“Debate: Millennials Don't Stand a Chance”

Devised, Documentary, and Immersive Theatre

The Story of EveryMillennial

Journal of Progress

Sean Byrne
Audition Process

I. Greetings
   a. Relax, this is a very informal audition. We’re just seeing how everyone works with each other.
   b. Fair warning: this does rehearse till February, and will be an actual time commitment. Our plan is to devise a full length hour piece which will require lots of outside planning and research.
   c. Questions?

II. Stories
   a. Present a one-minute, true story that you experienced.
   b. Now exchange that story with a partner and listen to their story. Both of you will then present the other person’s story just as they did, careful not to mimic them but to tell their story honestly.

III. Activities
   a. Bomb/shield
   b. Image work
      i. Create an image, re-create the image, and finish the image.
   c. Boal’s Ball
   d. Mirror exercise

IV. Devising Work
   a. Here are the limits, pick four and devise a three minute story off these requirements:
      i. Something round
      ii. A line of famous text
      iii. A beat
      iv. One person left on stage
      v. Group singing
      vi. Something blue
      vii. A double take
      viii. A moment of joy
      ix. A moment of no dialogue
      x. An embarrassing moment

Cast List:
Senior Male: Jordan Clifford
Senior Female: Hannah Gutman
Junior Male: Tyler Cramer
Junior Female: Chrissy Johnson
Sophomore Male: D.j. Batchelor
Sophomore Female: Lauren Chapman
Freshman Male: Ty. Edwards
Freshman Female: Melissa Carter
Freshman Female: Lily Warner

This is my cast. Here we are! Gosh, here we go. Very exciting.
First Meeting:

Establishing the Group

I. Welcome, thanks!
   a. Like I mentioned earlier, this is a very real process and will take lots of your time. But thanks for coming aboard.
   b. Let’s take a look at schedule, we’re thinking three times a week
   c. Most importantly, this project is no longer just mine. It’s yours too. You are responsible for creating and gathering material for this project. You can make changes and direct things, just because it’s my thesis does not mean it’s my project.

II. Developing Commitment
   a. Most importantly, this is a safe space.
   b. What is our commitment to each other?
      i. Let’s establish a document that explains what we can give to each other and what we can expect from the group:
         1. What we can expect to give each other: hard work, focus, time, honest opinions, fun, ideas, respect, energy, non-judgment, open mindedness, support, ears, cooperation, responsibility
         2. What we can expect form the group: Solidarity, productivity, energy, ability to take criticism, understand there is a time for fun, comradery, professionalism, leaving troubles outside, smiles and hugs and warmth.
      ii. As the director, I am always here for you willing to walk through anything we’re working on. I will do my best to guide you all through anything we experience. My goal is to create a community amongst you all.

III. Working
   a. Warm-up
      i. Focus game
      ii. Circle exchange
      iii. Tilt game
      iv. Blind handshakes
   b. Energy
      i. Zip, zap, zup

IV. Discussion
   a. What did you all find from the sources on Millennials I asked you to peruse?
   b. Here is how this material will influence our work. Anything we find can be a starting point for creating and devising theatre – never be afraid to bring something to the table.

Second Meeting:

I. Warm-ups
   a. Zip, Zap, Zup
II. Discussion of America
   a. Continue from where we left off yesterday: how does America take care of our generation? What is the political climate like? What is our responsibility toward our country and government?
   b. 9/11 – where were you? What is the space like? What are the stories?
   c. Quotes:
      i. “I did not follow politics. I couldn’t even tell you who the candidates were. I should vote, it’s my civic duty – is that the AP gov word?”
      ii. “It’s a wise choice, if we didn’t follow what’s going on to not vote blindly.”
      iii. “I am at a point with the fact that I would rather not vote at all rather then make a misformed vote.”
   d. Possible topics at this point: marijuana, drone strikes, same sex marriage, equal pay, abortion, gun rights, intellectual property, education, student loans, copyright, campaign finance, immigration

III. Our view of America
   a. Seeing everyone else as a shade of gray
   b. Definition of melting pot
   c. Patriarchal
   d. Strong dichotomy

Meeting #3
I. Warm ups
   a. Image game
   b. Handshake murderer
   c. Rock, paper, scissors

