Pandemic Restrictions and the Live Audience-Performer Relationship: Respecting the Essential Ingredient in Performing Arts Education

by

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B.Ed. (Secondary Curriculum), University of Victoria, 1994
Dip. (Theatre-Acting), Ryerson, 1989

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

The most distinguishing feature of performing arts courses is the culminating presence of an audience. Although direct research about how audiences play a teaching role in performing arts courses and in performing arts in general is scant, there is evidence describing and showing relational aspects between performer and audience in various environments. In an educational context, I propose calling this relationship the Audience-Performer Feedback Loop (APFL). Using this as a pedagogical basis and being faced with Health Authority restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, this project provides technologies and strategic solutions to mitigate and maintain the role in which audiences teach performing arts students synchronously. This paper includes technology tutorials for inexperienced teachers and producers to bring live, at-home, synchronous audiences into their theatres under the watchful eyes of performers who thrive on learning from their audiences in real time. More research is needed to prove how the audience plays a teaching role as a distinguishing feature of performing arts education. Future policies should make direct reference to APFLs in performing arts curricula and be accompanied by strategies and techniques for understanding, identifying, learning, and assessing how APFLs shape a performance and have direct influence on the development and skill of performing arts students.

Keywords: performing arts, audience, performer, feedback, technology, pandemic

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Dedication

For my sister, Hellen.

Chapter One: Introduction

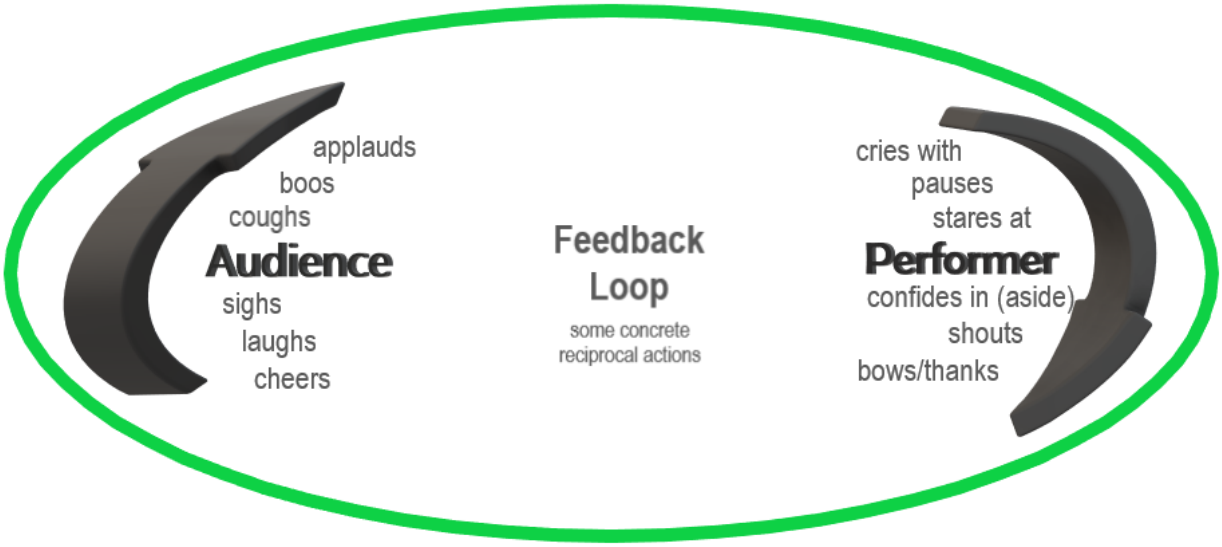
Educational Value of Audience in Performing Arts Courses of Study

The topic of this study is the educational value of audience in performing arts courses of study. While there are many types of feedback that students receive in their education such as direct oral response from teacher to student, peer review and reaction, and the standard written assessment and evaluation, performing arts courses offer the uniquely deliberate opportunity for students to receive impartial, third-party responses in such forms as praise by applause, empathy by audible gasps or laughter, disapproval or boredom by disengaging from the performance through coughing, falling asleep, or leaving. Actors, performers, and creative teams are apt to glean a great deal of knowledge from their audiences, just as much or even more than what audiences learn from the experience of being entertained. The pivotal role that audience plays in 'educating' the performer cannot be overstated. "The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience" (Brook, 1968, p. 142). I propose that the active, real-time relationship between performer and audience might be more accurately termed the Audience-Performer Feedback Loop (APFL) which, I will argue, is a vital part of the theatre curriculum (see Figure 1). It is essentially the establishment and nurturing of an active rapport and chemistry between the audience and the performers (and more generally the performance) over the course of a live theatrical presentation. The attention paid to the performer is recognized, sometimes deliberately by the performer as in an aside to the audience, in a pantomime where a character directly addresses the audience to elicits a response from them, or in a clowning performance. The audience's audible and visceral engagement with the performance gives the performer the opportunity to react in a number of ways to maintain and nurture this subliminal and at times

overt interaction between the two, in the same way that athletes are overtly cheered and booed by their spectators.

Figure 1.

The Audience-Performer Feedback Loop: Some Concrete Reciprocal Actions



Reacting to audiences' needs for sharing new ways of interpreting the human condition then is the role of both the theatre and a central goal of performing arts education.

The Problem of Teaching Performing Arts During COVID-19

The purpose of my study is to offer teachers and researchers of the performing arts some ways to reimagine and maintain the feedback that a live audience gives to students of the performing arts. The traditional ways of running performing arts courses have included an audience. Performers' (or students') skills are developed throughout the course, scaffolding their newly acquired practical knowledge into a rehearsal phase, culminating in a live performance,

usually in front of a live audience in a theatrical setting. This culmination brings with the performing arts course the unique feature of the APFL, providing students with a real-world learning experience not artificed by the traditional classroom setting. The COVID-19 pandemic has set restrictions in place that have essentially removed the unique feature of performing arts courses, disallowing students to be able to perform in front of a live audience, removing their ability to react and to learn from them.

Professional Context

I have had the great fortune to have attended several schools to gain a wide perspective of education in general, to attain a specialized and uniquely classical training in the performing arts, and to make some specific findings about public secondary education training through my experience as a student, as a teacher, and as a mentor-teacher. Having a classical theatre-acting training from Ryerson Theatre School and prior technical theatrical training from the University of Guelph, I have a unique perspective on teacher-training at the post-secondary level and have realized that without learning a heavily weighted balance of both theatre and drama, the performing arts teacher can teach neither very well.

In my experience as a performer, an audience member, a teacher, and a director, performing without an audience is reduced to a form of self-indulgence or therapy and so, it is my strong belief that students of any art form should seek the effect of objective non-authortative response for any true learning to happen. My personal experience maintains that the teacher alone cannot be an effective audience for their students. The problem of maintaining feedback loops for the purpose of growing as an individual and continually finding meaning in actions is both a microcosmic view and a broad reflection of how I have come to approach my work as a teacher and the opportunities I provide for learning in my students and in myself.

Some of the challenges introduced by COVID-19 include mandated safety protocols such as physical distancing, increased cleanliness of work sites, heightened importance of personal hygiene, and the wearing of masks. In British Columbia, these measures of protection have been mandated by the Ministry of Education, developed by local school districts in conjunction with the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, the British Columbia Ministry of Health, and WorkSafe BC, and distributed to all public and private schools. A continually updated guide titled COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings contains the directives provided to schools.

These challenges have a particular influence on the ability to teach drama and performing arts courses in traditional ways. Physical distancing negates the ability of any close proximity or contact between students. The concept of creating cohorts of students that do not have to physically distance is generally a moot point since, by most accounts, cohorts at the secondary level have been built around the schedules of students where their congregation in such groups occurs most regularly in core academic courses. This means that students in out-of-timetable courses such as Musical Theatre and Theatre Production do not constitute a cohort and must therefore either remain physically distant from one another or wear a mask. Students in Drama can no longer share or pass any items back and forth between them without first disinfecting the item, creating another problem around learning the function, use, and character expression of shared properties, which is not nearly the same as providing each student with the same property individually. Students also cannot explore an essential aspect of physicality in movement and expression of emotion where the sense of touch or contact is employed for effective communication.

In my own classroom experience, some safety protocols have become problematic. For example, the excessive use of hand sanitizer in entering each and every classroom has led to an undercurrent of paranoia in some students and even annoying skin irritations. This might undermine their own ability to be fully involved in activities that require some degree of trust. Such activities might include dancing within two meters while masked. Masks alone have been the most challenging issue in relation to students' dramatic performance. Without the benefit of seeing anything of one's face below the bridge of the nose, there is a great loss of expressive variety for the performing arts student. This will undoubtedly present issues of interpretation by an audience. However, reducing the risk of viral spread has become an accepted priority, trumping all other teaching and learning needs. My students have recognized this, my fellow performing arts teachers and I model this behaviour, and our students all follow the safety rules set in place. Perceptions of health risks for students have become a constant management issue. Teaching a performing arts course requires special attention to students' individual perceptions of what is safe, especially with the added stress of working collaboratively. A group exercise or activity must consider the comfort-levels of its participants and in that sense, too, adaptations to the lesson, blocking, or choreography become a necessity. Safety protocols during a pandemic provide a myriad of issues for performing arts. Including employees, performers and staff, the maximum number of occupants in a theatre was 50. However, at the time of this writing, all theatres have been closed to any public whatsoever. The current mandates and protocols are subject to change in the face of developing circumstances such as vaccination roll outs and herd immunity. Working with such unknowns reduces the feasibility of restructuring a performing arts course to meet a moving target. This is not only an issue present in education wherein my situation simply does not allow a live audience, but it is being grappled with in the wider

performing arts community as well. The problem that is specific to the learning and teaching of performing arts is "How can the value of APFLs, so instrumental to learning and teaching performing arts, be maintained when health authority guidelines do not allow for a live audience?" Technology can provide a potential solution. Using video conferencing to connect performers with their at-home audience is quickly gaining ground in the entertainment industry. Providing the ability for the performing student and audience member to share the same space in a synchronous manner is certainly a step toward allowing APFLs the chance to thrive.

