



VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Past meets future in the present: Self-reflection as a rehearsal method in *Albertine in Five Times*

Artemis Preeshl^{1*}

Received: 05 April 2016
Accepted: 09 September 2016
Published: 28 September 2016

*Corresponding author: Artemis Preeshl,
Department of Theatre Arts and Dance,
Loyola University New Orleans, 405
Audubon Trace, Jefferson, LA 70121,
USA
E-mail: moxaherb@hotmail.com

Reviewing editor:
Zoe Strecker, Transylvania University,
USA

Additional information is available at
the end of the article

Abstract: In rehearsal of Michel Tremblay's play, the impact of self-reflection on personalization and characterization of the actresses in *Albertine in Five Times* was assessed through quantitative and qualitative methods. In a sample of freshmen and juniors majoring in Theatre/Communications and Theatre, actresses reflected on and characterization by writing a letter to self, journaling, and sharing in a verbal check-in before rehearsal. The hypothesis that written reflection on personalization and characterization would have a greater impact than the daily verbal check-in was rejected. The daily verbal check-in was perceived to have a significant impact on personalization and characterization of Theatre/Communications majors and freshmen more than journaling or writing letters to self. Juniors perceived that all three methods of self-reflection impacted personalization and characterization. The actresses perceived that the daily verbal check-in enhanced awareness of the cast as an ensemble. Self-reflection encouraged the actresses to become aware of the interaction between personalization and characterization. Written and verbal self-reflection unified the stages of *Albertine's* life into a cohesive whole in *Albertine in Five Times*.

Subjects: Communication Studies; Instructional Communication; Theatre & Performance Studies

Keywords: reflection; education; performance; rehearsal; ignatian; pedagogy; Foreignness in the arts



Artemis Preeshl

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Artemis Preeshl teaches acting, movement, and speech. She conducts research on personality, mood, and movement. A Fulbright Senior Researcher, she directed *Pancha Ratna* (Best World Cinema, Hollywood's DIY Film Festival), taught research methods. As a Fulbright Specialist in Theatre, she lectured on Elizabethan writers, and directed a staged reading of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* at Madras University. The Routledge Companion on Commedia dell'arte published her chapter on "Brighella". She holds an MFA in Drama, an MA in Dance, and BA degree in Psychology. She is a Laban Movement Analyst and an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework®. In collaboration with Dr Gwen George and Dr Wendy Hicks, her research on "The Path to Presence" was published in *Cogent Education* in 2015. Preeshl is writing a book on Shakespeare and Commedia dell'arte with Routledge due in 2017.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Self-reflection is essential to critical thinking. An engaged actor reflects on performance in rehearsal and performance. This study compares oral reflection, journaling, and writing a letter to self as methods of reflection. Since five of the six characters in *Albertine in Five Times* portray *Albertine* at different ages, reflection was central to the rehearsal process. By assessing basic emotions before, during, and after the rehearsal, the actresses gained insight into how they felt about rehearsal and how their character felt at different times in her life.

1. Introduction

In the academy and the professional world, students and employees may use reflection to achieve personal and professional goals. Some reflective techniques for professional development include journaling, recorded observations of oneself and others, and discussions about strengths, weaknesses, and strategies to improve performance. Although theatre programmes may encourage actors to reflect on classroom experiences, theatre practitioners seldom assess the impact of self-reflection on character development. Therefore, research on self-reflection in nursing, music, and athletics may contribute to understanding how reflection increases learning in theatre.

In *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, Constantin Stanislavsk, founder of “the method” acting technique, created a scenario about reflection in acting. The acting teacher Tortsov instructed a young actor named Paul, “Concentrate the rays of your attention inwards, observe what is happening in your head, and identify what you believe in the scene you have just played” (2010, p. 636). His teaching revealed how an actor might reflect on thoughts and beliefs on what happened to understand his or her character in a scene. In method acting, an actor thinks about how his or her character should speak and interact with other characters to reach the character’s goal. An actor might define a character’s goal as: “I want to make [my scene partner] do or say [x]”. Then, s/he tries different tactics in rehearsal to make the other character do or say to get what s/he wants. The actor uses tactics such as encourage, induce, coerce, or persuade a character to respond in a specific way. If a tactic is effective, the actor plays this tactic again. If the tactics do not cause the other character to do what s/he intends, the actor tries to speak or behave in a different way to reach the character’s goal. This pilot study examines how actors use reflection on the self and the character in rehearsal to play believable characters onstage.

The structure of *Albertine in Five Times* as a memory play lent itself to the incorporation of self-reflection as a rehearsal method. In a memory play such as Charles Dicken’s *Christmas Carol*, a narrator retells stories from his or her life out of sequence. *Albertine in Five Times* takes place in the memory and imagination of a war widow, Albertine at 70, who recalls episodes from five decades of her life. Albertine at 70 has Sundowner Syndrome. When the sun goes down, she cannot distinguish reality from hallucinations. Smith (2014) defined “sundowning” as “confusion at the end of the day and into the night ... [which] cause[s] a variety of behaviors ... confusion, anxiety, aggression or ignoring directions ... pacing or wandering”. This lower middle class French Canadian woman grew up in rural Quebec. When she was a young woman, she moved with her family to Montreal. Albertine at 70 moved into a nursing home. As the sun goes down on her first day, Albertine relives the beating that she gave to her daughter at age 30. In 1942, when a watchman had stalked her 11-year daughter in La Fontaine Park, Albertine saw the stalker kneeling with his head on her daughter’s stomach. Instead of confronting the watchman, she beat her daughter. Following each episodic memory, Albertine at 70 discusses her choices with her selves at ages 30, 40, 50, and 60, and her deceased sister, Madeleine. In *Albertine in Five Times*, Albertine might have had post-traumatic syndrome disorder (PTSD) or another mental disorders as well as Sundowner Syndrome. In 1925, Pierre Janet, the forefather of PTSD, treated patients through “recover[y]and integrat[ion] the memories of the trauma into the totality of people’s identities” (Van Der Hart, Brown, & Van Der Kolk, 1989). The Albertines intuitively reflected on traumatic incidents to reconstruct and integrate their memories into a collective whole. As the Albertines recount moments from their life, they share memories, vanquish nemeses, and rewrite the narrative of their life.