II. Discussion on Themes
   a. What’s the meaning of the piece, who exactly is our audience?
      i. In choosing topics, make sure we chose them to fit our audience – even if the audience includes folks who are much older than the millennial generation
   b. Activism
      i. In what ways is it convenient and easy?
      ii. How does social media allow people to be ‘active’ with activism?
      iii. Corporation activism?
   c. Social Media
      i. So important to our generation.
      ii. Literally, you can begin to trace entire lives through online interaction
      iii. How do non-millenials use social media
   d. How do we let the older generations impact our generation?
   e. What is the role of TV media in our life?
i. Do we believe everything or are we skeptical about what we read/hear?
ii. What do we do to fact check?
iii. Do we actually care about the news? Or are we self-centered
f. Quotes:
   i. “I don’t know if I have these values because they are mine or they’re still coming from my parents.”

Meeting #4
I. Warm-up
   a. Defender (really work the imagination, give weight to each character and situation)
   b. Tangles and knots
   c. Museum tour
      i. Hold hands with someone and guide them around the space, creating a museum to walk through. Show them all the exhibits, how fascinating everything is

II. Discussion
   a. Grab a partner and tell them a quick story
      i. What were the important parts of the story? What did you grab onto? What are the things that every story needs?
   b. Conducting interviews:
      i. Be respectful; meet in a comfortable place on their time
      ii. Have a clear set of questions
      iii. Don’t be afraid to deviate from this set of questions
      iv. Ask open-ended questions
      v. Pay attention not only to their voice, but also to their physicality
      vi. Give them time to answer, better answers can follow pauses
      vii. “Have I missed anything or is there anything you’d like to say?”
      viii. Finally, ask if they are comfortable in us using their interview during a theatrical performance.

III. Activity
   a. Environment: create an environment by entering the space one at a time, perform an activity, then have another person enter the space to keep it growing
      i. What are different ways we can change the environment, keep it going, make it urgent

IV. Discussion
   a. On our topics
   b. On our process
      i. It’s the connection to the person being interviewed that matters, we’re not mimicking someone, we are sharing their personal story
      ii. Know ourselves before we can relate to others, what can we do to relax our own perceptions and open up to the world?
iii. The best things can often come out of nowhere, so always pay attention and ask questions

Meeting #5
I. Working on Stories
   a. What does every story need?
      i. Characters,
      ii. A beginning, middle and end
      iii. Empathy
      iv. Arch

II. Activity
   a. I'm going to assign partners to each of you and hand you a series of three questions. It's your job to arrange an interview with this person and ask him/her one of the questions. Record the interview and memorize it, both physically and verbally. Understand their emotions.
   b. Let's work

Meeting #6
I. Warm-up
   a. Circle height
   b. Penguin racing!
   c. Glass cobra (reference Boal)

II. Activity
   a. Image Alive – work on devising from words. We'll read a sentence and two people will form an image based off that sentence. When I say switch another person will enter, tap one of the workers on the shoulder and replace them – thus forming a new image. When I say image alive, the people forming the image will essentially come alive to play out whatever scene makes sense for their image.

III. Presentation of interviews
   a. No one really had them prepared today, that's fine. We pushed it back to next meeting

IV. Discussion
   a. So we've had a good number of discussions now on what are generation has dealt with and what is important to us. We need to start pairing down these ideas into tangible topics
   b. The question then is this: if we were writing a biography of the millennial generation, what would he first nine chapters cover?

Meeting #7
I. A quick meeting: let's go over interviews process again,
II. Also, let's spend some time watching and sharing resources that talk about forum theatre, documentary theatre and different devised works
   a. I should really start playing a clip at the start of each happening so as to pique interest in new forms of working
Meeting #8

I. Warm-up
   a. Zip Zap Zup, work on energy
   b. Stretching, relaxing the body and allowing it to find a neutral state

II. Info
   a. Let’s decide on when we’re coming back over winter break to do some heavy devising work and getting into the process

III. Activity
   a. Trust Work
      i. We’ve already agreed that this is a safe space, great. Let’s make sure though, that we’re all comfortable with each other. I think it’s time we solidify our relationship amongst each other as a group.
      ii. Trust circle
          1. Form a circle around an individual, if they feel safe they are to cross their arms in front of them and let the weight in their chest, shoulders and abdomen go. As they do so, they will fall back into the circle and will be passed around gently, with words of encouragement, through the circle and back again.
          2. If someone is not comfortable doing so, then we won’t make them.
      iii. Value Clarification
          1. We’ve talked about some pretty serious stuff, and we’ve done well not to come to arguing. Let’s take a moment though to see where everyone stands and get to know people. We’re all a group and can work off each other.
          2. I will call out a statement, if you agree go to one side of the room and if you disagree, go to the other. I will then give each person a chance to speak for twenty seconds on why they chose what they did if they so wish, starting with the majority so the minority does not feel out gunned.