Technology and the Resourced-Based Classroom

My approach to adopting technology to my classes is in considering first how the technology used in the classroom reflects how it is used in real-world applications, and second how the technology makes the students' learning more streamlined, direct, efficient, and relevant to the discipline being learned and to the level and area of interest that each student demonstrates. In order to teach students to have full and flexible power over the technologies I use in my teaching, it is paramount in my mind to have intimate working knowledge of the technologies (i.e., how they are made, what technologies came before them, what intended and possible unintended functions they have, their original characteristics, their unique abilities, etc.), so that students can build their learning on a foundation made stable well beyond pedagogical reasoning or the application of a generic assessment model. Technology is fully embraced in my classes, but without a clear, relevant, learning purpose that reflects a real-world application, it cannot be imposed upon me and nor should any teachers be made to have such technology redefine their lessons. If anything, the inverse should occur on a regular basis with the teacher's mastery over the technology being learned and subsequently employed as a result of that mastery.

Technologies used in theatre classes are highly specific to the professional craft and require a practical knowledge base that very few teacher-training institutions build into their programs. Such teacher-training programs must equip potential performing arts teachers with the practical know-how to produce a full theatrical production independent of hiring trained theatre technicians to do the work for them. Design, lighting, sound, sets, costumes, management, operation, and safety are mere mentions in theatre curriculum, but must be mastered skills in order to teach them to any sufficient degree. A practical, working knowledge base in these areas also provides the master teacher the underpinnings creative choices for the clear communication of character motivation, story, and emotional impact. Of all subjects taught in school, it becomes blatantly obvious that the adage of 'those who can't do, teach' simply cannot be tolerated in a theatre program of any merit. The phrase is particularly ironic, yet salient, having been coined in playwright George Bernard Shaw's 1903 drama "Man and Superman". Being highly trained in acting and technical production has allowed me to recognize and develop the actor as the creative context from which to help them unpack and hone their inherent “technologies” of expression in voice, speech, movement, subtext, and intention.

Purpose and Significance of the Project

The purpose of my study is to identify technologies and strategies to support synchronous online audience feedback to students of the performing arts. I will develop a set of considerations and an analytical model from which to build a pedagogy adapted to an environment restricted by health and safety guidelines under a global pandemic. I will also offer a set of technologies, strategies for their use, and examples of implementation. Ways to sustain the real-time environment of live performance to a certain extent with the intention of preserving the interactions, teachable moments, and reward-mechanisms inherent within the theatrical

experience will be explored. APFLs are key drivers in the motivation for both the performer on stage and for the enhancement of the audience's experience. This feedback loop is a direct extension of what it means to gain a deeper understanding of oneself, to build community, to expand one's thinking and appreciation of the world, and to gain theoretical and practical experience, all key functions of any theatrical experience for both audience and performer alike and, likewise, any education system (Post, 2005; Morgan & Saxton, 1987; Dewey, 1934). It is not the purpose of this paper to justify the existence of drama education nor to extol the value of teaching and learning the performing arts in schools. That issue has already come to rest by its inclusion in the British Columbia Education Curriculum alongside countless other educational institutions' approved courses of study in this area. A great deal of technical training and personal expertise must accompany successful solutions in maintaining APFL as an integral part of the learning experience for performing arts students. What do theatre students gain educationally from a live audience? How integral is the APFL to students of theatre? What technologies can be adapted and employed under COVID-19 regulations to bring a live audience virtually into a theatre for the mutual benefit of audience and performer?

Project Design and Goals

This project represents my attempts to build a performance experience for my students that is not only authentic so that the performers can gauge themselves through audience reactions and feedback, but also adheres to the public safety guidelines imposed by our collective efforts to deal with COVID-19.

Some of the broader design elements of this project are inherently built upon the foundations of the performing arts curriculum that is standard for British Columbia schools and can be found on the government's website for Arts Education curriculum. There will be a fluid

component to the design as much of the performance will need to have back-up plans, just as any professional production will contain contingencies for any number of issues that might rise. Examples of this may include student illness, availability of resources and student-involvement, artistic-design, preparation time, production time, equipment failures, post-production time, distribution methods, and the desired level of audience participation. The design will culminate in a partially live and mostly pre-recorded theatrical show to be live streamed to an audience that will have an opportunity to participate and to give real-time feedback to the performers. The performers will spend much of the show watching the audience react to a primarily pre-recorded performance of themselves, followed by a live question-and-answer session with the at-home, remote audience. The essence of the project is to write, direct, block, choreograph, design, light, build, record, remaster, edit, and produce a secondary school musical production that will encompass elements of remote audience participation and offer live feedback to participating students without the benefit of an in-person theatre audience. This will require a multitude of technologies and specialized skills such as set-building, directing, designing, lighting, costuming, camera operation, filming, using Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), compositing, image projection, video editing, audio engineering, interactive live-streaming requiring a mix-minus audio set-up and multiple playback screens and video sources, etc., and employ talents from students in all areas of the secondary art and digital media curriculum. After performing a live-streamed opening component involving remote audience participation, the student participants (i.e., cast, crew, and creative teams) will sit and watch two screens for most of the show: one of their own pre-recorded and edited performances and one of the audience members at home. This will develop in stages using different events throughout the school year (e.g., Hallowe'en activities, Remembrance Day Virtual Assembly, Virtual Fine Arts Showcase), employing

technologies and students a bit at a time in a scaffolding manner to ensure the best chance of success in the culmination of the school's Mainstage Musical Theatre production. Using video conferencing to stream the show privately and provide the means for a question-and-answer post-show session, it is the intention of this project to successfully provide an opportunity for a online live APFL and, adjunctively, to make an argument for more robust training of secondary drama teachers at the post-secondary level to facilitate the use of technologies in this way.

Literature Search Methods

Methods used to support the foundational reasoning behind this project include web-based searches on the world wide web, searches through the UVic Library and DSpace systems, Google Scholar, Search Theses Canada, Academia, and Google search engine, using Boolean combinations of search terms such as: education, drama education, theatre, drama, performing arts, history, models, pedagogy, theory, belonging, connection, student learning, praxis, video, audio, secondary, high school, teaching, art, musical theatre, extracurricular, participation, audience, performer, feedback, school musical, adaptations, covid-19, live theatre, digital technology, media, virtual reality, etc., and my personal library of education, philosophy, and theatre-related books.

The criteria for including these search terms was that their combinations should yield scholarly works and articles that support the underpinnings of the project and help to illustrate what it is that makes performing arts education unique and valuable to student learning and to broader society. I have also been fortunate enough to have consulted with faculty at the University of Victoria’s Phoenix Theatre.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Since the dawn of humankind, there has been drama. The wearing of hides during the hunt may have been the earliest form of imitation, of acting to elicit a desired response, in this case the subjugation of the animal being hunted into believing the disguised hunter was one of its own (Britannica, 2020; Willerslev, 2004). Drama continues to be stories as told by firelight and rituals created by tribespeople with the intention of passing practical knowledge and symbolic meanings learned to the next generation. All these prehistoric notions of drama have the same basic structural dichotomy, that of the performer and audience. Either of these on their own can make drama, for the performer, even when acting alone, becomes their own audience using their "third eye" to watch, evaluate, change, improve, and learn from their own performance while simultaneously performing. Acting is a basic human instinct; a baby smiles imitating their parent. Clare Warden (2013) reflects on the role of audience in the context of professional wrestling and how the performer reacts to and is egged on by the audience, in turn giving the audience what they want. Pitts (2005) "communication loop" theory can describe the reciprocal empathy between performer and audience. This applies to theatre education settings as well. We are hard-wired to learn through acting.

Sharon Bailin (1993), in her work "Drama as Experience" delineates and resolves the difference between drama and theatre as being ends of a continuum.

> Nonetheless, the drama end of the continuum is given educational priority, while activities related to theatre are neglected or downplayed. The dichotomy between drama and theatre can certainly be questioned, as can the denial of theatre's educational value which is predicated upon it. (p. 96)

I would also argue that it is because of a lack of sufficient teacher training and resources in theatre production that a greater focus on drama has been placed in educational settings since the latter is not only more esoteric in its pedagogy but also more cost-effective and requires less practical knowledge and technical skill.

In Chapter 10 of Creativity in Theatre, "A Vygotskian Argument for Teaching Drama in Secondary Schools," Harry Daniels and Emma Downes (2018) argue that:

> drama provides young people with opportunities of 'being other', of reflecting on one's identity in the social world […] facilitated by experiences of being in role in the safety of settings that are an important part of drama in education. (p. 153)

They go on to use Vygotsky's *general genetic law of cultural development* which makes the case for the primacy of interpersonal exchange in development. The collaborative action upon which creative drama is formed provides space for the fertile bedding of Vygotsky's developmental tools such as reflection, critical thinking, questioning, reconstructing and even subverting intended motives to grow and be expressed. As Daniels and Downes explain, "Drama creates the collective ability to question--to reconstruct the now into something that will be different in the future. This very reason is why drama has such a profound and powerful pedagogic potential" (p. 160).

Drama, through the lens of Dewey, "provides students with an opportunity to recontextualize the carriers of meaning, namely objects, persons and events, and in the process of doing so, students are prompted to discover "the meaning of what [they do]" (Dewey, 1897/1972, 56 from Goldblatt, 2006, p.23).

Musical theatre broadens the collaborative process and involves many disciplines, using the collective talent of students not only from Drama programs but also Music programs, Stagecraft, and Theatre Production programs, and in some cases a broader range of arts programs. Lee (1983) urged that "[n]owhere do we find a better conceived, more effective synthesis of all the fine arts. Nowhere do we find a medium more ideally suited to the interests and capabilities of high school students" (p. 41).

