a story; but I don't have to worry about blundering a playwright's carefully chosen words. After university I fantasized that I would dance, but it became obvious that I'm not the kind of girl for that line of work. It is a very difficult field; I suppose I don't exactly meet the traditional standards. I'm nearsighted and must always wear glasses; I cannot handle glass contacts because I break them too easily. They scare me, what if it breaks in your eye? And if I lose my eyes how will I read? I was also much smaller than the other girls at auditions, so if I happened to be placed in the back I would disappear. So I just spent a few months riding my horses and taking care of my kittens. I also did a lot of reading. I have a few friends from university but we mostly only write. It's difficult for them to visit. I bake a lot. I don't think people should argue, only converse in disagreement. I cry easily. I've always "felt things deeper than most," as my mother says. My family is not particularly religious, but sometimes I feel like life would be easier in a convent than with my parents. They relentlessly remind me to do more with my life. Because I've never had a boyfriend, they assume I won't be married off anytime soon. My mother was already married at this point in her life. And as much as I hate to say it, I do need to keep busy somehow. Well now, my father's firm chooses a show to sponsor every year, and this year they chose *Nothing On* by Robin Housemonger. Because they are sponsoring, he got me a job. I'm going to be an assistant stage manager; it sounds simple enough. I follow along with the book and cue things like lights and give the actors lines if they need them. I also am in charge of all the props (many of which my mother has donated) and it all sounds rather exciting. I am going to shadow my father's good friend who is a stage manager and get a taste of what it's like. I'm thrilled to have this project, but a big benefit is that I will be working with Lloyd Dallas. He's so dreamy and successful and I cannot wait to meet him. I'll have plenty of time to get to know him since we will be on tour for twelve weeks. Who knows? Maybe it won't just be the start of my career, but the start of something more...

ACT I:

What time is it:

Grand Theatre, Weston-super-Mare. Behind the stage, at my desk until I am called to the stage to receive direction. Once I receive direction I go to the dressing room, prop room, etc.

I met Lloyd about a month ago and I thought he took a fancy to me. We started rehearsal New Year's Day and most of the cast was not in shape to rehearse; now we are two weeks into rehearsal and a few hours away from opening. It's the middle of the night, January 14th, everyone is tired but we must power through!

ACT II

The winter has been a bitter one. It's February 13th, 14:00 in the afternoon. It also happens to be the day before Valentine's Day. I am tired and could not sleep last night.

Theatre Royal, Ashton-under-Lyne. I had just gone to the doctor, a little family-run practice, to see if my suspicions were true. They are. I'm pregnant.

Municiple Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees. April 11th still cold and wet.

What surrounds me:

The actors surround me awaiting their entrances; I have my book with all the light, prop and actor cues and blocking. I have my two microphones: one for front of house and one for the dressing room. I have my clipboard with all my preshow/post show tasks and any reminders I may need. I have my headset so I can keep in touch with the rest of the crew including lights and music.

Given circumstances:

ACT I

We open tomorrow and I know Lloyd is especially on edge; he's been quite short with me. I know that he must be extremely stressed. I'm a few weeks late but I have also been really stressed- so it's probably nothing. I must focus at the task at hand- doing anything and everything I can to help Lloyd and also Tim. We have been in rehearsals for two weeks and we open tomorrow (tonight). I've done everything in my power- I've done all the props and I helped Tim put up the set. I'm calling light cues and we keep on holding. I have my blocking notes in case we need them. It's the technical but all the props have finally been introduced today. It's a little difficult on the actors and I wish I could do more to help. I found out Lloyd has been sleeping with Brooke Aston, the actress who plays Vicki. I don't know what to think. We're together. He slept with me over two weeks ago. I was there first. He liked me first. How could he do that? After I found out, he came to talk to me- he said it was all just actor talk. I suppose actors do have creative imaginations. Belinda loves to have new information so they could have been getting a coffee and then she just assumed they're having a little thing. That's probably it.