In this contemporary production of Michel Tremblay’s *Albertine in Five Times*, the actresses engaged in a series of self-reflection in rehearsal. When Albertine at 70 sought to make meaning of the five stages her life, she exclaimed, “Listen to the heart rather than the head” (Tremblay, 1984, p. 31). The actresses took Albertine’s advice and reflected on their own lives and rehearsal experiences using three methods:

- (1) Writing three letters-to-self during the rehearsal process,
- (2) Writing for five minutes in a private journal at the start of each rehearsal, and
- (3) Sharing in a daily verbal check-in circle before each rehearsal.

This purpose of this pilot study was to assess characterization and personalization of a role through self-reflection. In a play, characterization is the way an actor speaks, moves, and interacts as a character in relation to other characters. Personalization is the process of endowing a person, object, or situation with an actor's personal and meaningful memory to heighten the stakes for a character. As a result of self-reflection in rehearsal, it was hoped that the actors would appear and feel more believable in rehearsal and performance. By comparing quantitative and qualitative responses to written and oral reflection across majors and academic classes, a significant impact of self-reflection on the rehearsal process of *Albertine in Five Times* was expected. It was hypothesized that written self-reflection in the letters-to-self and journaling would have a greater impact than the daily verbal check-in circle on the personalization and characterization of the actresses in *Albertine in Five Times*.

Self-reflection includes writing and talking about experiences. In *Albertine in Five Times*, the actors reflected by journaling, writing three letters to themselves, and sharing at the beginning of each rehearsal. The letter-to-self exercise was based on a self-reflective Jesuit practice. For example, Georgetown's Escape retreat, Escape Director Bridget Sherry invited "students [to] write a 'letter to self' reflecting on their aspirations for personal growth ... sealed the letters ... in the Escape office for a year, then sent [letters] back to the individual Escapees" (Piccini, 2013). Therefore, the actresses wrote three letters-to-self: one before rehearsal began, one in the middle of the rehearsal process, and one after the play opened. After writing the next letter, the actresses received the previous letters by mail. At the beginning of each rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*, the actresses wrote in their journals for five minutes and shared aloud whatever was on their minds in a daily check-in circle. The actresses passed a pencil as a talking stick to ensure that only the actress with the pencil spoke at any given moment. After the show closed, actors reviewed their journals and letters-to-self. The actresses reflected on what they thought about and how they felt before, during, and after rehearsal to assess how reflection impacted their personalization and characterization in rehearsals of *Albertine in Five Times*. It was hoped that the actresses would apply relevant aspects of their own experiences to the related actions of their characters onstage.

2. Literature review

Few theatre practitioners have conducted studies on self-reflection in theatre. To develop this pilot study, it was necessary to consider studies on reflection in other fields. The focus of a musician is similar to an actor's focus. In 2006, Ericsson found that expert violinists who deliberately practiced specific goals identified by their teachers in weekly lessons significantly improved how they played. Similar to a violinist who sets a goal to improve technique, an actor sets a goal to develop a character. Because researchers have primarily studied self-reflection in disciplines other than the performing arts, research on self-reflection in other fields deepened understanding of how self-reflection could improve performance.

Self-reflection increased professional development in sports and nursing. In the early 1990s, researchers explored application of self-reflection on nursing skills. Burnard (2008) found that reflection on clinical experiences improved client care in nursing. Dewing (1990) determined that reflection increased clinical knowledge and nursing skills in novice and senior nurses. Newell (1992) distinguished between concentration on improvement of a set of nursing skills in single or multiple sessions and observation of one specific technique over time. In athletics, Macintyre, Igou, Campbell, Moran, and Matthews (2014) found that expert athletes planned, concentrated on, and reflected on the skills of specific movements to improve their execution and achieve excellence. These studies on reflection in sports and nursing supported the impact of self-reflection on learning. Self-reflection contextualized experience and increased professional competency.

Following these initial studies, researchers divided the process of self-reflection into steps. Cameron and Mitchell (1991) utilized three different journaling techniques to develop authenticity in nursing students. In the first technique, Knowing-in-Action, as a student nurse practiced a nursing skill and recorded observations about the chosen clinical intervention, another nursing student

recorded observations of the student nurse. Then, the student and peer compared their observations of interventions and discussed alternative interventions. In the second technique, Reflection-in-Action, the student read journal entries and documented areas of growth. Then, peers discussed their shared experiences in a group. In the third technique, the student re-read Knowing-in-Action and Reflection-in-Action techniques in their journals to assess successful interventions, methods to improve nursing skills, and theories or practices that may contribute to future professional growth. Subsequently, Riley-Douchet and Wilson (1997) articulated a three-step reflective process to enhance critical thinking and appropriate emotional response in nursing. In step one, students recorded events, emotions, and “cathartic experiences” (p. 967). In step two, peers discussed shared their concerns with each other. In step three, the student nurses discussed issues with their peers in a group and documented personal progress. This three-step process allowed students to identify professional growth, share “thoughtful and meaningful feedback with each other”, and assess critical incidents through “collaborative problem-solving” (p. 967). Reflection through observations, critical incident logs, journaling, and discussions closed the loop in the learning process.