The theoretical basis upon which this project rests is grounded heavily in the established practices of professional theatre, film, and media and, as such, relies upon a range of pedagogical ideas and philosophies so wide as to encompass all the potential benefits and educational outcomes that a project of this kind has to offer. The following literature review will be by no means exhaustive but will attempt to cover varied educational and design aspects inherent in the virtual live-streamed theatrical production that, with the collective talents and efforts of my committed students and colleagues, we will attempt to manifest. More specifically, the literature examined includes considerations and analytical models in assessing the teaching and learning related to performing arts education, adaptations and adoptions of current technologies to teaching in a pandemic, and research supporting a valuable form of education that uses the theatrical experience to both embrace current curricular trends and to move beyond traditional models of drama and performing arts education.

Theatre and Audience as Education

To fully appreciate how theatre encompasses drama, it is necessary to comprehend the notion of audience. Audience in a classroom is inherently participatory and being so offers students of theatre and drama a deeply reflective learning experience (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Heathcote et al., 1984). As technology has evolved, so too have audiences, however, the

enduring value of employing the reflective and educational value of drama (Heathcote et al., 1984) cannot be understated. Although research directly related to this concept in terms performing arts education as opposed to drama education is scarce, articles in outlying areas do support the notion of the audience's potential to inform and influence in real-time the performance, including through the audience's use of technology as 'mediated' or controlled by the performer(s) as evidenced by Hödl et al. (2020) and moreover Webb et al (2016). In a more general sense, the 21st century audience is being recognized as performer in the evolution of modern entertainment and the theatrical experience (Heim, 2015; Molleman, 2019), in the immersive theatre movement of David Greig as described by Clare Watson (2013), and in other more interactive theatre experiences (Heddon et al., 2012; Alston, 2013; Ashford, 2018). Drama classes are environments in educational settings because they intentionally offer up the student to be the performer as well as the audience and to learn from both perspectives simultaneously in many cases. However, performing arts courses are unique in that they intend the student to learn from an audience that they do not know and with which they must work to establish and maintain a new relationship for each new audience/performance. Prendergast (2006) alludes to this distinction:

> We may exit or enter the room or auditorium at will and never offend the actors, because their presence is "mediatized" (Auslander, 2001) and we are not sharing the same time or space with them. Attending a live performance is otherwise; our presence is a key element of the event and definitely can and does make a significant difference both for the performers and for ourselves… [And] If we can accept that audience presence is central to performance then it follows that

> aesthetic education in the performing arts needs to pay some attention to this phenomenon. (p. 94)

In developing a curriculum for Audience-in-Performance (AIP), Prendergast (2006) posits that "simply put, studying performance requires experiencing performance" (p. 115). This confronts the traditionally perceived passive role that an audience is afforded by paying to sit and watch without having to 'perform' in order to be educated and, conversely with what Thom (1993) calls "playful attention" (p. 205). The focus here is placed upon the audience's function and role it plays, which is distinct from but not entirely exclusive of the performance. As performing arts educators, an audience is to be respected for their varied interpretations and intelligence, and not 'commodified' or treated without regard to their influence on live performers as Prendergast later laments. Prendergast decries the effect an audience has on the untrained performer, "Performing artists tend to take their audience very much for granted" (p. 123), and in her "Declaration of Audience in Performance" (p. 123), laments the way 21st century audiences are treated, "Today's audience is treated by performance (institutions, managers, producers, artists) with the same kind of respect/fear we pay the dead – deferential, self-interested and monological in attitude. What, then, must we do?" (p. 123). Prendergast further uncovers a missing link between her master's work and her doctoral dissertation:

> As I encounter Blau, he catches me off-guard, de-stabilizes and undermines me as I work towards a definition and deeper understanding of audience. "If the audience is not altogether an absence, it is by no means a reliable presence" (p. 1) writes Blau. (p.121)

Here, Prendergast contemplates Herbert Blau's *The Audience* (1990) to which she is referring. From the trained performer's perspective of which Blau is most likely writing, the

unreliability of audience rests in its variety of individuals, the expectations of the performers themselves, the intended effects on the audience by the playwright, the director, the designers, the technicians, and the unexpected changes from one performance to the next. For Prendergast, the culmination of AIP presented through her approach using ekphrasis (i.e. responding to one art form through the use of another) enlightens her understanding of the function and purpose of audience as it relates to the performers on stage. The modalities of the AIP described by Prendergast are akin to the APFL in that they describe the kinds of learning that can be offered not only to the audience but also to the performer and reciprocal relationship of the two within the theatrical experience. Finally, though, Prendergast notes the influential role that the audience plays in educating the performer. “Interrogating performance and consistently holding it to account in terms of what it intends and how it succeeds or fails is at the core of this curricular vision of AIP” (p. 234).

In my own classical theatre-acting training at Ryerson, I learned (especially in clowning classes with Adrian Pecknold) that a large part of an actor’s duty is to be vulnerable to, listen to, and to ‘be with’ an audience. As every true artist knows, any art form without the active acknowledgement and participation of an audience at any level is reduced to mere self-indulgence or therapy.

Drama classes are more akin to “workshopping” ideas, feelings, and expressions whereas performing arts classes reflect the more real-world reality of theatrical expression that puts all the “workshopping” against the test of a live audience. Using technologies to create remote or virtual live theatre environments can sustain the unique education that performing arts classes provide. The value of drama is not entirely lost as Geelhoed et al. (2016) assert, "We found indications that providing some form of remote audience interaction will aid in creating a tighter audience

community and will benefit audience and performers alike" (p. 5600). Their research defined two metrics in evaluating audience experience in co-present and remote aspects of performance to determine how audiences rated each aspect over one another. As they stated, audience interaction (or in my words the APFL) is an important factor creating a positively rated experience.

Extending this benefit for audience and performer in theatrical settings to the classroom, digital technologies have brought as much educational benefit as it has created distraction from the teacher-performer at the front of class. However, the use of digital technologies in theatre and drama classes take on the cultures that surround them, shed light on the issues of their use and misuse, and provide students with the opportunity to understand more deeply their relationships to them. Richardson (2015) states in his three-year study that for his students "the digital habitus is the internalization of an intense, ongoing engagement with digital technologies" (p. 98) and concludes with three findings that help to better understand the changing culture of audience: "Immersion in digital culture is... ...a significant factor in how teens respond to live theatre" (p. 100), "Students were enthusiastic about theatre because it was live..." (p. 101), and "students appreciated the unique behaviours expected of live theatre audiences, with cellphone etiquette a lively and contested topic of debate" (p. 102). This would suggest that students of theatre recognize the special circumstances and expectations under which live performance is to be experienced. As performers themselves, students inherently gain a deeper perspective of audience and the psychological effects it has on performance in opposing simultaneously forms of social facilitation and inhibition (Triplett, 1898; Zajonc, 1965). Academic research on the effects of audience on theatrical performers is sparse, although there is significant market literature on the role of audience reaction to and influence on media and how media changes to gain larger audiences (or market share). In a related article, Ben Walmsley (2011) found that

audiences were motivated to go to the theatre for escapism and edutainment and that "post-show discussions enhanced the audience experience by providing a forum to share ideas, explain complexities, and provide insight into the creative process and a rare connection to actors and creative teams" (p. 347). This enhancement and extension of the APFL is a conscious practice in my theatre education programs and should be an implicit part of theatre production and performance curricula.

It is perhaps not surprising to find a lack of academic research on the topic of the audience's essential role in 'educating' the performer in the midst of the performance, but this is the essential notion behind this project. A trained actor understands and can express how this is the existential core of theatre; to invite an audience to indirectly posses the performance and live in it through the performers and the theatrical experience as a whole. A teacher understands this, too, at least on an unconscious level, feeling the pull of their 'audience' to learn, to experience, to feel new awareness and knowledge in the complex interactions that occur between themself and their students. This is the same bond as the one between audience and performer that is best described at the end of Peter Brook's book The Empty Space:

> The spectators may just stare at the spectacle, expecting the actor to do all the work and before a passive gaze he may find that all he can offer is a repetition of rehearsals. This may disturb him deeply, he may put all his goodwill, integrity ardour into working up liveliness and yet he senses all the time a lack. He talks about a 'bad' house. Occasionally, on what he calls a 'good night', he encounters and audience that by chance brings an active interest and life to its watching role --this audience assists. With this assistance, the assistance of eyes and focus and desires and enjoyment and concentration, repetition turns into representation.

> Then the word representation no longer separates actor and audience, show and public: it envelops them: what is present for one is present for the other. The audience too has undergone a change. It has come from a life outside the theatre that is essentially repetitive to a special arena in which each moment is lived more clearly and more tensely. The audience assists the actor, and at the same time for the audience itself assistance comes back from the stage. (p. 140)

'Spectator'/'audience' and 'actor' are easily replaced respectively with 'jury' and 'lawyer', 'congregation' and 'preacher', ‘athlete’ and ‘spectator’, 'voter(s)' and 'politician', 'patient' and 'doctor', or 'student(s)' and 'teacher’. This link between the two is replete in many social interactions. In the theatre of the school setting, this interaction forms the basis of learning and teaching, on both parts of the student and the teacher. Similar to what Brook suggests, it is the engaged student that, in their eagerness to learn, fuels the teacher with the motivation to make the learning relevant and accessible, thus re-engaging the student and beginning a new feedback cycle.