ACT II

I've been trying to contact Lloyd. I've left him at least ten voicemails- I filled up his box. I have to tell him what's going on. I'm about two months late now, so I went to the doctors this morning. My worst fears were confirmed. I'm pregnant. I arrived at the theatre a little later than I was supposed to. I had to take a moment to process. Now I must leave all my own troubles at the door; I do have a show to run. I'm not going to let this affect my work- my father said a stage manager is the glue in any production. When I arrive, there are major upsets going on- Dotty and Garry are fighting again. It seems worse than ever, Dotty won't speak to anyone, not even Belinda or me. Dotty is a professional and along with my father she has a lot of money in the show. She would never miss a show- if I call beginners she'll be ready in no time. Get the actors on stage. Get the show started. Call cues. Don't think about this morning. We find whisky on the stage so I have to go hide that from Selsdon. The last thing I need is to put a drunken actor on stage. We cannot find him so I have to look for him and make sure he's being good. Tim and I aren't communicating as well as normal so he did a few of my calls thinking I was out. Lloyd shows up and I am completely thrown. I have a show to run but I need to tell him about this baby. If I don't tell him now, will I ever get the chance again? I thought we had something special but I haven't heard from him at all since going on tour. I know he's busy with *Richard III* but this is about his unborn child! Every time I see him I turn into putty. I get butterflies I wish I could squash. I wish I could blurt it out but how do you even begin to say that? Maybe this is exactly what I needed...maybe he's always wanted a family and he's been secretly hoping for something like this to happen. I will run this show- but first chance I get, I am telling him. I am having his baby. And he needs to know.

ACT III

Last time I talked to Lloyd he was cold and wanted nothing to do with this baby or me. I told my parents and I thought they would never speak to me again, but they're coming around. This is the last show- everyone just wants to get through it. We all want to be done with this tour. After this show I will have successfully finished out my first job. I do not think I am cut out to be a stage manager. I'm going to live abroad with my aunt to finish out my pregnancy and figure out the next chapter. Get through the show- that's what I keep saying to myself.

Relationships:

My father is a huge fan of Dotty Otley and he often chooses to sponsor her shows. I greatly respect her. I've seen some of Belinda's shows and I think she's a talent. She is also what I would call the 'mother of the cast.' She really seems to care about everyone involved. She likes to share information she finds about the cast, and it's pretty interesting. She never is malicious with her information — she simply shares what she knows! I think she's lovely; she has definitely helped me when I've needed it. I'm glad to have her. Garry is pleasant to me but I know he and Dotty have had a few quarrels and, well, I simply cannot help thinking it's his fault. Frederick is an exceedingly polite person. The poor man has the most outrageous habit of getting nosebleeds. Now to Ms. Ashton. I really had no problems with her. I've never seen her in anything, poor girl is always losing her contacts. I'm impressed with anyone who can wear glass contacts. She's really pretty and I didn't think anything of it, until Belinda mentioned that Lloyd and Brooke had a thing. I didn't want to believe it but sometimes it seems like she blatantly rubs it in my face. She is awful and the more I'm around her the more I'm reminded of Lloyd. I thought Lloyd and I had something special, I thought he was going to be my first (maybe even last) real grownup relationship. He gave me attention once, even if it was short-lived. I want to talk things out with him but how can you talk to someone who won't call you back? Now I'm pregnant with his baby and I need his help. I need him to know.

Relationships to events:

I know that I am a key component to this show. I am here to make sure all goes smoothly. I must make sure all the props are where they need to go, I need to cue the lights, I have to cue the music, and when necessary I must cue the actors. I have to make sure this is the show Lloyd intended to run.

I want attention from Lloyd. I want to be the best stage manager I can be. I want to fix problems. I want Lloyd to listen to me; I want to tell him about my baby. I want to do a good job and make the show run smoothly. I want everyone to get along. I need Dotty to get out of her dressing room to go on stage. I have a few things I feel I need to prove to my parents and myself. I need to prove I can be a grownup and have a grownup job. I can solve my own problems and the problems of others.

