

# Women in Theatre: Representation in Roles through the Decades

by

[Rachel Kingsland

Submitted to the Board of Theatre and Performance  
School of the Arts  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College  
State University of New York

November 2018

Sponsor: Lenora Champagne

Second Reader: Rachel Dickstein



## Table of Contents

Artistic Aims	Pages 2-7
Contextual Essay	Pages 8-20
Bibliography	Pages 21
Technical Essay	Pages 22-28

## Artistic Aims

For my senior project, I will perform in a short play, "*The Role of Della*." My role is Emma. I believe doing this part will showcase the hard work I put into my time here at Purchase College. I will be diving into a category of theatre that I have never done in any production I have been a part of. While this is my first staged production at Purchase, I have participated in many productions while I was at SUNY Rockland Community College. The classes I took there will also help me with this production.

My role in this production is a diverse one. I will be acting alongside someone else in this short play. I have to come prepared with memorizing my lines and the blocking Alex, our director, has given us. I also have to help set up the rehearsal space, which includes moving classroom chairs around to give us space and to move the table the way

we want it. The set is minimal. All the set needs is a chair and a desk. I must attend every rehearsal, tech rehearsals, and attend production meetings leading up to the festival.

The aims I have for my contextual essay are to examine women in lead roles. I think it's important to see how roles for women have changed as society has changed. I want to focus on the feminist aspect of theatre and how hard it is for women in the audition room. Many times when actresses go to auditions, they are sometimes turned away without even speaking a line of dialogue because the casting director believes they aren't the right fit. Most of the time casting agents care more about looks than talent. They have stereotyped women. My thesis essay will be about women's roles in theatre and how they have developed over time and to examine how women are more accurately represented on stage now than they were previously.

My journey getting here has felt like a long time coming. I had plans to go to a four-year college after high school. However, with my grades, I had to go to my local community college. That is how I ended up at RCC. While at the time I hated being at RCC and not having the "college experience" many of my friends were having at their four-year colleges, I believed it helped me transition better into being a young adult in terms of being more independent. I also believe that being at a community college helped me stay focused on my studies and the work I had to do for my program. It also helped me get better grades and helped me financially as well.

When I first arrived at Purchase College it was a struggle to get into the flow of campus. I didn't know anyone in any of my classes. The first semester at Purchase, I had

some great classes, like Contemporary US Latino Theatre. It was wonderful learning about the history of Latino theatre and plays from Latino/Latina playwrights that I wouldn't have read outside of class. For the next three semesters, I had to take a lot more of my required classes for my degree. But the US Latino theatre will always be a class that I will remember fondly during my time at Purchase.

There are many classes that I have taken both at Rockland Community College and here at Purchase College that will help me perform in my senior project. Acting I and Acting II were two classes that have helped me learn and understand how an action scene works, as well as how blocking is helpful to a performance and working with a scene partner. I also took an improv class that helped me think on my feet if anything happened during a scene. I also took another performance class which was based primarily around Shakespeare plays. This class helped me become more confident when performing in front of people. These classes helped me learn more about the theatre and helped me grow as an actor. They also prepared me for the classes I would take at Purchase. The required classes I took at Purchase were helpful as well. The history I learned in Theatre Histories II will help me tremendously when writing my contextual essay.

I'm excited about many aspects of my senior project. One thing is that I finally get to act in a production at Purchase. While I was a part of an important staged reading during the spring 2018 semester about abortion and the stigma around it, my senior project will be the first time I will be on stage at Purchase. At RCC I've only ever played characters that were either ensemble members for musicals such as *Rent* and *Ragtime*. I

had a small role as John Rugby in RCC fall production of *Merry Wives of Windsor*. So to be in a two-person play as one of the main characters in a contemporary play will be different and exciting.

As a transfer student, I felt that many students in the THP major had their own little groups because many had been in the program since they were freshmen. Transferring made me feel that I wasn't able to get to know that many people and thus wasn't able to be in any of the productions because many people would cast their friends and people they had met to be part of the productions on campus. That's the same way I felt when getting ready to present my senior project proposal. I didn't have anyone who wanted to be a part of my senior project since everyone was in groups with their friends and the one friend I did have wanted to write her own play for her senior project.

This didn't stop me, though, and I went ahead and looked up plays that I thought would be a good fit for my senior project. One play that interested me, which I proposed was a play called *The Ruby Sunrise* by Rinne Groff. The play was about a woman named Ruby who invented the first working Television in the 1920's. The play then fast forwards to the 1950's, when Ruby's daughter is trying to put on a television production that is about her mother's story. Ruby never got the credit she deserved in life. Throughout the play, Ruby's daughter is trying to fight to make sure her mother's story is told and isn't changed by people. It also deals with issues that were prominent during the 1950s. In one scene we find out that the actress who was meant to play Ruby was blacklisted because she was suspected to be a communist.

I thought this would be a good play to put on here at Purchase. It centered around a female heroine and her daughter who was trying to get the credit she deserved and the daughter trying to fight for what she believed in. It also was written by a female playwright. I thought this was another important element because I don't think you really see that in theatre as much as we should. Finally, it also had historical elements that I found interesting.