Technology Use in Performing Arts Education

In his 2002 John Dewey Lecture at Stanford University, Elliot Eisner turned the mirror of education onto the arts saying, "In many ways the idea that education has something to learn from the arts cuts across the grain of our traditional beliefs about how to improve educational practice" (Eisner, 2002, para. 2). He went on reveal the opposing approaches to educational practice made between Thorndike's attachment to the scientific method and Dewey's more ambiguous and humanist theories. "Nevertheless, by the end of the first quarter of the 20th century the die was cast. Except for some independent schools, Thorndike won and Dewey lost. Metaphorically speaking, schools were to become effective and efficient manufacturing plants”

(Eisner, 2002, para. 7). This put the performing arts as adjunctive and, certainly by today's standards, an elective course of study in the education system. As such, it comes as no surprise then that there is still a large gap between professional performing arts training and craft-practice and the level of performing arts education for training teachers. Sadly, this notion is supported by post-secondary level teacher-trainers of drama in education whose primary function, it seems, is to provide a generalized 'taster' of the potential value of using drama in education, mostly designed for elementary/primary school teachers. Very few schools offer training teachers a robust and rigorous education in performing arts, instead focussing on classroom drama and self-discovery over learning the craft and exercise of theatrical performance in front of largely unknown audiences that reflect the realities of performance that can be later applied to many real-life situations. Morgan and Saxton (1987) attempt to assuage this notion in their seminal work Teaching Drama:

> Teachers of Theatre Arts at the senior levels often make little use of the explorative strategies of drama work to help students find the inner understanding necessary for the expressive action of the script, while the classroom drama teacher makes little, if any, use of the art form to help her students find the appropriate expressive frames for the meaning they are exploring. Drama and theatre are not mutually exclusive. If drama is about meaning, it is the art form of theatre which encompasses and contains that meaning. If theatre is about expression, then it is the dramatic exploration of the meaning which fuels that expression. (p.1)

Morgan and Saxton express an understanding of the inextricable relationship between knowing what you teach and teaching what you know.

Eisner's audience in his 2002 lecture was made up of medical school faculty and students, but his arguments are, like Dewey's were, most appropriate for all educators and serve to lift the importance of arts education.

> What we are now doing is creating an industrial culture in our schools, one whose values are brittle and whose conception of what's important narrow. We flirt with payment by results, we pay practically no attention to the idea that engagement in school can and should provide intrinsic satisfactions, and we exacerbate the importance of extrinsic rewards by creating policies that encourage children to become point collectors. Achievement has triumphed over inquiry. I think our children deserve more. (Eisner, 2002, para. 11)

Dewey's influence on education resounds still in all areas of teaching, challenging the system to move away from the rigid, industrialized, scientific way of stating meaning and encouraging higher forms of thinking by going further to express meaning in artful ways. Perhaps the new education trends of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) in their encouragement of greater innovation are the continued attempts to introduce the *art* of practicing science. It could be considered that an audience in all educational pursuits has provided the catalyst for new discovery and knowledge and that 'necessity' and 'audience' are interchangeable in the sense that "necessity is the mother of invention" as William Horman, headmaster of Winchester and Eton stated in 1519. An audience provides the student the impetus to think beyond their own conceptions of the world and of themself to force something new to occur—a thought, an action, an expression that has both an intrinsic and extrinsic will behind it. This is the marriage of these

two energies of audience and performer that the performing arts innately carries and brings purpose and meaning to all action.

Academic Technology Assessment Tools

Performing arts education encompasses a vast array of technologies when the necessity of an audience is fully realized. Assessment of these technologies becomes an important part in determining how well an audience will respond to the performance and, in turn, how well students will learn in the theatrical education environment. Evaluating technologies from a layperson's perspective can lead to misplaced intentions and often result in the reflection of the technology-operator's own lack of real-world training. Several evaluation models developed by academics rely on this commonality of incompetence among teachers with the well-meaning intention of helping them find a use for the technology as much as a technology for an intended use. Two such models of evaluation are Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) and Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR).

A salient point that the TPACK authors Koehler and Mishra (2009) cite from Ertmer (2005) illustrates the predesigned marketable purpose of modern technologies and the specific training required by teachers to use them; teachers who have little time and are not given adequate in-service training to learn the full functionality of technologies introduced to their teaching. Ertmer stresses that teachers are less likely to use technologies that do not align with their existing pedagogical beliefs. Technologies are often developed using insulated test marketing strategies and product-oriented development that, in turn, try to allow for a wide acceptance into existing pedagogical practices, but make little-to-no accommodation for the learning effort and time required to use the technology for its intended purpose. The TPACK authors identify three core components of teaching with technology, but they leave out one very

important component, which is the existing skill set and specialized training that the teacher brings to their students (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). I want to stress that this is not to be confused with the content knowledge which appears to focus attention on the lesson and what the students will learn and it certainly is not to be confused with pedagogical knowledge, which can be described as how the students will learn. It is the overarching and underlying context that the technology inadvertently attempts to supersede. An unconscious design factor is made then by the authors that their model applies to generalist educators who have some formal training in how to teach, but the professional level of experience, mastery of craft, and practice they bring to their students seems to carry little weight or importance in this assessment model.

Hamilton et al. (2016) review a different evaluation model that is centred on four predefined uses of technology in the classroom rather than the more generalized descriptive evaluation of the TPACK model. Substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition (SAMR) are progressive steps in the ways that a technology adopted for classroom use eventually becomes the central driving vehicle of learning. Described as a ladder that teachers are encouraged to ““move up” from lower to higher levels of teaching with technology, which according to Puentedura, leads to higher (i.e., enhanced) levels of teaching and learning" (Hamilton et al., 2016 p. 434). This model also generalizes in an almost surreptitious way by unconsciously, yet progressively, removing the specialized expertise and practical content training that the teacher inherently brings to the classroom and dissolves it into allowing the technology to create new tasks that may have been previously inconceivable, as the model itself states. If reversing one's perspective on this model, at this highest level of "enhanced" teaching, there is an inference that, without the technology, the teacher lacks the physical capability to make their students' learning technologically relevant. Hamilton et al. question the lack of

context, the rigid hierarchical structure, and the tendency of the model to emphasize creating a product over learning a process. However, both TPACK and SAMR are open to interpretation most likely due to the creators' intentions to include as many and varied teaching disciplines and pedagogies as possible in the hopes that their models would be widely adopted. Perhaps the omission of teacher and student contexts in these models is deliberate, but neither model is overtly designed to include such pivotal contexts.

Challenges of Technologies Used for Teaching in a Pandemic

In light of COVID-19, supportive documents for returning to school have been and continue to be developed with online access to them. In order to follow this guidance, many schools were tasked with submitting a plan to their local Boards of Education for approval before the beginning of the school year. At the secondary level, these plans included restructuring timetables to accommodate the need to socially distance, effectively reducing the number students in the building at any one time. At Spectrum Community School where I work teaching Drama, Musical Theatre, Stagecraft (Theatrical Production), Media Arts (Digital Film/TV Production), Film Studies, and Black and White Photography and Printmaking, the semester system was replaced with the quarter system wherein two courses are taught over ten weeks. As Greater Victoria Teachers' Association's representative, secretary, and chair of my school's Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee and secretary and chair of the Staff Committee, I produced a video to explain the new timetable and safety protocols for parents and their students in advance of the start of the school year. The first few weeks was a confusing time for many students and staff adapting to a new timetable that either compressed the course content being taught or, out of necessity, reduced the amount of content being taught. The challenge to balance the learning needs of students against the hierarchical need for safety continues to take

considerable effort for many teachers. Subsequent videos of updated protocols continue to be produced and shared with staff, students, and school families.

The pandemic itself illustrated to the world how human nature tends to behave reactively. It is admittedly difficult to be proactive when one cannot anticipate what to be proactive about. The pandemic has shown the resilience of many to attempt to restore education back to familiar ways as much as possible but has also revealed the shortcomings of an infrastructure built upon Industrial Age models. Social technologies have been popularized by the pandemic restrictions, making their way somewhat blindly into education, at times with the support of academic research. These technologies have allowed teachers to continue teaching in traditional ways without much regard for furthering the push toward student-centred learning. The education system suffers a disconnect from how the role of the teacher can be changed by the use of technologies that have the potential to transform education rather than simply enhance an outdated pedagogy. When looking more specifically at theatre education and theatre in general, technology's power to transform the way we experience and learn becomes far more obvious. There has been an explosion of technology pushed onto the education sector clamouring for ways emulate or replace educational settings with a likeness that provides comfort and familiarity for students and especially for traditional, stand-in-front-and-lecture classroom teachers. However, the theatre and entertainment sector has adopted technology, adapted itself to it, and transformed itself into new forms of theatre and performance. The film industry might be the most obvious example with the advent of Computer-Generated Imagery (GCI) which appears seamlessly in over 90% of all major films produced, Digital Surround Sound, Motion Capture, and the like. The pandemic has brought another wave of innovation for professional and amateur entertainment companies with podcasting, live-streaming, virtual reality (VR), mediated

audience participation through technology use, interactive installations, live performances with a synchronous remote audience, etc.. There are examples of this from the no-expenses-spared virtual audience at NBA games played at the ESPN center in Florida where fans at home paid to have their own cameras broadcast onto individual screens in courtside seats for the players to see to Victoria's Blue Bridge Theatre using Zoom™® live streaming synchronous solo performances of A Christmas Carol by to an at-home audience that paid for a private link. In both of these cases the intention was primarily to bring the "performance" to a synchronous at-home audience but, just as importantly, the performers had the potential to see and hear their audience while performing. The potential of these technologies to reignite and reimagine a virtual relationship between the performer and audience is exciting. As these technologies continue to be used by artists of all kinds, Nuriman et al. (2020) examined specific technological adaptations from interactive live performance to equally interactive fully immersive virtual performance, proposing an educational benefit in the process, transforming the audience member into becoming the performer.