What is in my way:

Lloyd won't give me the attention I want. He will not return my calls, or my messages. When I finally see him in person he keeps getting distracted and won't hear me out. I also have a show to run so I cannot abandon that. And then there's Brooke who keeps getting in my way. Every time I turn around to finally have my say, there she is.

As far as the show goes, I make my way to the dressing rooms to rally the troops. Then I make the calls, because Doty has never been late after beginners. I call the cues and help the actors to go on. And as far as Lloyd is concerned? I've called him numerous times. I've even written him letters. I tell Lloyd I need to talk to him; I even take him aside so we can speak in private. In the end I realize that this may be the last time I see him so I leave my book and corner him. He has to listen to me- there are no more distractions, this is the moment. I tell him my peace. I am having a baby.

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Thoughts on Weekend I

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 6, 2015

One of the things I love most about theatre is it is ever changing. No two nights are the same. It's fleeting, the moment is there and then it disappears- but it leaves something behind. It leaves behind a feeling, it leaves behind a memory it leaves an imprint of some sort. In any given moment, people are more likely to remember what they felt than the words that were spoken. This is such a joyful show and full of hilarity. I spoke to someone this week and they said they had never been to a show before seeing *Noises Off*. In their entire twenty plus years of existence they had never been to any type of theatre- this is not a completely uncommon occurrence for a college campus. But they loved it; I hope they will be inspired to continually come back to the theatre. I hope we had the honor of making a lasting impression. Every single time we do the show it seems to improve, I can feel Poppy becoming more and more real every time. There we're times where I was unsure if we could pull it off...but we are doing it and loving every moment of it.

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Weekend II

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 6, 2015

Before Thursday night we had an 'Italian Run' it was a necessary refresher. Monday and Tuesday had felt strange to not run the show. At first I thought we may only have a read through and that made me nervous because this is such an action oriented show. I felt it would throw me off. An incredible amount of movement is involved so simply running lines would not have been as beneficial. In the Italian run we went as fast as we could without losing the lines or sacrificing our intelligibility. It was good to know we were in shape to start the second weekend and it was so fun. It definitely helped to reestablish the rhythm that is pertinent to this show. Thursday went rather smoothly but I felt, as most of the cast did, that we could get tighter and even more in sync. As the weekend went on, we did.

As an actor being in the present moment is crucial, especially for this show. Things could go wrong and have to be fixed. One performance multiple pieces of glass fell to the ground when Selsdon came through the window so I had to be extra fast and efficient at putting the glass back. Then on the Saturday matinee Belinda's shoe fell off as she was going up the stairs to make her entrance. Rather than leaving the shoe on the stairs I retrieved her shoe and put it on Poppy's desk. It may not have been my 'blocking' but it needed to be done and it was the stage manger thing to do. Also, the sardines would go every which way in this act and tracking them down was completely different every time. I found some more moments throughout the entirety of the run for example Brooke and Poppy gained a much clearer relationship. These moments helped to justify Poppy's dismay even more so. Doty and Poppy continued finding times of shared misery. Every time we did Act II it felt better. Closing day Act II was the smoothest of all. The growth of the play did not stop after tech- it continued on through the entire run. This play, this wonderful play, I truly believe has helped me to be a more present, flexible and aware actor. These are skills that are so important and I am beyond grateful to have been able to improve upon them.

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Poppy Personality Analysis

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 10, 2015

People with different personality traits respond to situations in different ways.