Meeting with Prof. Flamiano

This was a productive meeting, we discussed the nature millennials have with technology and why we interact the way we do. She pointed out some research to me that I had not previously found and offered her opinion on questions I had concerning the use of media.

Meeting #9

I. Warm-ups
   a. Group led

II. Presenting Interviews
   a. Melissa – economy, younger, sitting on floor, male, 22?
   b. Chrissy – relationship, “something that people can define as lame.”
c. DJ – Something I can’t live without, person couldn’t think of anything and that was the interview – a real human moment

d. Ty – a chance to do anything in the world

e. Jordan – grandma and her relationship with his grandpa. So cool how much it sounded like any other modern day young romance

Meeting #10

I. Warm ups
   a. Group led

II. Presenting Interviews
   a. Lauren – Roommate, retelling a story of a drunken escapade
   b. Melissa – urbanization, quite a long piece, wealth

Meeting with Zachary

I updated Zachary on our finding a space. I couldn’t obtain Court Square Theatre but have leads on some other things. I’ll be checking out Duke hall next. We also discussed the role of the audience for this production. Originally, I wanted to find a way to heavily incorporate the audience in the piece, through direct interaction and allowing the audience to change the nature of the show. But as we go on in happenings, I no longer think this can be the case and so we’re adapting the participation aspect to more include the audience rather than cast them as actors. We’re developing pieces that will actively rely on audience participation without alienating them or causing distress.

Meeting #11

I. Warm ups

II. Interviews:
   a. Lauren – “like a race,” bisexuality, Molly
   b. DJ – race in class, academic diversity
   c. Lily – “I’m a racist.”
   d. Jordan – Tupac, can’t change his race but he does try to mask it if he’s talking to a cop, Ferguson, police
   e. Tyler – Mother, honesty, loving her son no matter what even though she wasn’t supported by her parents in her love of the arts
   f. Ty – discrimination progress, offering a non answer

III. Discussion
   a. How do we portray someone different than us? All of us are white, so how do we portray someone of color? We have to offer them the chance to speak in their voice – we simply create the space.

Meeting #12

I. Warm ups

II. Interviews:
   a. Lauren – Shrooms, goblins, Audrey Seabull
   b. DJ – Colbert Report, news isn’t news but it’s funny
   c. Melissa – Last week tonight, the only news I can watch
d. Ty – I try to watch the news, not really

e. Lily – what is racism? Why do we still perpetuate it, and how?

f. Chrissy – god, thoughtful and thankful for religion

Meetings #13-21 were devoted to rehearsing the piece and finishing the devising process.

Meeting with Zachary
- some brilliant work but watch time limit
- clean up certain bits (tinder, story telling, stress/anxiety)
- perhaps moments of choreography?
- Where does the audience fit in?
  o How do we encourage them?
- Say we don’t have millennials in the audience? Where do they fit?
- Loved Hakunnah Mattatta

Meeting with Dennis
- wide ranging but good courage
- where is the through line of the piece?
- What’s the frame?
  o Help the audience create sense/sensibility/ pictures
  o Right now its lots of photographs, string them into an album
  o Super structure the story
    ▪ Its simple, but allows a set up
    ▪ Find the unifiers: props the reoccur or symbols that occur
- We are a generation still in the making, we are unformed – so there is no stance to judge us, don’t buy into the discourse
  o Turn the negatives into positives, social media = arab spring
- The idea of biography could be twitter feed, buzzfeed, etc
- Jordan’s race interview is dangerous, could be considered stereotyping
- Careful of energy flow
- During the stress dance, images are relatively cliché, what do we really look like?
- Transformation into character should be clear – use a costume piece of something

These were the final notes I got before putting up the project. It was a whirlwind of a ride and, in the end, created a phenomenal piece. I was able to bring together nine unique individuals and build an ensemble out of them – and more importantly, they worked to create it themselves with the audience.