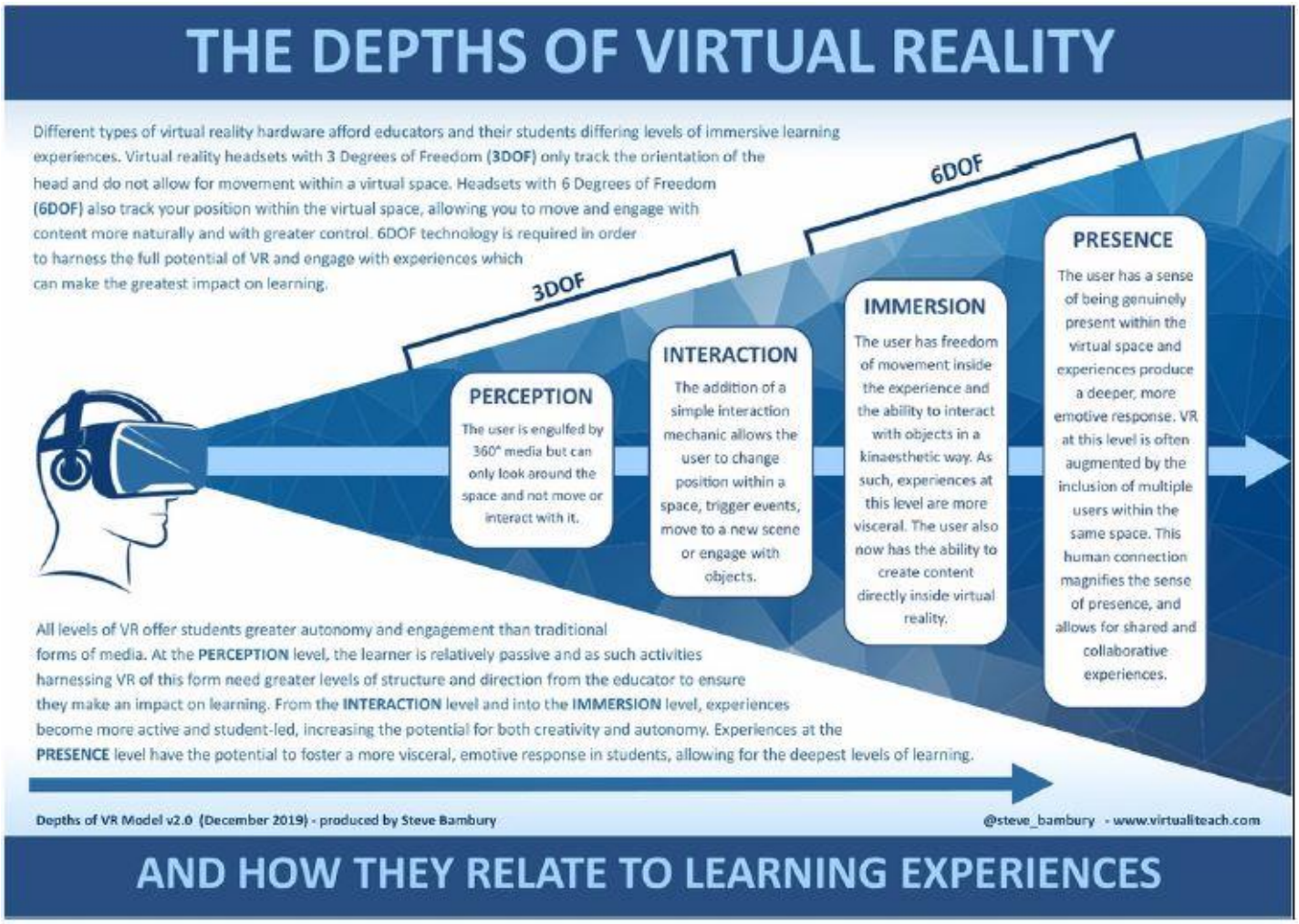
> Reality is what we have now. Augmented Reality (AR) is a digital content being overlaid onto the real world (Courty & Corpetti, 2007), which one can see using a device such as cellphone, tablet, headset, etc. Some AR examples are Pokemon Go, Facebook Spark, Instagram filters, etc. Augmented Virtuality (AV) is the reverse of AR, in which the real world is augmenting the virtual world. Leap Motion technology is the best example for this AV. Virtual Reality (VR) is the wholly synthetic experience. The user is immersed in a space that is digitally generated. While using a VR device (namely VR goggles), the user is unable to see the real world. Mixed Reality (MR) is the combination of all the

> abovementioned and represents a higher level of virtual experience. This term is sometimes called Extended Reality (XR). There is another term, namely Hyper Reality which combines all the above and is embellished with additional sensory stimuli (for example water splash, breeze, odors, etc.) similar to that of 4D cinema. (p. 166)

The technologies examined in this article titled "From Real to Virtual: Adaptation Model of Performance Arts during COVID-19" included using a complex set of technologies in the creation of imagined spaces and characters for 'audience' members to participate in an immersive VR (Virtual Reality) experience. Details of the technologies used were not as pertinent as author's reference to a December 2019 infographic by Steve Bambury (Figure 2) explaining how virtual reality relates to learning experiences. Bambury's contends that student-centered learning increases along with the increasing immersiveness of the technology supplied to the student. It is suggested that students who are immersed in a virtual reality with other student-participants experience deeper emotive responses and that this "human" connection magnifies the sense of "being there" and, in turn, enriches the collaborative experience. While this is a commendable intention of the use of virtual reality in educational settings, it also harkens toward an attempt to emulate the kind of collaboration that happens in reality. The difference however, is that the reality of an open-minded, inquiry-based, student-focused learning environment provides the student with more creative space and unlimited directions to take their learning whereas the reality from inside a headset is limited to the program controls, software, and ultimately the creator's sense of what should be included in the virtual educational reality presented to the student.

Figure 2.

The Depths of Virtual Reality: How They Relate to Learning Experiences



Virtual experience stages according to Bambury (2019), as cited by Nuriman et al. (2020, p.168).

Although virtual reality might provide an immersive experience that blurs the distinction between audience-participant and performer, most of the 'script' remains in control of the virtual reality's creator(s), restricting and defining the learning experience as illustrated above. This is implicit in the use of technology mediated performances where music is created by the audience members' participation using their smartphones. An app is used to create a shared collective composition of sound/music that is 'moderated' and ultimately controlled by the host (Hödl et

al., 2020). This point was also missed by the Nuriman et al. article and both articles reflect the limited creative choice for the audience that such reality affords. Any performance in this regard, no matter how *immersive* it might be, is still under the reigns of those who build and create all the elements necessary for the performance to occur, whether the audience is an active participant or not. Akin to the ultimate destiny of a character in a role-playing computer game, the story is ultimately unchanged from what the "programmer" has written. Not everyone likes to game for the very reason that the game limits the participant's creativity.

This perhaps speaks to the heart of motivation behind being an audience member over that of an active participant, as the whole point to attending an event is to experience, interpret, and appreciate the creative talents of others. When one is given the choice to be an active participant, there is no longer a clear separation between performer and artist, and the risk of self-promotion is introduced (Molleman, 2019). The embedding of participation has become so commonplace in our modern technologies that its potential to skew the desired outcomes by its creators can be overlooked and the APFL is thrown into the muddy waters of attention-seeking audiences and performers subjected from their traditional places off and on stage.

A growing area of technology in education is the use of social networking applications. Gerhart and Koohikamali (2019) used Push-Pull-Mooring form of Migration Theory to explain the move by individuals from social networking sites (SNSs) to social networking applications (SNAs) where anonymity is afforded to the user. Use of these in the theatre classroom can act as a communication tool between students to engage in frank and open discussions about any aspects of the class with the affordance of not being identified. The teacher, also without being identified, can gain valuable insight into how students are responding to the rehearsal process, the scaffolding of the lessons built into producing a show in a learning environment, or even

seemingly mundane issues such as costume choices. Having an anonymous SNA allows the cast and crew of a theatre class to build their own community in their own way. However, like the researchers have concluded, whether a SNA is anonymous or not seems to be of less importance than its potential for increasing popularity, introducing the potential for negative effects like bullying. This suggests, as before, that one of the main motivations for participation is to meet the need for self-promotion. Any form of online community-building can act as a beneficial adjunct to a collaborative course such as theatre, but a formal learning environment is necessary to reflect the realities of professional theatre production and counter the potential false ego-boosting effects of social media misuse.

The adjunctive use of a virtual classroom can provide stability in the face of changing health and safety protocols. My experience has taught me that using a single central online location such as Google Classroom for communicating with high school students is the best way to provide clear, concise instruction and off-campus communication and learning opportunities.

Summary

Literature specific to APFLs is scarce and shows a need for further research in this area as it relates to the educational value that it can provide the practitioner of student-centred learning. AIP puts emphasis on educating an audience through making them the performer. Considering the other elements to which audiences are subjected (i.e., lighting, set, costume, makeup, and sound design, other audience members, etc.) could be factors that affect APFLs. APFLs can offer teachers to learn from their students and adapt their teaching accordingly to nurture the students' value of audience as an educational tool. While the APFL represents the key feature of synchronous and immediate feedback, there is room here to recognize the value of what can be learned after the fact. In many practical cases, hindsight is 20/20 and the educational

value of watching one's own performance through recorded playback or question and answer with a live audience, teacher, or peer has a strong influence on a performer's learning and self discovery. However, this kind of asynchronous feedback lacks the ability to inform the performer while in the process of performing and does nothing to develop the "third eye," an essential tool of self-awareness and acting skill for any performer. Being able to stay in character and not trip on the carpet, forget a line, handle a prop in the way a character would handle it, and be with the audience to enhance your performance as well as their reactions, appreciation, and understanding can only be learned in the synchronous environment. Learning after-the-fact is an all-too-common practice in non-performance-based disciplines and courses of study and ignores the role that APFLs play for the performing arts student. Learning by doing and adjusting one's performance in mid-stream according to an audience's reactions is the catalyst for learning in many performance task-related courses, and begs for the adapting of technologies to maintain such an effective feedback loop.