Poppy is introverted, she is sensing, she is feeling and she looks at situations in a judging perspective. Not judgmental but she judges by observing and deciding what needs to be done. She is humble and often times the things she does go unnoticed. Because of her personality it is easier for people who are selfish and even manipulative to take advantage. She is extremely supportive and is more likely to use empathy than judgment. She has an instinctually reliable and patient nature. She takes directions well and likes to go beyond what is asked. She is exceedingly loyal and this causes her to get emotionally attached easily. She often makes sure the needs of others are taken care of ahead of her own. The standards she sets for herself are high and she often downplays her successes. Because of her set standards she takes everything that may go wrong in a situation as her fault. Any failings affect her sensitive nature personally. When she has strong feelings, often she cannot voice them properly and struggles with emotional expression. Too much or too little, explosive outburst of emotion can occur because of the built up extreme frustration. She would do anything for her romantic partner and all she would want in return is affection and love. Which is why Poppy falls so hard for Lloyd in the first place. She would do anything asked in hopes of some affection in return. If she does not received the desired affection she sees it as a personal flaw- not a reflection of the person she longs for. Which is one of the reasons no matter how standoffish Lloyd becomes she is still loyal to her feelings towards him. It's a matter of what she needs to change, not what he needs to do. She makes excuses for him and criticizes herself. Even after an absurd amount of time of not hearing from him she has glimmers of optimism that maybe he will accept her...and their baby.

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Tracking Outline

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 29, 2015

A character is always coming from and going somewhere. When a person enters a room they have a purpose for doing so, they have something they need to accomplish. We do not walk around aimlessly for no reason, there's always a purpose. There is an end goal in mind. After getting my script I started a 'tracking outline'. To help me with my objectives, I outlined where Poppy was at every part of the play, where she was coming from where she was going etc. I started the tracking at the beginning of my process and added throughout.

These are note from my binder:

It is a technical rehearsal, making sure the music cues and lighting cues are successful and any problems with the set or props I am ready to fix in addition to taking line notes.

I hear my name called and the dialogue between actors stopped, so I know that something is going on.

I notice there is talk of the sardines- maybe they have gone bad? I leave my book and go on stage to see what I can do to help. Lloyd asks for 'four grilled turbot' but I don't understand because the play calls for sardines- how will I find these fish by tomorrow? What do I do will all the sardines? Then Garry is saying that we need to take the bags and boxes and everything else away. I may have a lot to fix by tomorrow.

Lloyd asks me if I understand, though I do not completely- I'm dismissed so I leave the sardines and head back to my book.

As I am following along with the lines and calling the cues, there is another hold up. I am called to the stage so I leave my book and go as fast as I can to fix the problem. The actors keep fuddling with the doors when I come on stage. Lloyd says 'be fruitful and multiply...' but how does he know I'm late? I leave to get Tim after receiving directions. Tim was asleep in the dressing room. I Tell Tim he needs to fix the doors and I go back to my book.

Everyone is calling for Selsdon. And then I am called to the stage again- Lloyd asks me if I've seen him. When I went to retrieve Tim from the dressing rooms I didn't see Selsdon so I run off to check again. I look in every single possible room and he is nowhere to be found. I relay the information to Lloyd and he tells me to ring the police.

I call the police and tell them we've lost an elderly gentleman and there is a possibility he's intoxicated. They inform me that they have found an old man in the doorway across from the theatre. They say he is very dirty and smells horribly. Not just of booze, but a stale stench as well. They have brought him to the station. I say I will pick him up in a few minutes. I go to the stage to tell Lloyd and then I start to smell Selsdon I turn around he may have heard me 'oh my god did he hear me?' At first I don't know but he did not seem to hear everything. He says something about 'the smell of the theatre.' He leaves and I'm in the clear. Then Lloyd asks me how I got this job. My dad did help me get hired, but I'm the one actually doing the work! Then he remarks about how I'm no ones girlfriend. All I can say to myself is 'don't cry in front of the actors Poppy- don't cry.' As I'm leaving, Belinda stops to comfort me about Selsdon. I tell her I'm fine. I am responsible for the mood of this production. I Am. Fine. I leave to tell the police I will not actually be picking up that old man. Then I return to my book to continue with my duties.