However, there were many factors as to why my proposal for the play wasn't accepted. I would have had to cast at least 8 people to play the characters, which would be way too many for a senior project. It also had three acts, making the full runtime almost two hours. Even though the third act was short, it would still be too long to be a festival piece and you wouldn't be able to cut the play without it not making sense.

After my proposal wasn't accepted I was introduced to Sarahanne Grillo's senior project. She was in my junior seminar class and needed two more seniors for her project. I joined instantly because it was a small 10-minute piece and the end of the play had such a great twist that I knew I had to be a part of the production. The play we are putting on is called *The Role of Della*. It's a short play about a woman auditioning for a character named Della. I will be playing Emma, who says she's a casting director who puts Elizabeth, another actress, through some challenging situations. We later find out that it was all a lie and that Emma is actually an actress who was only pretending so she wouldn't have any competition when she auditions herself.

One of the reasons why I'm excited about this project is the fact that it's a comedic play. I believe this will be a great contrast with the other senior projects that will be going up for the festival. Another reason is that the play **will** be going up in the **fall** and not in the **spring**. This was huge for me seeing how I'm finishing up all my classes during the fall semester and won't have to split up my credits and possibly lose my financial aid. Sarahanne was willing to put the production up in the fall and not the spring to accommodate me to meet my January graduation date.

The goal I hope to achieve in the *Role of Della* is to really play with the character of Emma. She explains to Elizabeth that she is the casting director. However, she's only lying to get Elizabeth out of the audition room and to get her audition card. Emma's actions in the play show how desperate she is to get the role.



## Women in Theatre: Representation over the Decades

During the early periods of theatre women were virtually excluded from taking part in any sort of performances on stage. It didn't matter if there was a female character in a play, the role was played by a man instead.. However, as America headed into the 19th century, we saw women taking part in theatre. Yet the roles they got weren't always great. Women's roles in society were drastically different from the roles written for women on stage. Offstage, most women had to be homemakers. People viewed the actresses onstage as sex objects and they were constantly objectified. As we went into the 20th and 21st century, we saw theatre once again evolve and women in American society becoming more independent and fighting for their rights. Theatre became more realistic in terms representation of Women and their roles in American society.

Between the mid 18th century to the 19th century, many women were able to find work on the stage. Gone were the days of women being excluded from the theatre as a whole. In Faye E. Dudden's book, "*Women in American Theatre: Actresses and*

| *Audience*” she explains why some see women **took up** acting to escape how they should be.

Acting female is what traditionalists and reactionaries prescribe for women, but an “acting female”-a woman who plays roles-reveals the possibility of escaping that imperative. Whenever a woman enacts a part she implicitly threatens the prevailing definition of womanhood: she shows she can become someone else and make you believe it. The very project the actress engages in undermines assumptions about the fixity of identity. (Dudden, Page 2,).

Dudden suggests that women acting on stage could be seen as going against society's standards on how women should behave. She explains further that women and theatre were closely associated with sexuality and immorality. This was a deep contrast to the everyday women in American society in the 19th century.

| *“A Doll's House”* by Henrik Ibsen showcases how certain roles for women can change the status quo in society. The play questions the traditional roles men and women had in a 19th-century marriage. This caused a scandal after the audience watches as Nora packs up her things and leave her children behind. **Throug**hout the play Nora deals with the way her husband, **Torvald**, treats her. She has had enough with him treating her like a delicate doll to be played with. The audience realizes that she is a human being with feelings.

This went against the typical idea that women had to stay home and take care of the family; that they must grin and bear whatever life throws at them for the sake of their children. Nora was taking a great risk of losing everything and even never seeing her own children again after she leaves home. However, in the play, we realize that she had enough of her husband's treatment of her as a doll. She isn't a plaything, she had autonomous feelings. We see what Nora's future could be when looking at the only other main female character in the play, Kristine Linde, who chose family over the man she loved and married Mr. Linde. When the play begins, we learn that her husband has died. While she didn't leave her husband like Nora, she is alone and has become bitter from working hard as a secretary and living without sufficient means from being poor. Kristine aligns with the conventions and ideologies in the 19th century that women lived their lives in a way that was expected of them: to take care of others, whether they want to or not. There are many scholars who question if Ibsen was really championing women and feminist ideals.

Margaret D. Stetz talks about this in her essay "*Mrs. Linde, Feminism, and Women's Work, Then and Now*" Stetz explains that a few scholars agree that Ibsen was championing feminist ideals for 19th-century women and asks what kind of feminism was he championing. Stetz states that we must not always look at Nora, who many have dissected constantly when reading the play.