Analytical models for evaluating technology and technology use in theatre programs is contingent upon the teacher's mastery of the technology in question, even subtle technologies such as speech, voice production, microphone technique, movement, as well as creative technical theatre production design, and the use of video and audio production technologies in an interactive live-streaming format. Teacher-training in theatre design, production, directing, acting, and drama must afford the meaningful requirements needed to adapt and adopt other media technologies for the development and execution of virtual performances with APFL capabilities to overcome pandemic restrictions and employ synchronous audiences. Use of social technologies in education have unseen potential to cause issues around self-promotion and will require an astute teacher to mitigate negative effects, especially when such technologies are used

by audience members in the collective creation of a performance. The use of technologies to create a remote synchronous audience to provide the feedback loop that is so essential to student performers' learning will require a teacher/moderator with a considerable skill set. To achieve an APFL that entertains the audience and educates the performers will take practical knowledge of live video and audio streaming technologies that allow for two-way communication between the performers and the audience. For young performing arts students, it may be necessary to make them aware of how APFLs affects performance and audience appreciation. Enhancing the digestibility of this, the teacher might choose to parcel the performance, offering the audience pre-recorded sections of performance to allow the performers to be fully attentive to the at-home audience reactions. In this scenario, performers sit as an audience simultaneously watching their own pre-recorded performance and, more importantly, watching the reactions of the at-home audience. Adapting to synchronous live performance will also be a learning exercise for the audience, and a culminating question and answer period between the two parties may provide an opportunity to teach everyone the value of APFLs.

Chapter Three: Theatrical Production Under Pandemic Restrictions

Hands-On Educational Technology Tips

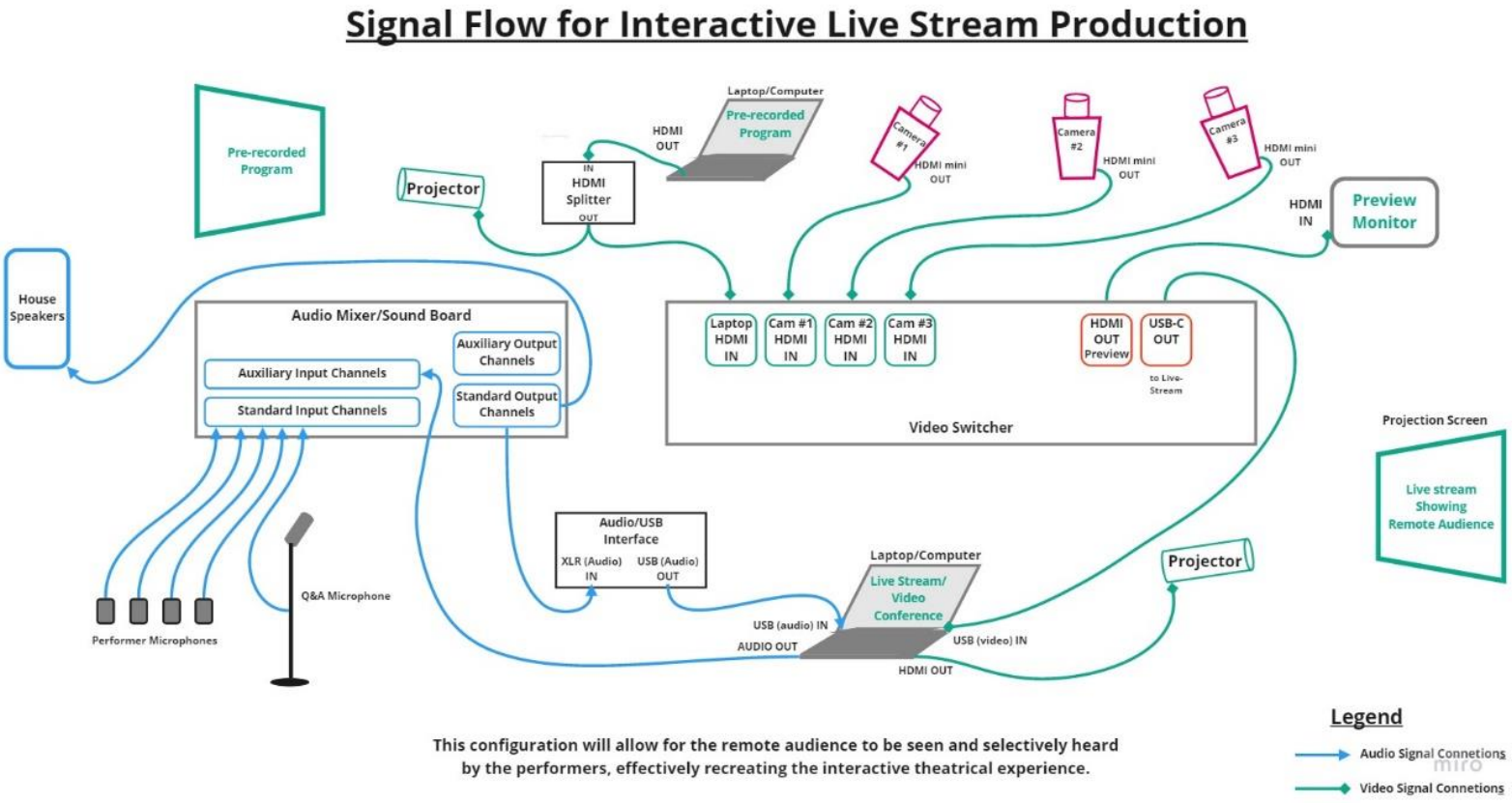
A compilated video file of these tips has been uploaded to the UVicSpace open access learning and research repository where they will remain static. A Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence has been placed on this material. You are free to copy, remix, transform, build upon, and redistribute the material in any medium or format under the same license, naming the original creator and attribution parties. You must also indicate if changes were made with reference to previous modifications. You may not use the material for commercial advantage or monetary compensation. An example of such an attribution might look like this: "The Audience-Performer Feedback Loop by René Schwarz is licensed under CC BY 4.0

The right-hand side bar on each page of my WordPress blog site The Story is Everything provides a full list of the six Hands-On Educational Technology Tips. Tech Tips for Performing Arts links to a YouTube playlist also containing all six videos. The WordPress blog site and YouTube playlist will be updated and added to regularly. I have designed and drawn a signal flow diagram detailing the technology and connections needed to create a theatrical experience with APFL capabilities between a remote audience and live performers. Testing the technology and configuration has yielded the potential for audio feedback to occur and will require an audio operator to mute the remote/streaming auxiliary audio output from the mixer back into the live stream whenever a remote audience member speaks in order to avoid an unwanted feedback loop. This will still allow the performers to hear the remote audience, but stop the remote audience from hearing itself which would create the audio feedback loop. A basic version of this set up has become the standard for live production that involves remote participation such as

press conferences with remote reporters asking questions. The diagram can be found online here: Signal Flow for Interactive Live Stream Production and is illustrated below.

Figure 3.

Signal Flow for Interactive Live Stream Production



The following hyperlinks connect to a series of YouTube videos and WordPress blogs containing both written and video instruction on how to set up and use technologies for live streaming theatrical productions. A deliberate attempt has been made to keep the cost of these technologies affordable within public school settings.

Cameras: YouTube video WordPress blog

While cameras evolve from DSLR to mirrorless with WiFi, this video covers the most affordable way to connect a camera to a digital video switcher for live streaming purposes.

Digital Switchers & Streaming via YouTube: YouTube video WordPress blog

A digital video switcher can make a big difference to your live stream. His video features the ATEM Mini from BlackMagic Design.

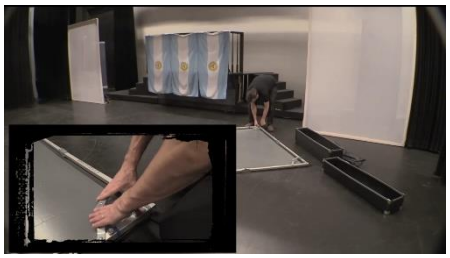
Streaming via Zoom: YouTube video WordPress blog

The ATEM mini digital switcher (a device that lets the user live stream and use up to 4 HDMI sources and 2 external audio sources), can bring a professional touch to streaming any theatrical performance. Zoom makes it easy.

Projectors and Connectors: YouTube video WordPress blog

As technology continues to evolve, so do the ways we connect. Not everyone can afford the latest, so here are a few standards, namely RGB and HDMI, but 5G may make WiFi connections as obsolete as RGB.

Portable Projection Screen Set-up: YouTube video WordPress blog



Translucent project screens allow projected content to be seen from both sides - a handy feature when you want both performers and limited audience members to see. In streaming environments, this is key to having your performers see the remote audience while allowing a live limited audience to enjoy the show in more ways than one.

Mixing Sound for Live Stream: YouTube video WordPress blog

To realize the potential for your remote audience to interact with your performers, this video helps to explain a way to avoid the dreaded audio feedback loop.

