**Performance as Research Project**

This is a three-part project. Parts II and III will be assigned at a later date (Part II on the first presentation date for Part I, Part II on the first presentation day for Part III) but, in brief, the full project consists of being assigned a song sung by a character whose lived experience is outside your own and exploring the ways the song can read on your body and voice, first by approaching the song through personalization (Part I), then researching the song, show, and context in more depth and using your performance as a mode of inquiry into a research question you formulate about the song/show/character (Part II) and, finally, synthesizing the result of your experiments in a brief reflection and poster eligible for presentation at the Center for Undergraduate Research’s fall 2018 poster session (Part III).

In this project, you will:

* Utilize best practices for song preparation without the help of outside recordings.
* Consider the efficacy of personalization as a tool to engage with material associated with characters with lived experiences far outside your own.
* Clearly articulate a research question.
* Perform conventional academic research engaging scholarly sources.
* Engage performance as a research tool.
* Demonstrate an ability to articulate the way narratives read differently on various bodies and voices.
* Demonstrate an ability to produce research that is legible to the broader academic community through a combination of conventional and artistic scholarly practices.

**Part I**

You will be assigned a song. **You should not research the show, the song, the character, or any information other than what is on your sheet music.** If you’re already familiar with your song, do your best to set aside that prior knowledge as you prepare for your first performance (or, if you’re intimately familiar with it and feel unable to do so, speak with the instructor about an alternative assignment).

You will prepare your song using the personalization techniques you have learned in class. At least two worksheets – the First Two Acting Questions and another worksheet engaging lyrical content – must be emailed to the instructor by the beginning of the class period prior to the class in which you are performing.

**PAR Project: Phase II**

In this phase, you will dig into your show through the use of external research, forming your own questions along the way. The parts should be completed in order, then turned in at least 24 hours before you are scheduled to present in class.

**1) The Basics**

You can use any resources you like to answer these questions. They’re matters of public record and, as such, don’t require citations unless you’re quoting something directly.

**SHOW**  
**Show Name:**

**Composer/Lyricist/Librettist:**

**Source Material (if adapted):**

**Plot Summary** (this can be copied and pasted from the licensing agency, Wikipedia, etc. – just make sure you cite your source)**:**

**What is the context for the song in the show?**

**TIME/PLACE**

**Year Published:  
Setting (Time):**

**Setting (Place):**

**CHARACTER**

**Character Name:**

**Actor in Original Production and Notable Revivals:**

**Age (if given or inferable):**

**Gender Identity (if given or inferable):**

**Ethnicity (if given or inferable):**

**Religion (if given or inferable):**

**Sexual Orientation (if given or inferable):**

**Who are they singing to in the show? What is their relationship to that person?**

**2) Research Question(s), Part I**

Now you have some information on the context of the song, show, and character, and some more information about how their lived experience might be different from your own. Take a few minutes to jot down what you think you need more information about, then try to choose 1-3 specific research questions you want to explore as you delve into more in-depth research.

Need help understanding how to formulate an effective research question? These are some useful resources:

* <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/how-to-write-a-research-question>
* <https://www.esc.edu/online-writing-center/resources/research/research-paper-steps/developing-questions/>

**3) In-Depth Research**

This is the part where you engage scholarly sources. You should respond to at least one question from each category. Each response should be at least 250 words, but use as much space as you need to answer the question fully and articulate your own response – scholarly sources are used to support your ideas and help you develop them, not to stand in for your own thoughts.

**SHOW**

**A. How does this show fit into the other works produced by its creative team**

**and the musical theatre moment in which it was created?** (Biographies,

critical essays in peer-reviewed journals, and original production reviews

are good sources for this question.)

**B. What was the social significance of the source material? How does the**

**show adapt the source material?** (Cite at least one scholarly source –

that’s an article in a peer-reviewed journal or book - referencing the show

or the source material.)

**C. What’s the plot structure of the show? In what ways does it operate the**

**way you would expect a musical to function and in what ways is it**

**surprising? What did you learn from the places where the musical**

**either conforms to your expectations of the genre or surprises you?**

(You will likely want to find a source to help support your assertions of

how musicals are generally structured.)

**TIME/PLACE**

**A. Big picture: What was going on in the world at the time in which the show**

**was set? At the time in which the show was written? How do those two**

**cultural moments speak to each other?** (Cite at least one scholarly

source – that’s an article in a peer-reviewed journal or book - referencing

the sociocultural context of the show’s setting *or* the original production.