Self-reflection allowed for further critical self-appraisal in the late 1990s and early ‘00s. Allowing for interplay between setting goals, solving problems, and self-reflection, Zimmerman (2008) outlined three stages of task behaviour: Forethought, performance, and self-reflection. In his self-reflective phase, critical self-appraisal corresponded with appropriate behaviour to increase persistence on task and promote long-term learning. Following the research of Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997), Zimmerman (2008), and Matthews and Desmond (2002), Hild (2014) identified a cyclical process of self-reflection on performance:

- (1) Use of metacognitive strategies;
- (2) Ability to efficiently regulate emotions to maintain task-focus;
- (3) Ability to accurately self-assess; and
- (4) Formation of causal attributions that encourage further striving to attain goals and improve strategies as an element of deliberate practice (p. 141).

The combination of selecting a skill on which to focus, deciding how to improve the skill, and reflecting on rehearsal improved performance.

Similar to actors, nurses, athletes, and musicians focused on a goal and tried different strategies to achieve their objective. Whereas the actor becomes a character that speaks memorized text, listens to scripted lines, observes the subtext of other characters, and takes action onstage, neither the nurse, athlete, nor musician playing an instrument take on another character. They play themselves. Yet, when the actresses applied self-reflection to a memory play such as *Albertine in Five Times*, they perceived that they increased in self-awareness and deepened their experiences in characters.

3. Method

This purpose of this pilot study was to assess which technique of self-reflection had the most significant impact on personalization and characterization in the rehearsal process of *Albertine in Five Times*. It was hypothesized that written self-reflection would have a greatest impact on the personalization and characterization of the actresses in *Albertine in Five Times*. The sample population consisted of cast members of *Albertine in Five Times* ($n = 6$) who were juniors or freshmen who were either Theatre or Theatre/Communications majors at a small Jesuit university in the South. In the Theatre degree, 33% of the credits came from theatre classes. In the Theatre/Communications degree, 25% of the credits came from Theatre, and 25% came from mass communications. Participation in the study was neither a consideration in, nor a condition of, casting in *Albertine in Five Times*. Because the majority of the actors were freshmen, the actresses did not have significant interpersonal relationships with the other cast members or the crew before rehearsals began. Since neither major nor academic class was considered in casting, major and class were dependent variables in this study. The Institutional Review Board approved the quantitative and qualitative questions in the

self-reflection survey on rehearsal below. (see Appendix B) Prior to data collection, each actress volunteered for the study and completed an informed consent form. (see Appendix A). During this pilot study, the cast and crew recorded primary emotions experienced in rehearsal on the Self-Reflection Survey on Rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times* in a quiet room on campus. The intended benefits from this research included:

- (1) Understanding how one's current circumstances impact how the actress chooses to move and speak in character, and
- (2) increasing awareness of reflection on the relationship between the character's circumstances and one's own life enhances to create a more believable character.

It was hoped that self-reflection would improve awareness regarding how personalization and characterization enhanced believability in rehearsal and onstage.

The participants reflected in three ways: Writing a letter-to-self at three times in the rehearsal process, and writing in a journaling and participating in a daily verbal check-in circle before each rehearsal. Actresses wrote a letter-to-self:

- (1) Before the first reading of the play in the first 10 min of rehearsal,
- (2) after the winter holiday in the first 10 min of rehearsal, and
- (3) before the first dress rehearsal in the first 10 min of rehearsal.

The stage manager collected the sealed letters of the actresses and mailed the letters back to the actresses before returning to rehearsal after the winter holiday break, before the opening of the show, and after the show closed. The stage manager started each rehearsal by instructing the cast and crew to write in a private journal for five minutes. Then, the cast and crew shared whatever they wanted to share without interruption in the daily verbal check-in circles. After the written and verbal reflections were completed, the stage manager called the cast to warm-up for rehearsal.

Before completing the self-reflection survey on rehearsal, the actresses were instructed to re-read their letters-to-self and journal entries, and reflect on the rehearsal process of *Albertine in Five Times*, to assess how self-reflection impacted personalization and characterization. Through self-reflection in the rehearsal process, it was hypothesized that written self-reflection of the actresses would significantly impact personalization and characterization more than the verbal check-in in the rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*.

4.1. Results

Three self-reflection methods, the letter-to-self, journaling, and daily verbal check-in circle, were assessed. Of these three of these methods of self-reflection, the daily verbal check-in circle and journaling significantly informed the perceived impact of personalization and characterization on the actresses in *Albertine in Five Times* by major and class (two-sample *t*-test, $p < 0.05$).

4.2. Daily verbal check-in circle

The extent to which the daily verbal check-in circle was perceived to increase the ability of the actresses to personalize characters averaged 4.5 ± 3.67 , $n = 6$). The extent to which verbal check-in circle was perceived to increase the ability for (see Figures 1 and 2):

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors to personalize characters (5 ± 0 , $n = 2$).
- (2) Theatre majors to personalize characters averaged ($3.75 \pm .957$, $n = 4$).