The act has come to a halt and I here them calling 'left one' Brooke must have lost her contact. Poor dear is always losing her contacts! I go out to look with the rest of the company. Find Brooke's contact, go on with rehearsal, finish rehearsal and give darling Lloyd a break. I am careful not to step on it- Freddie says something then I see Lloyd and I steal a glance. Then Brooke comes tumbling into me and my papers go everywhere. I must pick them all up- then Freddie gets a nosebleed so I tend to him (I am a nosebleed expert). I lead Freddie off stage so he can compose himself before his next entrance. I return to my book.

There is silence on stage- that is never a good thing. Lloyd calls out for Selsdon and he eventually makes it to the stage. Lloyd is asking him to stop but Selsdon must not hear. I'm fearful Lloyd will blow up if we have another long hold up so I peek out from the wings to help things along- I need to get Selsdon to hold it. He eventually catches on, what a sweet man. Then Lloyd dismisses me without so much as a smile. I suppose he could still be mad about the whole Selsdon mix up earlier. He calls me back only to have me put the glass back in the window. So I do; anything for Lloyd. I start to feel a little queasy so I run to the restroom after I

put the glass back. I return to my desk right as Selsdon calls for line. I know Selsdon's lines best of anyone's. He's a brilliant actor he just needs a bit of line help now and again.

We are going pretty strongly almost completely done with the act when there's another interruption- I give the needed line. Then I am asked to bring out the book, I come out with the book but this is not a normal stop. It feels weird. Awkward. I show the book to Lloyd and then he starts to rail on Brooke. I don't know what to do. I want to leave but Lloyd may need something else. Poor Brooke begins to cry so Lloyd runs after her. Then Belinda reveals that Brooke and Lloyd have spent the whole weekend together. She says that they are having a thing. How can this be? How is this possible? How could he do that to me? Then the queasy rush comes back I have to go. I get sick. Lloyd comes out and tells me him and Brooke are nothing, I don't know what to believe. I have trouble giving Selsdon his needed line, so I come back out with the book. I have to call lights so I run back.

I am running late because I had to go to the doctor before the matinee; I am pregnant. I need to focus on the show. I have received news from Tim that Dotty won't come out of her dressing room. I try myself, she won't leave her room. I call beginners; Dotty always is the first one ready after I call beginners. I go to check the plates of sardines and make sure all are accounted for. Then Tim tells me if we don't get Dotty I'll have to go on. I need to get Dotty on stage. Also, if I focus on the show I won't think about myself as much.

I went to the dressing rooms but am unsuccessful so I enlist Belinda to help. I need to do the front of house calls- I am running behind schedule. I come out and find money and whisky. Selsdon has been hiding them everywhere back stage and now he is hiding them on the stage. I have to hide that before moving on, I go to the lavatories and to reprimand Selsdon. I can't find him.

I go to see if Belinda knows where he may be. She doesn't. I remember to make the calls and she helps me look for Selsdon. I leave to look for him in the pub. Tim comes in with flowers. He must have known I was in state today. It is so thoughtful of him to bring me flowers right before Valentine's Day. I look in the pub. I look in every nook and cranny. No Selsdon.

I tell Belinda he is not there and she tells me he was in the Lavatory. He must have found the whisky. Uh oh. I make the second call. Freddie tells me Tim did them. Why would he do that? I make the last call.

Then Lloyd comes back out and my world is back to where I was this morning. I get his attention and tell him I need to speak to him. Brooke comes in and he is distracted so I go to double check the props. Then Lloyd comments about the flowers; this is my chance to make him jealous. I tell him Tim bought them for me. Lloyd leaves and I start after him. Brooke is in my way so Freddie breaks us up. Belinda sends me to check on Garry and Dotty. As I'm walking towards the dressing rooms I hear them coming towards me I run backstage to warn the others to brace themselves.