A reputable web source or scholarly source may be used for the other time

period. and you should perform your own analysis of the connections

between the two.)

**B. Medium picture: Estimate the current year in the show and the year of**

**your character's birth. What major world events did your character**

**live through? Regional events? How did those events likely affect your**

**character’s family and community?** (Historical and sociological sources

are your friends here. Think outside the box with your research queries –

there are some shockingly specific papers out there!)

**C. Small picture: What is the community in which the show is set? What can**

**you glean or infer about the population, economic situation, and**

**challenges of the community’s real-world equivalent at the time in**

**which the show is set? How do those factors likely affect your**

**character?** (Population databases and publicrecords will be helpful in

addition to more conventional journal articles and books.)

**CHARACTER**

**A. Lived experience: The character’s lived experience is, in one or more**

**ways, outside your own. How do you differ from the character? What**

**information do you need to understand their lived experience better,**

**and how can you privilege the voices of people who share their**

**experiences in gaining that knowledge?** (Find personal accounts from

one or more scholarly sources – memoirs, autoethnographies, interviews,

etc. – representing the voices and experiences of people who share the

identities and experiences you don’t share with the character. Video

interviews are also acceptable if more conventionally scholarly sources

aren’t available.)

**B. Social standing: Time, place, race, class, gender, religion – there are**

**myriad intersections of identity that affect the ways one moves**

**through the world. What aspects of your character’s identity and**

**experiences shape the way they relate to the person to whom they’re**

**speaking? What are factors your character is keeping under**

**consideration that you might not (kinds of power they have that you**

**don’t, places they are vulnerable that you aren’t, etc.)?**

(This will involve research into those aspects of time/place/identity and

your own extrapolation from there. For example, a woman in a time and

place where she is unable to own property has much higher stakes when

courting a potential romantic partner than a woman for whom only love is

on the line, or a person in an economically advantaged position might be

willing to use bolder tactics against a boss if they’re working for

something to do rather than a paycheck.)

**YOUR OWN RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**A. Choose your own adventure!** (Just make sure you rely on scholarly sources

while doing so. I encourage you to choose the research question that’s

most fruitful or interesting rather than the one that seems easiest to

answer.)

**SCHOLARLY SOURCE GRAB BAG**

**A. Sometimes valuable information comes from really weird places.** Choose

an element you haven’t yet researched that is tangentially related to your

show or character – a hobby your character enjoys, a particular legal case

happening in the same county, the way titles are given in your character’s

Dukedom – and explore what a scholarly source or two have to say about

it. Summarize your source(s) and how you can use that information in

your performance.

**4) Characterization**

Back to the workshop stuff! Now fill out 1) the first two acting questions with what is actually happening in the musical – one person to whom you’re talking, one thing you want, informed by all the research you’ve done up to this point 2) a text-based worksheet from the character’s point of view, either a reiteration and deepening of the worksheet you explored for personalization or a new one.

**5) Research Question(s), Part II**

Almost there! Formulate one or two research questions you want to answer *through your performance of the song.* You have all the intellectual knowledge – what do you need to learn through performing, through embodied knowledge?

This is also a place to request any needed assistance with setting the parameters of your “experiment.” Each presentation will start with a performance as always but if, for example, you know it would be useful to have a partner try running the scene just before with you or to have people in class help you experience the conditions of the community, the instructor can prep to make that possible in your working time.

**THR 310 PAR Project: Part III**

The third part of the Performance as Research project is intended to translate the artistic exploration you generated from scholarly inquiry back into something that is legible in conventional scholarly conversations. This is taking the form of preparing the abstract needed to apply for the KU Fall Undergraduate Research Poster Session that takes place on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 from 4:00 pm-6:00 pm in the Ballroom (5th floor) of the Kansas Union.

**You are not obligated to actually apply for the poster session or generate a poster**, but if you wish to do so applications are due Friday, November 16 and you can attend a Poster Presentation Workshop on Tuesday, November 27th, 2018 from 4-5pm in the Kansas Room (6th floor) of the Kansas Union. You may also be interested in holding onto your research to offer something at the larger research presentation event the Center for Undergraduate Research holds in the spring.

**Step 1: Visit the Poster Presentation Basics website** and watch the video offering guidelines

for how to create a research poster to know what you’re (hypothetically) proposing to

create: https://ugresearch.ku.edu/student/researchbytes/poster-presentation-basics

**Step 2: Decide on the argument of your (hypothetical) poster and choose a title.** You’ve

generated a *lot* of research in this process; now you need to distill one single piece of it to

share on the poster. What’s the most interesting thing you discovered, or the thing you

think other people will find the most interesting/useful?