The extent to which the daily verbal check-in circle was perceived to increase the ability for (see Figures 3 and 4):

Figure 1. The perceived impact of daily verbal check-in circle on the ability of theatre/communications majors to personalize character.

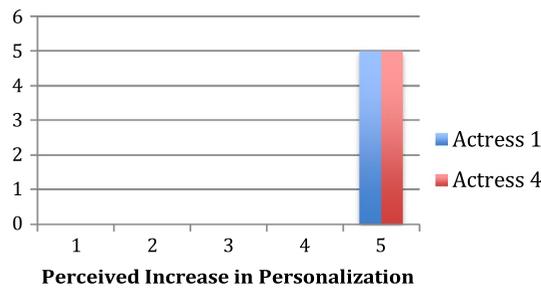


Figure 2. The perceived impact of the daily verbal check-in circle on the ability of theatre majors to personalize character.

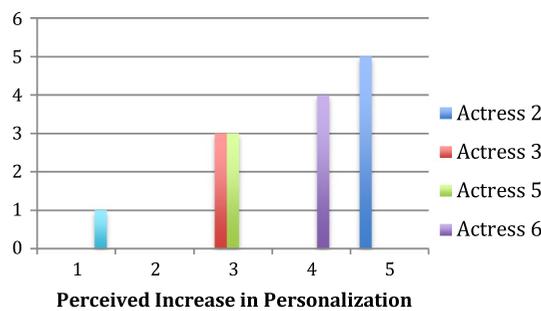


Figure 3. The perceived impact of the daily verbal check-in circle on the ability of freshmen to personalize character in Albertine in five times.

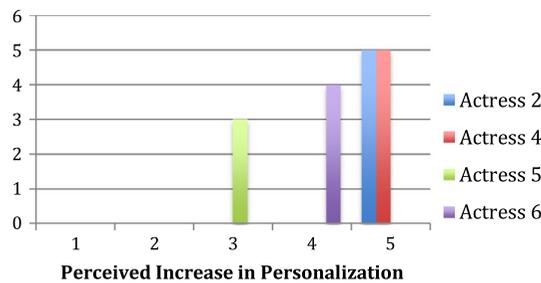
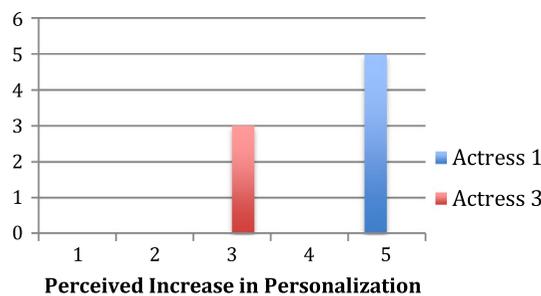


Figure 4. The perceived impact of the daily verbal check-in circle on the ability of juniors to personalize character in Albertine in five times.



- (1) Juniors to personalize characters averaged (4 ± 1.414 , $n = 2$).
- (2) Freshmen to personalize characters averaged ($3.75 \pm .957$, $n = 4$).

Theatre/Communications majors perceived that the daily verbal check-in circle informed personalization of their characters to a significantly greater extent than Theatre majors. Theatre/Communications majors consistently ranked the perceived impact of the daily verbal check-in circle on personalization higher than other self-reflection techniques.

The extent to which the daily verbal check-in circle was recommended as a method for personalization by:

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors averaged $(5 \pm 0, n = 2)$.
- (2) Theatre majors averaged $(4.75 \pm .5, n = 4)$.

The extent to which the daily verbal check-in circle was recommended as a method for personalization by:

- (1) Freshmen averaged $(4.75 \pm .5, n = 4)$.
- (2) Juniors averaged $(5 \pm 0, n = 2)$.

Though differences across major and class were not significant, the Theatre/Communications majors and juniors were more likely to recommend the daily verbal check-in circle as a rehearsal method than Theatre majors. Freshmen reported that they perceived the daily verbal check-in circle to be more useful than written reflection.

4.3. Letter-to-self

The actresses averaged $3.5 (\pm 1.517, n = 2)$ in the extent to which they perceived that the letter-to-self informed their characterization in *Albertine in Five Times*. Although Theatre/Communication majors and Theatre majors perceived that the letter-to-self informed characterization to the same extent (3.5), the range of Theatre majors' scores differed significantly. The extent to which the letter-to-self was perceived to inform characterization by:

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors averaged $3.5 (\pm .707, n = 2)$.
- (2) Theatre majors averaged $3.5 (\pm 1.915, n = 4)$.

The extent the letter-to-self was perceived to inform characterization by:

- (1) Freshmen averaged $3.25 (\pm 1.707, n = 4)$.
- (2) Juniors averaged $4 (\pm 1.414, n = 2)$.

Juniors perceived that the letter-to-self informed characterization to a greater extent than freshman. (see Figures 5 and 6.) Freshmen's perception of the impact of self-reflection on characterization ranged from 1–5.

The extent the letter-to-self was recommended as a rehearsal method by:

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors averaged $(4.5 \pm .707, n = 2)$.
- (2) Theatre majors averaged $(4 \pm 1.154, n = 4)$.

Figure 5. The extent to which juniors would recommend the letter-to-self in future productions.