Learning from Others and Learning the Rules

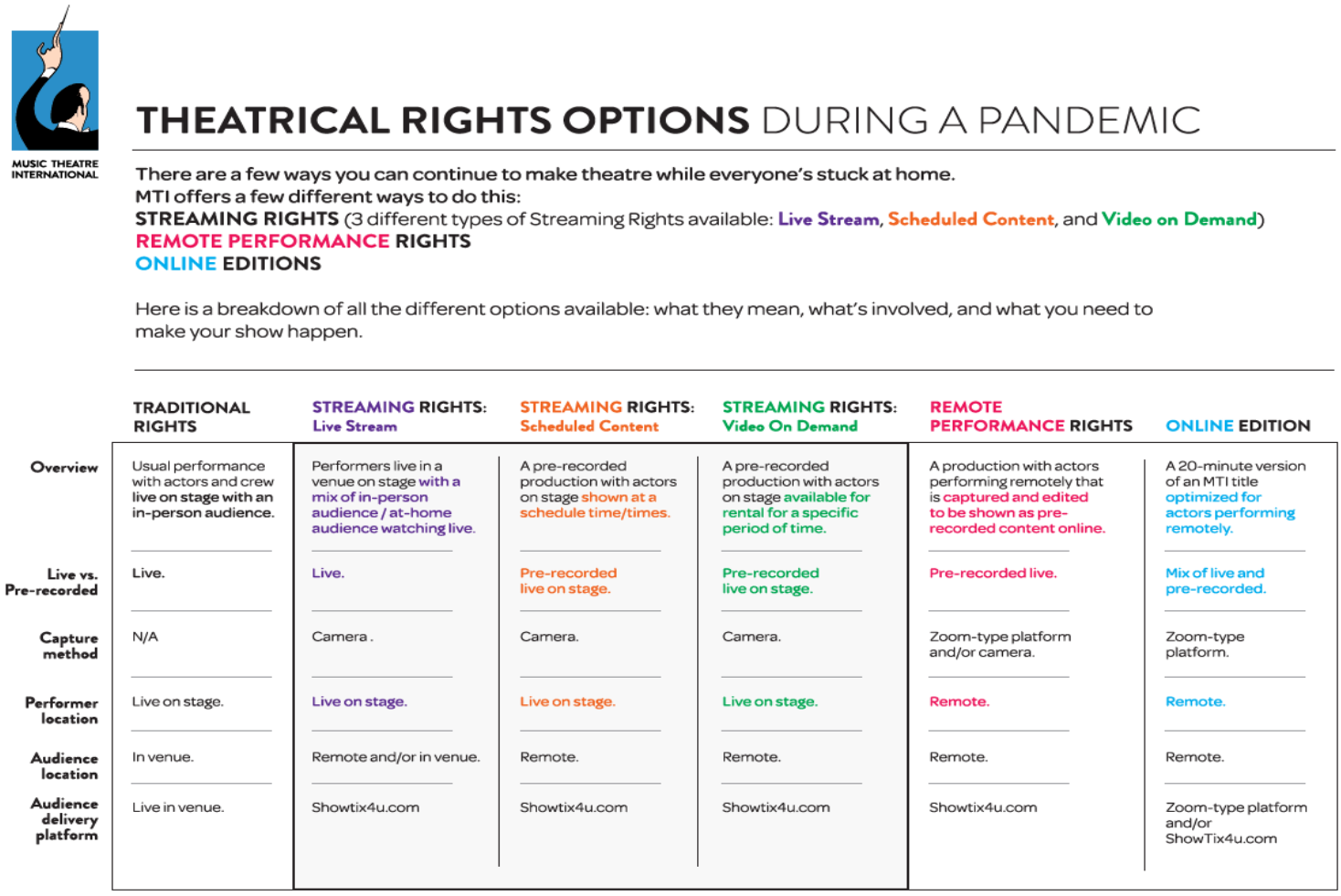
The challenge facing many teachers of performing arts courses is not only in making a clear distinction between teaching drama and teaching performing arts, but also in seeking to gain for their students the educational value of having a largely objective live audience. This challenge is compounded by pandemic restrictions allowing no more than 50 individuals in a theatre at any one time. When adding up the number of performers, stagehands, musicians, and technicians required for a full-scale musical theatre production, the addition of a live audience is often negated altogether. This has been the case for the recent 2021 productions put on by neighbouring schools such as Claremont Secondary's production of "We Will Rock You" and later "Winnie the Pooh," Lambrick Park Secondary's production of "Shrek," and Reynolds Secondary's production of "Freaky Friday". Some productions unconsciously did not adhere to COVID-19 restrictions, for example, using transparent plastic food service masks in their attempt

to allow audiences to see facial expressions and to get a better sound quality. Some remote audience members raised concerns upon seeing the performance, and sudden changes had to made. Other productions had a difficulty adapting technologies to the restrictions such as producing good sound quality while wearing masks, or physically distancing when not wearing masks. Oak Bay High School hired professional company Pacific Audio Works to run much of the technology of their production in their efforts to overcome a lack of technical know-how specific to live streaming using Open Broadcaster Software Live. I had made early attempts through email at the start of the school year to communicate my intentions with my local musical theatre director/teacher colleagues. While maintaining one's integrity of ownership over production process, the result of planning in a vacuum has proved unsuccessful in many regards.

Audiences were directed to live-stream performance links under the performance rights purchased by each of the schools' musical theatre programs. However, taking the traditional route to purchase performance rights restricted how they would be allowed to livestream their productions. Such restrictions from the rights holders included no editing or post-production allowed, no pre-recorded music (the music had to be played live), and in some cases a limit of two separate camera angles. This limited not only what productions were made available to be streamed, but also how they could be presented to remote audiences as the graphic on the following page from Music Theatre International illustrates:

Figure 4.

Virtual Performance Toolkit



In all these cases except the 20-minute version, the performance must be recorded as if presented before a live audience, which not only negates the possibility to take advantage of audio, video, and post-production technologies, but does not allow or make mention of performers' ability to see their remote audience live while performing.

Production Design with APFL in Mind

With this knowledge in hand, I designed a production that would go beyond the limits imposed by the rights holders and offer students the opportunity to learn how to perform for the camera as well as retaining a small part of the performance toward maintaining the APFL.

Another major consideration for taking performing arts courses in a non-conformist direction was the financial burden purchasing performing rights would have on a public-school program. To save costs, I decided to write a production that included numbers from musicals that the school had already produced in previous years. Costumes, props, and some set pieces that were stored could be revived, retrofitted, and reused. Copyright would not be an issue as the decision was made not to charge any ticket price to remote audiences. The performance link would be provided as an unlisted link or on a secure and private streaming platform. The story follows a character's travels from one musical to next, picking up more characters along the way and in the end finding some self-truth. The opening scene involved remote audience participation and therefore required the use of technology that would allow for real-time interaction between performer and remote audience, setting the APFL on firm ground. The production cut to a pre-filmed and post-produced multi-camera, segment and ended with a synchronous question-and-answer session between the remote audience and the performers, musicians, dancers, stage crew, and technicians. Using a live streaming switcher, projectors, and screens, everyone involved in the production was able to see the remote viewing audience on one screen in one part of the theatre and their own performance (live and pre-recorded) on another screen in another part of the theatre. In this way the performers would gain as close to a live audience experience as possible under COVID-19 restrictions.

Scaffolding Technologies and Aptitudes Toward Achieving Full APFL

Performance for a camera is quite different than performance for an audience. In the development of what technologies to use and in what way they would best be used to help students learn through live performance, it was necessary to employ the technology in steps from their conventional purposes toward a hybrid of live performance with streaming capability for a

remote audience. Planning what the end production would look like at the start was key in being able to experiment and refine a process that would emulate having a live audience.

First came a rehearsal process where the cast and crew were made aware of how exactly the end performance would look for them and the audience (see Appendix B). With that awareness, a level of trust in the process was easily established as we moved forward. The music director agreed to have the pit orchestra record the performance of few numbers beforehand. This was followed by recording the cast singing individually to the band's recording using a multi-track recorder and re-engineering the vocal tracks in post. It was soon decided to record the vocals as a whole group and then remaster that track with the individual tracks. This then became the soundtrack for our choreographer to clean the dancing and when the lights were programmed, the set pieces were complete, the costumes were fitted and finished, and the blocking set, that section of the show was filmed several times from different angles to take full advantage of the film medium. To progress closer to live production, subsequent sections of the show were filmed with the pit orchestra playing live with the performers wearing wireless microphones amplified into the theatre to balance audio levels. Sections of dialogue continued to be recorded in the manner of a film production with a variety of close-up shots, inserts, wide, and establishing shots. The cast and crew prepared themselves for the final phase which included a digital streaming switcher, laptops, cameras, projectors, screens, and an audio mixer to provide several video and audio signals. This technology would not only allow remote audiences to watch the performance, but also to allow them to react to and interact with the performers in real time. A section of the show required some audience participation. Remote audience participants were arranged for in advance. Everyone involved in the production was also prepared for a question-and-answer period with the remote audience at the end of the show. As many of the cast

members' families were audience members, their participation in the show's first scene and the in the question-and-answer period at the end deepened everyone's appreciation of the adaptations made to compensate for restrictions not allowing an in-person audience (see Appendix C).

Sharing the Know-How

Using video conferencing technologies within performing arts contexts and for the purpose of providing an APFL required a reimagining of their potentials. This is where some specialized practical knowledge has afforded me the best chance of success in this project. As such, I offer a few key instructional videos to help others in the common interest of providing both audience and performer a deeper and more potentially interactive theatrical experience (see Appendix A). These videos, presented as Hands-on Educational Technology Tips that can be found in full on my blog, are titled as follows: Cameras, Switchers and YouTube Live, Streaming via Zoom™, Projectors and Connectors, Portable Projection Screen Set-Up, and Mixing Sound.

Testing the technology is a key to the success of anyone's intended use of it. In whatever capacity technology can be imagined, it is the will of its user that makes such imagination a reality. The Hands-on Educational Technology Tips videos are intended to give teachers of performing arts courses and anyone in performing arts some of the know-how to deal with pandemic restrictions while creating as close to a live theatrical experience for both the audience and the performer as possible. The key behind using the technology is in its potential to recreate the interactive capacity between audience and performer that is the very essence of theatre.