I go to my book to make sure that all the light and music technicians are ready. They both come out. We are almost ready to start up. Tim starts to make the last call; I've already done it. I stop him. Lloyd comes back out- I make sure to remind him we need to talk later. He then talks to Tim about the flowers I overhear that they were never for me. I have to call the beginning of the show and not think too much of what just happened. I keep remembering. I call the cues.

Garry is banging his head on the stage. I tell him to stop he could break the stage.

I stay with my book and call the different light cues. I get up when it is necessary. To see if Freddie needs any help with his nose

I check on Dotty to see if there's anything I can do for her

I reprimand Selsdon about drinking

I pick up the laundry that falls (preventing obstacles for the actors)

I have to make sure Belinda makes her entrances

I have to make sure Garry makes his entrances

We can't find Brooke so I read for her because the show cannot come to a halt.

Lloyd tells me I have to go on I prepare to go on. I see Brooke; I get out of the way as fast as possible so she can make her entrance.

Brooke goes backwards in lines, Garry skips a few pages- I have to find where we are. I find where we are and inform everyone.

I pick up the Sardines when they fall (preventing obstacles for the actors)

I continue with my calls.

Before Selsdon's entrance I go to the crash box to make the glass sound cue.

After Selsdon goes on I go to my book so I can follow along very closely, he's the one I always worry about. I give him his line.

With a few lines left in the show and only the last lights cue I go to talk to Lloyd.

I tell him I'm pregnant and after he reminds me I rush back to make the final lights cue.

After finally starting the show I call the cues backstage and follow along with the book and I do all I can do considering the circumstances. Towards the end of the play Tim comes backstage and tells me I need to go on for the Sheik so I do.

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Poppy Norton-Taylor

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Evaluation

Posted by [mmurphy3](#) on October 31, 2015

This process not only helped me to learn about myself as an actor, but also more deeply as a person. I fell in love with this play when I first read it. I continued to get more and more enjoyment out of it throughout the summer. I could not wait for it to be performed. This was the special kind of play that made me laugh aloud by just reading it to myself; I am so unbelievably grateful to have been a part of *Noises Off*. I feel so blessed to have been allowed this opportunity to bring Poppy to life .

This process has been a whirlwind. It went by so fast, but in so little time I have learned so much. I was thrilled when I found out I would be a part of this production. Soon thereafter, I was equal parts thrilled and terrified; the opening date seemed so close. But this initial craze was soon replaced with a resolute understanding that I just needed to work my hardest and throw my entire self into this process. That's how I find my passion. It is imperative that I dive headfirst and give it everything I have. The first Sunday, I spent a lot of time with the script trying to figure out who Poppy really is. There were points of frustration, where I did not understand Poppy the way I wanted to. Then things started to click. Poppy is a lot more similar to me than I originally thought. She became so much more real as I starting thinking, how would I function in these circumstances? For a small amount of time I was viewing Poppy as this complete other entity. But I wanted Poppy to be heard, I wanted her story to be seen. The only person who could do that was me.

I also learned that so many times we are our biggest obstacle and we create problems that are not there. Admittedly, there was a point where I felt totally disconnected and unable to really embody the character I created in my minds eye. It is in these moments when I had to totally let go of myself—of worries, fears, distractions—and embrace a characters life as it is. I was wrong to think I had nowhere else to go with my character. I was stuck in my own head, I was preventing myself from growth. Once I realized what personal fixations I needed to release, I was able to finally connect in manner I needed to. Everything started to make more sense. Poppy was real.

Everything about this experience has been incredible. I loved this show, I loved this cast, and I loved every single moment of playing Poppy. Those moments of doubt in which I thought "can I really pull this off?" or "are we all going to come through with this together?" only made me realize with more assurance how intensely we wanted it to be successful. In truth, things as seemingly simple as visualization, self-awareness, and self-encouragement are some of the most important elements to success. It starts from the inside. I have grown more than I ever expected, and I have found an insatiable desire to never stop.

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