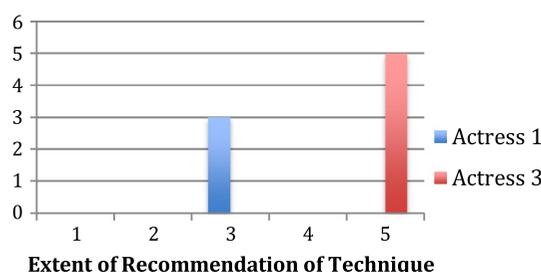
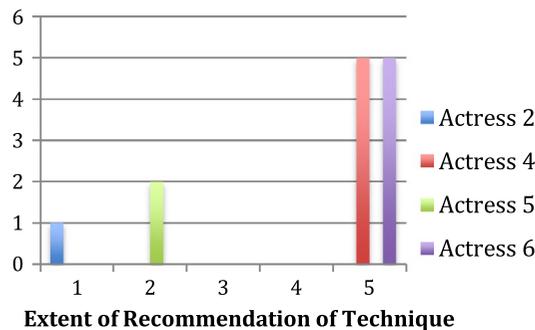


Figure 6. The extent to which freshmen would recommend the letter-to-self in future productions.



Self-reflection through writing a letter-to-self did not significantly differ across major or class. However, the freshmen’s perception of the impact of the letter-to-self ranged from 1 to 5. Because juniors perceived that the letter-to-self was more effective for characterization than freshmen, they were more likely to recommend the letter-to-self as a method of characterization than freshman.

4.4. Journaling

The extent to which journaling was perceived to inform characterization of the actresses averaged ($3.67 \pm 1.505, n = 6$). The extent to which journaling was perceived to inform characterization for:

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors averaged ($4 \pm 0, n = 2$).
- (2) Theatre majors averaged ($3.5 \pm 1.915, n = 4$).

The extent to which journaling was perceived to inform characterization for:

- (1) Juniors averaged ($4.5 \pm .707, n = 2$).
- (2) Freshmen averaged ($3.25 \pm 1.707, n = 4$).

Juniors perceived that journaling significantly informed characterization to a greater extent than freshmen, Theatre/Communication or Theatre majors. (see Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. The extent to which juniors would recommend journaling in future productions.

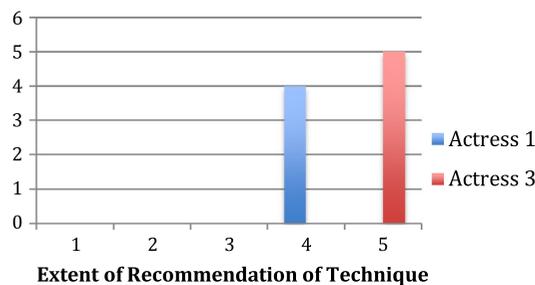


Figure 8. The extent to which freshmen would recommend journaling in future productions.

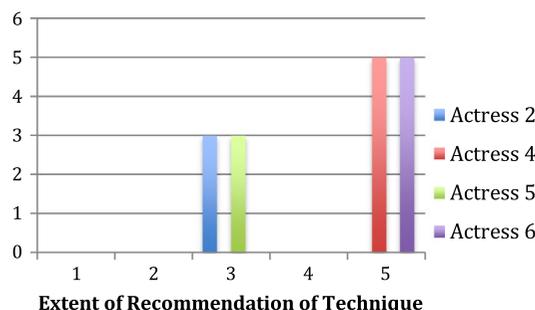


Table 1. Comparison of the three methods of self-reflection*

	Actors	Juniors	Freshmen	Theatre	Theatre/communications
Daily verbal					
Check-in circle	4.5	4	4.25	3.75	5
Journaling	3.67	4.5	3.25	3.5	4
Letter	3.5	4	3.25	3.5	3.5

*Bold indicates significant differences at the (.05) level.

The extent to which the journaling was recommended as a rehearsal method averaged by:

- (1) Theatre/Communication majors averaged ($5 \pm 0, n = 2$).
- (2) Theatre majors averaged ($4.75 \pm .5, n = 4$).

The extent to which the journaling was recommended as a rehearsal method by:

- (1) Freshmen averaged ($4.75 \pm .5, n = 4$).
- (2) Juniors averaged ($5 \pm 0, n = 2$).

All of the Theatre/Communication majors and juniors recommended journaling as a method of characterization.

4.5. Comparison of the three methods of self-reflection

The daily verbal check-in circle and journaling were perceived to be significantly more effective than writing to the letter-to-self. The actresses averaged $3.89 (\pm .535, n = 6)$ in the extent to which the three methods of self-reflection informed characterization. The daily verbal check-in circle was perceived to significantly impact the characterization of the Theatre/ Communications majors ($5 \pm 0, n = 2$) and freshmen ($4.25 \pm .577, n = 4$) more than writing in a journal or writing a letter-to-self (see Table 1).

Juniors perceived journaling to have a significant impact on characterization ($4.167 \pm .289, n = 2$). However, journaling was not perceived as more significantly informative for characterization than the other two methods of self-reflection ($3.67 \pm .365, n = 6$). The letter-to-self was not perceived to significantly inform characterization across majors and classes. It was hypothesized that written self-reflection would have a greater impact on the personalization and characterization of the actresses than the daily check-in circle in *Albertine in Five Times*. The hypothesis was rejected. Although juniors perceived that journaling was effective, Theatre/Communications majors and freshmen perceived that the daily verbal check-in circle was more effective for characterization. Differences across major and class were not significant. Freshmen reported that they perceived that the daily verbal check-in circle more useful than written reflection. Theatre/Communications majors and juniors were more likely to recommend the daily verbal check-in circle as a rehearsal method than Theatre majors.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how oral and written self-reflection informed personalization and characterization in rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*. Some of the actresses made qualitative comments about their quantitative responses. The themes of the qualitative responses of the actresses were categorized by self-reflection method in Table 2: Comments on recommending self-reflection in a future production.