**Step 3: Write an abstract.** The poster presentation application allows an abstract up to 250

words in length and *no more*. That means you’ll need to write clearly and concisely.

The Professor Is In has a fantastic resource on abstracts that suggests a good abstract

consists six or fewer sentences that fill the following roles in the following order:

* 1) Point out a big picture problem or topic debated in your field. *Maybe your poster is dealing with the way you’re engaging performance as research, or maybe the question you’re answering is tied to the question you posed through your performance. Either way, what umbrella topic does that fall under?*
* 2) Demonstrate the gap in the literature on this topic. *You’ve done some tiptoeing through the literature in Part II, so you have a sense of what people have said. What haven’t they said?*
* 3) Explain how your project fills the gap. *That thing “they” haven’t said? You’re saying it, and you need to demonstrate why it’s important that it gets addressed.*
* 4) Discuss the specific material that you engage to make your argument. *The show, the methodology, etc.*
* 5) Share your original argument. *This is where your thesis statement goes.*
* 6) End with a strong concluding sentence.

The Professor Is In’s post is available here: https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/12/how-tosday-how-to-write-a-paper-abstract/ (Yes, it’s about paper abstracts, but it’s the best resource I’ve found.) If you want to Google around for additional resources, it’s helpful to specify that you’re looking for how to write an abstract in the humanities; STEM field abstracts are pretty different.

**Step 4: Generate a Word document or PDF that have your name, title, and your abstract.**

**Step 5: Email your abstract and reflection (on reverse) to the instructor by the date indicated on the course calendar.**

**PAR Project: Reflection**

The PAR Project was a research project intended to encourage each of you to engage practice as a research tool, but the project itself was also a pedagogical experiment, a departure from the conventional class made possible through the Center for Undergraduate Research. This reflection asks you to consider how the project worked *for you.* The only requirements are your honest, thoughtful response; there are no rewards for you, Lusie, or the class if you reflect that something worked super well, and there are no risks if something didn’t work well at all. Please respond to the following questions in the way you feel appropriate. (It isn’t necessary to respond to every sub-question – they’re just intended to help you think more dimensionally about the main question.):  
  
**1) Before this project, when/had you engaged practice or performance as a way of conducting research? Conducting research as a way of informing your practice or performance?** How is the relationship between practice and research usually framed in your more performance-oriented classes? In your more literature-oriented classes? Do you like playing with them together, or do you prefer that things stay in their own corners?

**2) What was your experience of trying to learn a song without any context or access to other recordings?** Did you feel prepared to do so? Now that you’ve done it once, do you feel like you’d be better able to do it again if someone gave you music with which you were unfamiliar? Did you feel more or less ownership of or connection to the song than songs you’ve “met” through others’ performances?

**3) How were the processes of approaching the song *wholly* through personalization and *wholly* through characterization different for you?**

**4) Everyone was assigned a song from a character who was in some way outside their lived experience, but the degrees of that difference varied widely, from characters folks could easily play with only a difference of time and place to characters one would be very unlikely to play with different genders, ages, and ethnic identities. Were this project to be repeated with the goal to give everyone a song where they have the same degrees of separation from a character, would you prefer being assigned songs you could use for auditions with conventional expectations, or does it seem more fun/like a better challenge/etc. to be assigned songs from characters you’d never normally play? Why do you feel the way you do?**

**5) What was the process of conducting conventional academic research like for you?** Do you feel like you had the tools you needed as a scholar to complete that part of the assignment effectively? If not, how could it have been clearer or what other resources or steps would have helped you feel more confident conducting your research?

**6) How/did the more extensive external research you performed inform your performance differently than just researching the musical from which your song was pulled? How/do you anticipate using external research to inform your work in the future?**

**7) Do you feel confident thinking through and articulating the implications of nonconventional casting?** Was the process of trying to work out how to have those conversations in class useful? Would you have liked more or less guidance in the conversation process or more or less formal instruction in appropriate ways to engage language around questions of identity?

**8) Do you feel better prepared to use your work as an artist to generate written scholarship? Can you think of contexts in which you might try to do so in the future?**

**9) What else did you like about this project? What worked for you?**

**10) What do you wish had gone differently about this project? What seemed less effective than it might’ve been?**