Chapter Four: Reflections

The following link leads to a podcast version of this chapter on my WordPress "The Story is Everything" blog site: Extending APFL's Purpose. Below is a transcript of the podcast:

Summary of Learning through the Project and the Program

I learned that the best results come from starting with what you know and, more specifically, what you know how to do. Of course, the most painful part of learning is the struggle you must go through when you venture into territory you've never charted before. And for me that was the academic push that making a master's degree had me shying away from it the first time I considered pursuing one almost 15 years ago. But now, so close to the finish line, I realize that the culmination has become a wonderful blend of what I know how to do, what I believe is my best way of passing on what I know how to do, and bridging the two with existing like-minded ideas, research, and literature from a long history of like-mindedness that has come before me. A truly salient illumination has been that the academia behind pursuing a master's degree is the enormous and ever-expanding way that research can be approached and written about. This might have something to do with being in a program that appears to be on a leading edge in research and academic practice. Educational technology may not have been my first choice as I tend to be philosophical about education, but it was the perfect match for my practical nature. I can say that what I learned has taught me to be comfortable in my skin, to be confident. I am now more motivated to move forward than to fear being left behind.

Reflections on Growth

My research began to shed daylight on what have inherently known and felt was right in teaching practical resource and performance-based courses. The words of Dewey, of Eisner, Heathcote, Peter Brook, my former teacher Saxton, the varied research from market analysts to

behavioural scientists, and especially the works and encouragement of one my committee member Dr. Monica Prendergast all contributed my deepening conviction that the learning with the most longevity happens in the most subtle forms and ways; in the moments where connections are made between failing or succeeding without saying a word, in a look of acknowledgement, a nod of encouragement, a gasp of "aha," a round of applause from an objective audience. Having done the research I am more confident than ever to call attention to these ways of learning and bring about an awareness of this to my students. It has been a challenge to find literature and research that is specific to how a student can learn from an audience in performance, but the research of Warden on professional wrestling audiences and Pitts's "communication loop," combined with Prendergast's "Audience in Performance," Vygostski's developmental tools for cultural development, Heathcote, and my own former mime and clown instructor Adrian Pecknold, to name a few, all fomented my resolve to create a new level of awareness around the potential teaching and learning that an audience provides to the performer in real time. The research and literature helped me to connect the dots and come up with the concept of the Audience-Performer Feedback Loop. We learn from way we are watched, appreciated, misunderstood, laughed at, laughed with, and ultimately accepted. This is where my master's research has led. How can this be promoted during a pandemic? Well, informed by my research, that is exactly where my practice and project has led me.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

So, where is this going to go? Is it bound to collect virtual dust in some endlessly retreating corner of the internet? There is so much research out there, so much that isn't even accessible by everyone yet, but that will not stop the development of new ideas, good or poor. In education, there is a dire need for teachers to understand the subtle ways that teach their students;

as an influential singular audience, the teacher can crush a student's hopes and expectations with a simple turn of the head, a gesture, a frown. This type of research that places how students' abilities to learn as dependent upon how a teacher presents themselves is at the core of this Audience-Performer Feedback Loop, where, at times, the roles between teacher and student, between audience and performer, can be swiftly reversed, sometimes unnoticeably by the parties involved.

Teacher-training policy should include a course in such research that has been primarily the domain of marketing psychologists and adjunctive course units in bedside-manner training for student-physicians. Taking what has been a tradition of schooling from the stages of live theatre and extending it outwards to students, teachers, and making a conscious practice of raising one's awareness of how we learn from our audiences in all forms can benefit how effectively we teach, learn, and live with each other.

I'd like to thank doctors Valerie Irvine, Michael Paskevicius, Monica Prendergast, and all of my instructors throughout the Technology in Education Graduate Program. Thanks, too, to all my classmates for the times I will surely not soon forget.

And now, we return you to our regularly scheduled program.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Rehearsal/Filming Schedule

No Small Roles – Rehearsal/Filming Schedule			
Month/Days	Monday	Wednesday	Thursday
January 4, 5, & 7	Process Recap, Schedule Hand-out, The Process Forward	Act II scene iii ("Fugue for Tinhorns" - page 42-44) Principal cast + Nicely, Benny, & Rusty – review blocking & choreography	Act II scene v ("Don't Cry for Me Argentina" & "Money Kept Rollin' In" - pg. 45-49) FULL CAST – review & clean blocking & choreography
January 11, 13, & 14	Act II scene iii ("Fugue for Tinhorns" - page 42-44) Principal cast + Nicely, Benny, & Rusty –***film*** dialogue & song	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – choreography & blocking	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – finish choreography & blocking
January 18, 20, & 21	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – clean choreography & blocking	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – learn vocals & run dance number through to end dialogue	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – full dress with tech.
January 25, 27, & 28	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – run-through with full tech (try mics on outside of masks)	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST – run-through with full tech (try mics on outside of masks)– ***full tech & pit band run***	Act II scene v ("Don't Cry for Me Argentina" & "Money Kept Rollin' In" - pg. 45-49) FULL CAST – run-through blocking & choreography
February 1, 3, & 4	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) & Act II scene v ("Don't Cry for Me Argentina" & "Money Kept Rollin' In" - pg. 45-49)FULL CAST – ***clean***	ACT II scene ii ("What is Urinetown?" – pg. 35-37) FULL CAST - ***FILM***	ACT I scene iii ("El Bravo" – pg. 17-19) Principal cast – blocking & choreography
February 8, 10, & 11	Act II scene v ("Don't Cry for Me Argentina" & "Money Kept Rollin'	Act II scene v ("Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" & end of scene dialogue- pg. 45-49)- ***FILM***	ACT I scene iii ("El Bravo" – pg. 17-19) Principal cast – finish blocking & choreography

	In" - pg. 45-49) FULL CAST – ***FILM***		
February 15, 17, & 18	FAMILY DAY	ACT I scene iii ("El Bravo" – pg. 17-19) Principal cast – Learn vocals & run-through)	ACT I scene iv ("Wilkommen" – pg. 19-24) FULL CAST – blocking & choreography
February 22, 24, & 26	ACT I scene iii ("El Bravo" – pg. 17-19) Principal cast – ***FILM***	ACT I scene iv ("Wilkommen" – pg. 19-24) CAST – blocking & choreography & learn song ACT II scene I ("Jimmy" & What Do I Need With Love?" – pg. 31-34) Laurel & Leif to learn song	ACT I scene iv ("Wilkommen" – pg. 19-24) CAST – finish blocking & choreography ACT II scene I ("Jimmy" & What Do I Need With Love?" – pg. 31-34) Principal cast - blocking
March 1, 3, & 4	ACT I scene iv ("Wilkommen" – pg. 19-24) FULL CAST – Rehearsal	ACT II scene I ("Jimmy"and dialogue – pg. 31-34) Principal cast - ***FILM***	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – blocking & choreography
March 8, 10, & 11	ACT I scene iv ("Wilkommen" – pg. 19-24) FULL CAST – ***FILM***	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – learn choreography	ACT II scene I ("What Do I Need With Love?" – pg. 31-34) Principal cast - ***FILM***
SPRING BREAK	EDIT	EDIT	EDIT
March 29, 31, April 1	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – finish choreography	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – finish blocking	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – review blocking & choreography
April 5, 7, & 8	EASTER MONDAY	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – review blocking & choreography	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" pg. 25-27) FULL CAST – **dress/tech run**
April 12, 14, & 15	ACT I scene v ("You're the Top" & Anything Goes" – pg. 25-30) FULL CAST – **run and *FILM***	ACT I scene ii ("I Hope I Get It" – pg. 9-16) CAST – polish blocking & choreography	ACT I scene ii ("I Hope I Get It" – pg. 9-16) CAST – learn blocking & choreography
April 19, 21, & 22	ACT I scene ii ("I Hope I Get It" – pg. 9-16) CAST – ***FILM***	ACT II scene vi ("We had a Good Thing Going" – pg. 49-53) Charlie & Loraine – blocking	ACT II scene vi ("We had a Good Thing Going" – pg. 49-53) Charlie & Loraine - blocking

April 26, 28, & 29	ACT II scene vi ("We had a Good Thing Going" – pg. 49-53) Charlie & Loraine - ***FILM***	ACT II scene vii (Seasons of Love" pg. 53-54) FULL CAST - blocking	ACT II scene vii (Seasons of Love" pg. 53-54) FULL CAST - blocking
May 3, 5, & 6	ACT II scene vii (Seasons of Love" pg. 53-54) FULL CAST - ***FILM***	Act I scene i ("25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") FULL CAST – song/blocking/choreography	Act I scene i ("25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") FULL CAST – blocking/choreography
May 10,12, & 13	Act I scene i ("25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") FULL CAST – recap run-through	Act I scene i ("25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") FULL CAST – **run-through with cameras**	Act I scene i "(25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") FULL CAST – **test livestream**

ANTICIPATED LIVE/LIVESTREAM PRODUCTION DATES (FULL CAST & CREW):

FRIDAY & SATURDAY MAY 14 & 15 – SHOWTIME BEGINS @ 7:30 p.m. (Arrive by 6:30. Mic check will begin 6:45.) **SUBJECT TO THEATRE ACCESS**

This schedule is subject to change, but it should give everyone a good idea of *when to have your lines memorized in time for scheduled rehearsals and filming*. Staying as close to this schedule as possible will also help us determine when to begin advertising. Thank you all for your trust, your commitment, and your talent. This is a very different way to put on a show, and your flexibility and patience is appreciated beyond measure.

N.B. This was the fourth and last iteration. A poll was conducted to ask the cast and crew to choose between moving the performance dates to the first or second weekend in May due to the intensity of the rehearsal and filming process, illnesses, and unforeseen circumstances. 90% responded with the choice to perform for the remote audience on May 14 and 15, almost two months beyond the accustomed closing date that the school traditionally chooses.

Appendix B: Student Feedback Example

A student gave me this mug embossed by their parent with my "role" and the titles of the musicals that I incorporated into the script. The student thanked me for the adapted process of creating a musical theatre production with the clear goal of bringing audience and performer together, even remotely, under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upon asking the cast and crew what they looked forward to the most, many replied putting on the live part of the show with the ability to see the remote audience (made up mostly of their families) projected on a screen for them to see during the performance. What the pandemic did not do was to quash the students' need and excitement behind performing in front of a live audience.