The question, “Would you recommend the daily verbal check-in circle in a future production? Why or why not?” prompted five of the six actresses to express a sense of “close[ness], togetherness

Table 2. Comments on recommending self-reflection in future productions

Verbal check-in	Journaling	Letter to self
Yes! This creates a bond among the cast and allows actors to set aside personal life and focus on the production	For a production of this nature/ emotional intensity, yes, as it allows for the actor to refocus and channel their energy	While I felt that this exercise was very beneficial to me personally (and therefore improved my performance), I am not certain of how intensely it impacted the role
It increases bonding between the actors and director, which was essential for this show	I didn't always have enough on my mind to write about	I didn't understand the purpose
It was a grete (<i>sic</i>) way to get close to the cast as Catholic and become a family	It helped release everything before rehearsal	It was nice to look back and get advice from yourself
It was helpful to get out how you are feeling	It helps you get out all your emotions toward things that don't matter	Yes, it helps you see how you've changed
Made me feel a togetherness, closeness of our group	Helps let go of outside problems	Didn't help really with characterization, but was fun
It helps you drop outside worries/ anxieties at the door—you can then focus	I journal all the time—it is very important for my mental health	You can chart the process of creating a new person—look back on your journey

[and] bonding” among the cast and director. One actress linked closeness with being “Catholic [and] becom[in] a family”. Three actresses perceived a catharsis through the ability to “set aside personal life”, “get out how you are feeling”, and “drop outside worries/anxieties at the door” in the daily verbal check-in circle. Two actresses perceived that the daily verbal check-in circle increased the ability to “focus”. One of these actresses perceived an increased “focus on the production”. The process of a daily verbal check-in circle was perceived to create a sense of belonging, encourage emotional expression, and increase focus on the production.

One question was perceived to bring out the cathartic nature of writing: “Would you recommend journaling in a future production? Why or why not?” For three actresses, journaling was perceived to help “release everything before rehearsal”, “get out all [your] emotions toward things that don't matter”, and “let go of outside problems”. Another actress reported that she wrote in a journal regularly because it was “very important for mental health”. Another actress did not think that she had enough to write about. Another actress observed, “for a production of this nature/emotional intensity ... the journal writing exercise allow[ed] for the actor to refocus and channel their [*sic*] energy”. Although one actress perceived that journal writing focused energy into this emotionally intense production, most of the actresses perceived that journaling released emotions and increased focus on the play.

One question, “Would you recommend the writing a letter-to-yourself exercise in a future production? Why or why not?” invited positive, negative, and ambiguous responses. One actress perceived that writing the letter-to-self benefitted her personally and improved her performance. One actress “didn't understand the purpose of the exercise”. Another actress perceived the exercise as “fun”, but “didn't think it helped”. Another actress was “not certain how intensely it impacted the role”. Other actresses responded positively to the letter-to-self. One actress seemed to embrace Albertine's advice to “listen to the heart”: she perceived that it was “nice to look back and get advice from yourself”. Another actress shared her perception: “You can chart the process of creating a new person - look back on your journey”. Although the actresses did not perceive the letter-to-self to be significantly informative, the diverse comments reflected a range of opinions on the letter-to-self. That 1/3 of the actresses perceived increased connectedness with character through the personal look-back at three different stages indicated that some actresses perceived a benefit from the longitudinal self-reflection.

Freshmen and juniors perceived that the self-reflection process benefitted them in various ways. Juniors consistently perceived the three forms of self-reflection as more impactful on their rehearsal process and performance than the freshmen. Since Dewing (1990) found that self-reflection led to increased ability to enhance theoretical knowledge and nursing clinical skills in both beginning and advanced nurses, the junior's perception of the value of self-reflection in rehearsal and performance may suggest that advanced students more readily perceive that self-reflection may be effective in rehearsal. It is not surprising, therefore, that juniors perceived self-reflection as useful in characterization through "focus", and "advice from the [your]self" that "improved performance". Though one freshman did not perceive a benefit from the reflection process, three freshmen perceived value in catharsis. One freshman perceived that written reflection in the personal journal contributed to the creation of a new "person". This comment in particular underscores the hope for this pilot study: Reflection on one's feelings may be applied to the creation of character.

The difference between juniors and freshmen in the perceived benefit of written reflection in rehearsal and performance could further be related to Ericsson's (2006) finding that expert violinists who followed their teacher's weekly goals improved significantly. Macintyre et al. (2014) found that goal-oriented behaviour and self-reflection improved the performance of expert athletes. The juniors had more acting training. Like the expert athletes, the juniors with more advanced acting may have been more accustomed to choosing a goal, determining the best way to accomplish the goal, reflecting on their progress toward the goal, and changing behaviour to accomplish the goal. Because juniors have developed critical thinking and acting skills over two more years than freshmen, the juniors may have been more experienced in the application of self-reflection to performance than freshman. Therefore, juniors may have perceived a greater benefit from reflection across reflection methods.

