Working in the theatre isn’t always plain sailing. I realised this when I started searching for a placement in July 2023. It was quite difficult to reach out and write to many different theatre companies explaining why it would be great for me to do my placement there. The majority of the theatre companies I emailed got back saying they weren’t taking placements, or they had no shows on at the moment for me to work on. I emailed the Lyric, and they were very efficient and replied quickly. They told me in the beginning that they don’t usually take placements but as they had two Christmas shows coming up, they were happy to let me come and work for them. I went through the process of applying for the placement and getting my paperwork sent over, then once I sent them my timetable, we agreed on which days suited best I was ready to start. I had started AEL3001 5 weeks before starting placement, so it was good to get an insight into reflective practice and reflective writing before I began my placement. This put me in a great position to write my first blog.

At the beginning of AEL3001, we learnt about reflective practice and how reflection is a cyclical process in which we consciously consider our experiences, actions, emotions, and reactions to events. [[1]](#footnote-1) This was extremely helpful for me as I went into my placement with the idea of reflective practice in my head and I was analysing everything I did. I started to think reflectively about the tasks I was set during my placement and at the end of the day if the prop that I made turned out the way I wanted I would analyse what choices I had made for this to happen and if it didn’t turn out the way I wanted I would also analyse the choices I made and I would then think of ways I could do things differently next time to get a better outcome. It is not sufficient simply to have an experience to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. (Gibbs, 1988) [[2]](#footnote-2)

In week three we began to learn about reflective writing, which has helped with writing this blog. Reflective writing is an exploration and explanation of events, an account of your response to experiences, opinions and events, and an analysis of your thoughts and feelings about these experiences. It also helps to identify areas for development, and it is a way of putting learning into practice.[[3]](#footnote-3) There are many key characteristics of reflective writing, a combination of academic and personal, and the selection of events for analysis, you also need to focus on your strengths and success, but also anxieties, fears, mistakes, and weaknesses. The model of reflection that I have chosen to write my blog is the Gibbs Reflective cycle. Gibbs’ reflective cycle encourages a clear description, and analysis of a situation, and examines what one would do should the situation happen again. (Jasper, 2003) [[4]](#footnote-4) I chose this model as it is the one, I feel I can use in great detail to reflect on my time during this module and my placement.



I started my placement in the Lyric on the 24th of October. I was extremely nervous and anxious as I didn’t know what to expect. I was greeted by a lady called Kerry she was extremely welcoming which put me at ease. She gave me a tour of the entire building and explained to me what I would be focusing on during my placement, this then made me feel more comfortable as I got more of an insight into the placement process. I went to the stage-management office and met everyone who works there. They were all extremely nice and welcoming, I was starting to feel so much more comfortable and at ease. My first task was to read through their new script of Hansel and Gretel which is one of the Christmas shows they will be producing this winter. I read through it and underlined all of the props which were mentioned in the stage directions. I then went into the rehearsal room where there was a model box of the set for Hansel and Gretel, I got to look at it and this gave me more of an idea of the theme and colour scheme they are going for. What was good about today was that I got to meet everyone, and everyone made me feel extremely comfortable. I also found it good that I got to start my placement at the beginning of the show that way everyone, although more experienced than me, is new to the show, and this eased me in. I wouldn’t say anything was particularly bad about this experience, but the main stage managers were not there so everything seemed a bit all over the place and not very coherent this made it seem like an unprofessional environment. What I can make of this situation is that there was a lot for me to do today so the day went very quickly, I always have something to do, and it is a very busy environment. Today was a great day although I feel like I didn’t use my initiative when completing tasks. I felt very reliant on other people to walk me through things, and I feel like this happened because this was a new experience for me, and I was very nervous in case I did something wrong. I feel like my action plan for the future is to become a lot more confident and just take everything in my stride. This is a learning experience after all, so I feel if I take it upon myself to do things, I feel like doing and they turn out wrong then that is just making room for improvement.

After my first day in placement, I was moved on to more practical work and I started working in the workshop. My first task was to make the sweets for Hansel and Gretel. I was making them out of foam. They had to be quite large in size and all the same size and shape. This was very time-consuming, and I was finding it quite difficult as some of the materials didn’t cut very well. I also had to make a voodoo doll which I have included a picture of. This is for the Christmas show, ‘Have Yourself a Scary Little Christmas’. At first, this seemed to me like it was going to be quite a simple task as I researched images of voodoo dolls, and I thought it would be quite quick to make. What was good about this experience was that it gave me an insight into how much work goes into theatre-making as it nearly took me all day to make this voodoo doll. What was also good about this experience was that I gained a bit of confidence as once it was made it turned out well and everyone who was working with me was extremely impressed with it. This gave me a bit of reassurance that I can do things using my mind and I don’t need to constantly rely on other people's opinions. What was bad about this experience was that I began to make the body out of foam and cut out the body shape and began working on it until Stu who works in stage management came along and told me it was far too big, so I had to scrap that idea and start all over again. What I also found bad about this experience was that when making the mummer costume for the voodoo doll I also found myself getting quite anxious about doing it wrong so I kept asking the girl I worked with for advice until she said, ‘Shauna, I would’ve hoped you would use some initiative to figure it out’. This made me feel a bit upset but I continued to work on it, and it turned out okay. What else I could make of this situation is how much of a learning curve it has been for me. I have seen how quickly I have been immersed in this experience and how much trial and error goes into theatre-making. We are not always going to get it right the first time. What I feel like I could've done in this situation is just to work away at my own accord and then once I am done, I could ask for approval on what I have completed I feel like this could save a lot of stress asking other people constantly for approval. If this arose again this is exactly what I would do and then if it was incorrect, I could just start again and make the correct version.

In conclusion, starting my placement and learning how to reflect on my practice and write reflectively on my practice has been a very positive experience. I have learnt a lot and I feel as though it is a very positive thing to write reflectively on your practice as you can see where you are going wrong and where there is room for improvement. This way you are more likely to improve in the future. I will now continue my placement and hope to learn more throughout my AEL3001 module.

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