The style of self-reflection in this pilot study resembled Riley-Douchet and Wilson's (1997) reflective process that combined critical thinking with effective emotional response. Step one resembled journaling: documenting incidents, emotional state, and catharsis. Step two featured peer-to-peer sharing similar to the daily verbal check-in circle. However, the self-reflection process in the rehearsals of *Albertine in Five Times* did not include one aspect of Step two: Feedback to others. In acting classes, theatre students often make suggestions about performance to other theatre students in a guided discussion. However, theatre tradition dissuades actors from giving feedback on each other's performances in rehearsal. The director gives notes, or the stage manager gives the director's notes, to actors. If the actresses closed the loop through interactional peer review on each other's performances, the actresses may perceive more significant improvement in performance in a future study. However, if peer critique of acting in rehearsal were undertaken, the director and stage manager would need to handle the reflective process and facilitate the discussion with great sensitivity.

The actresses' keen interest in verbal feedback related to another finding in this pilot study: both of the Theatre/Communications majors consistently rated the daily verbal check-in circle and journaling as more informative for personalization and characterization than Theatre majors. Compared with the longitudinal nature of the letter-to-self, it may be the interest of Theatre/Communications majors in the quick pace of mass communication lent itself to daily check-in circle and journaling. The actresses' preference for the daily verbal check-in circle could be related to the self-selection of the students who choose to major in verbally expressive degrees such as Theatre and Mass Communication. Additionally, it is important to consider the impact of the Net Generation on self-reflection of the actresses. Tapscott's (2009) research on millennial students suggested that employers improve retention of the Net Generation on the job by "monitoring performance with more frequent informal discussions that evaluate specific job contributions within the organization, and improvement of the manager-employee two-way relationship through open dialogue" (p. 161). Perhaps the time lapse between writing and rereading letters-to-self contributed to the perception of the reduced impact of letters-to-self on personalization and characterization. Further research on

peer feedback in rehearsal, the difference in rehearsal methods for the Net Generation and traditional rehearsal methods, and differences in rehearsal methods for novice and expert actors, would advance the study of self-reflection on performance.

6. Conclusion

It was hypothesized that written self-reflection would have a greater impact on the personalization and characterization of the actresses than a daily verbal check-in in *Albertine in Five Times*. Theatre/Communications majors rated the daily verbal check-in circle as highly as possible. Theatre/Communications majors and juniors were likely to recommend the daily verbal check-in circle as a rehearsal method. The Theatre/Communication majors and freshmen in particular, and the actresses overall, perceived that they were better informed about personalization through the daily verbal check-in circle than written self-reflective methods. Juniors perceived that journaling informed characterization. Consequently, juniors recommended journaling as a rehearsal method to a significant extent. However, journaling was not perceived as significantly more informative for characterization than the other methods of self-reflection. Juniors perceived the letter-to-self as a more effective method for characterization than freshman. However, self-reflection through writing a letter-to-self was not perceived to differ significantly by major or class. Theatre majors, juniors and freshmen perceived significant differences within their major or class in the extent to which they would recommend the letter-to-self as a rehearsal method.

In sum, Theatre/Communications majors and freshmen perceived that the daily verbal check-in circle was significantly impactful in personalization and characterization than journaling or writing a letter-to-self. Juniors perceived all forms of self-reflection to be informative. Juniors perceived that journaling was significantly informative to developing character. The hypothesis that written reflection would impact personalization and characterization more than the daily verbal check-in circle was rejected. The daily verbal check-in circle was perceived to be more effective for the Theatre/Communications majors, freshmen, and the actresses.

Reflection is essential to personal and professional development. Reflection plays a key role in developing leadership. Laub (2006) included reflection in his three steps to the Jesuit ideal of servant leadership: “listening over speaking, of reflection over thoughtless action, and of inquiry over certainty becoming an effective leader” (p. 174). When one reflects how one speaks and acts, self-reflection may increase awareness of one’s impact on others. For example, in the Ignatian context, Preis and Stauder (2014) found that when graduate students in speech pathology journaled about and reflected on clinical experiences, the advanced students improved in their ability to appropriately intervene with clients over time. The actresses in *Albertine in Five Times* reported that in verbal and written self-reflection in the rehearsal process tended increased personalization and characterization to some extent. Like the graduate students in Preis and Stauder’s study, the juniors in this pilot study perceived a greater impact of self-reflection on personalization and characterization.

Connection of personal experience to their characters’ experience replicated Albertine’s integration of her own memories in the play. Inspired by the Jesuit practice of the letter-to-self, the self-reflective process in *Albertine in Five Times* was perceived to deepen the actresses’ self-knowledge and increase awareness of how personal experience may compliment personalization and characterization. By reflecting on their personal experiences, the actresses could better discern why their characters choose a specific goal and strategies to achieve that goal. Self-reflection was perceived as a way to reflect on pivotal moments in Albertine’s life, which summed the five discreet moments in the protagonist’s life into a unified whole. The actresses perceived that bonding experience through the daily verbal check-in circle increased focus, allowed for catharsis, and/or enhanced the experience of the cast as an ensemble. In this pilot study, self-reflection was perceived as impactful and informative in personalization and characterization in rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*.

Funding

The author received no direct funding for this research.

Author details

Artemis Preeshl¹

E-mail: moxaherb@hotmail.com

¹ Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, Loyola University New Orleans, 405 Audubon Trace, Jefferson, LA 70121, USA.

Citation information

Cite this article as: Past meets future in the present: Self-reflection as a rehearsal method in Albertine in *Five Times*, Artemis Preeshl, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2016), 3: 1236435.

Note

¹ <http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/honors/essential-characteristics-jesuit-honors-program>.

References

- Burnard, P. (2008). Improving through reflection. *Journal of District Nursing*, 11, 10–12.
- Cameron, B. L., & Mitchell, A. M. (1991). Reflective peer journals: Developing authentic nurses. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 18, 290–297.
- Dewing, J. (1990). Reflective practice. *Senior Nurse*, 10, 26–28.
- Ericsson, K. A. (2006). The influence of experience and deliberate practice on the development of superior expert performance. In K. A. Ericsson, N. Charness, P. J. Feltovich, & R. F. Hoffman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of expertise and expert performance* (pp. 683–704). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816796>
- Hild, A. (2014). The role of self-regulatory processes in the development of interpreting expertise. In *The Development of Professional Competence*, 22, 128–149.
- Laub, J. (2006). From paternalism to the servant organization: Expanding the organizational leadership assessment (OLA) model. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 1, 155–178.
- Macintyre, T. E., Igou, E. R., Campbell, M. J., Moran, A. P., & Matthews, J. (2014). Metacognition and action: A new pathway to understanding social and cognitive aspects of expertise in sports. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01155>
- Matthews, G., & Desmond, P. A. (2002). Task-induced fatigue states and simulated driving performance. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology Section A*, 55, 659–686. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02724980143000505>
- Newell, R. (1992). Anxiety, accuracy and reflection: The limits of professional development. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17, 1326–1333. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jan.1992.17.issue-11>
- Piccini, S. (2013, Fall). *Escape retreat fosters a tradition of reflection and letter writing*. Georgetown Magazine.
- Preis, J., & Stauder, E. (2014). Reflective writing: From pedagogy to practice in a Jesuit university. *Jesuit Higher Education*, 3, 29–39.
- Riley-Douchet, C., & Wilson, S. (1997). A three-step method of self-reflection using reflective journal writing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25, 964–968. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.1997025964.x>
- Smith, G. (2014). Alzheimer's disease. *Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/sundowning/faq-20058511>
- Stanislavski, K. (2010). *An actor's work*. In J. Benedetti (Ed.), New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Tremblay, M. (1984). *Albertine in Five Times* (2nd ed.). L. Gaboriau (trans.), Vancouver: Talonbooks.
- Van Der Hart, O., Brown, P., & Van Der Kolk, B. A. (1989). Pierre Janet's treatment of post-traumatic stress. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 2, 379–395.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). Investigating self-regulation and motivation: Historical background, methodological developments, and future prospects. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45, 166–183. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0002831207312909>
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Risemberg, R. (1997). Becoming a self-regulated writer: A social cognitive perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 22, 73–101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1997.0919>

Appendix A

Informed consent for self-reflection survey on rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*

Description of the research: This purpose of this study was to assess how self-reflection impacted mood and characterization in the rehearsal process of *Albertine in Five Times*. Through self-reflection in the rehearsal process, it was hypothesized that the actresses' written and verbal self-reflection would significantly impact mood and characterization in rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*.

One of the essential characteristics of a Jesuit honours programme is reflection and discernment.

One hallmark of honors education is its encouragement of active and independent learning. As a way of extending this to the whole person, honors programs in Jesuit institutions should normally provide opportunities to learn about Ignatian methods of reflection and discernment and strive to incorporate these methods into their courses and their extracurricular activities. (University Honors, Academic Affairs).¹

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive and return the survey to and from Marquette 410B.

Benefits and risks: The benefits that may be derived from this research included:

- (1) Deeper knowledge from the letter-to-self increases understanding of the play.
- (2) Enhanced self-knowledge.

The risks to the subject may be: None anticipated.

Research data and records: Records of your participation in this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any time while you are actively participating, you may withdraw your consent and terminate your participation without consequence. Should you have any questions about this project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Professor Artemis Preeshl, whose telephone number appears above.

By signing below, you agree that you have been sufficiently informed of the purpose of the study and any risks and benefits. Please sign two copies and retain one copy for your records. I have read and understand the information given above, and I sign this consent willingly.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Appendix B

Self-reflection survey on rehearsal of *Albertine in Five Times*

Please re-read your letters and self-reflections written before and during the rehearsal process and complete the survey based on your self-reflection in the rehearsal process of *Albertine in Five Times*.

Major _____

Which is your current class?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

On a scale of 1–5 with five being the highest score:

(1) How well did the letter-to-yourself exercises inform characterization in *Albertine in Five Times*?

1 2 3 4 5

How well did the journaling inform characterization during *Albertine in Five Times*?

1 2 3 4 5

How well did the daily verbal check-in circle increase your ability to personalize your character in *Albertine in Five Times*?

1 2 3 4 5

(2) Would you recommend the writing a letter-to-yourself exercise in a future production?

1 2 3 4 5

Why or why not? _____

(3) Would you recommend journaling in a future production?

1 2 3 4 5

Why or why not? _____

(4) Would you recommend the daily verbal check-in circle in a future production?

1 2 3 4 5

Why or why not? _____

(5) Compared to your experience in other productions, how deeply were you able to identify with the characters in *Albertine in Five Times*?

1 2 3 4 5

Why or why not? _____

Please add additional comment on your experience in the production of *Albertine in Five Times*:



© 2016 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

No additional restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.



Cogent Arts & Humanities (ISSN: 2331-1983) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.

Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at www.CogentOA.com