From this perspective, *A Doll's House* becomes more than a play about Nora; it is also a drama about the female characters who exist on the margins, such as the

working-class women servants who run the Helmer household. These include “Anne Marie,” identified in the stage directions only by the generic title of “Nursemaid” or, in other translations, “Nurse.” Through her dialogue with Nora, we learn that long ago she had to give up her own daughter, who was born out of wedlock, in order to take the job of raising Nora. Although elderly, she still must go on working as the caretaker of the next generation of middle-class children.” (Stez,3)

As the 20th century approaches, gone are the days of women being the center of the story. While we do see women on stage, they are only playing secondary characters to their male counterparts. A 20th century playwright who I will be looking at is Arthur Miller. His plays are significant in American literature. However, when it comes to the female characters in his plays, they serve mainly to help move along the storyline of the male characters in the play. As Kerry Reid noted in an article she wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* after the death of Miller in 2005, “The Women in Miller’s play, however, often are shunted to the margins as many have noted.” (Reid, 1). She notes that Miller’s play *All My Sons* was a true story he heard during World War II. However, the most notable difference between the two was that the story was based on a young woman and her father defrauding the US Military. When he wrote the play, however, the young woman was turned into a male character. Reid explains “But when Miller wrote the play, the young woman became a young man because, as Miller noted in a 1999 BCC Interview, “I didn’t know much about girls then.” Which is interesting that he would use an excuse like that seeing how he was grown adult who was married at this time. Reid also says in the essay that when we want to read about great female characters of the 20th century we should

look at Blanche and Stella from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for example.

An example of one of Arthur Miller's works that are the opposite of Ibsen's Nora would be found in the character of Linda Loman in *Death of A Salesman*. She is the only female character in the play. She is wife to Willy Loman and is a mother to her two sons. It is clear from the play that Linda is a woman who is tired with the life she has and is frustrated with her husband trying to achieve the "American dream." Because of this, her life has been filled with disappointments. She also acts differently around her husband than she does with her sons. The play is set in the 1940's, throughout the play Linda's husband, Willy is a salesman who has lived with Linda in the same house for almost twenty-five years. Everything around them has changed, where they live is now surrounded by apartment buildings. Willy is having issues with driving and making mistakes like crossing the white line, driving off the road, and running red lights. He also starts to talk to himself more. Because of this, the way Linda acts around her husband and her two sons are very different. She is stern with her children, but with Willy is she careful with what she says.

While she is disappointed and angry with her husband, she is devoted to him when it comes to defending his behavior, even to their own children. One example can be seen in Act 1, Page 59. "Linda: Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you don't have any feeling for me." and "Linda: He's the dearest man in the world to me, and

I wouldn't have anyone making him feel blue." In this scene, Biff is calling out his father's erratic behavior and Linda is quick to defend him, going as so far as to tell her own son that if he didn't have any feelings for his father, then he didn't have any feelings for her. This shows the devotion she has for her husband and that she is subservient to him.

Linda Loman can also represent the historical context that was happening when Miller wrote the play. He wrote it in 1949, five years after the end of World War II. The war saw women stepping in and working more than ever during that time. According to the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, 350,000 American women served in uniform. However, women's roles in post-World War II America were very different. Unlike the pre-war era that included the Great Depression, after the war, there was much economic growth and once again family became the most important thing in American life.

"History, Art, & Archives: United States House of Representatives" on postwar gender norms states that "Postwar prosperity made the banalities of housework less taxing, but often came at a cost to women who gave up careers to maintain the domestic sphere. This lifestyle stressed the importance of a one-income household, with the husband working and the wife staying at home to raise the children." (1). So Linda Loman is a representation of women during post-WWII. They were willing to stay home and take care of the house. They were always there for their children and their husbands. So while Linda is disappointed with her life and with her husband, she stays because that's the "norm" and that's what's expected of her.

However, as we get into the 1960's and into the 70's, we see a change in women's roles on and off the theatrical stage. During this time, second wave feminism started. A

Companion to American Women's History talks about what the movement involved.

Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon write:

By the mid-1970's feminist politics was occurring primarily in single issue organizations focused on, for example, reproductive rights, employment discrimination, health, domestic violence, women's studies. An expanded reproductive rights campaign asserted women's rights to bear children in safe and healthy circumstances as well as to choose not to give birth, so the movement saw daycare and child welfare as equal in importance to birth control. (Baxandall, Gordon 420,).

A play that dealt with feminism as its central theme is the play *Fefu and Her Friends* written by Maria Irene Fornes. The big difference between *Fefu and Her Friends* and plays like *A Doll's House* and *Death of A Salesman* is that it features an all-female cast. The only male character is off stage for the entire play. The play was also written by a woman, Maria Irene Fornes. Her plays were considered to embrace voices that had previously been unheard before. Fornes wanted to provoke the audience both emotionally and intellectually. While the play is set for one day in the 1930's, it still features issues with feminism and how the characters deal with feminism.

In "The Path of 'Fefu,' From a Gun Joke to a Feminist Play Sans Plot," Fornes talks about how her play doesn't have much of a plot and points out how different her characters are to a play that does have a plot. She states:

In a plot play, the woman is either the mother or the sister or the girlfriend or the daughter. The purpose of the character is to serve a plot so the relationship is responding to the needs of the plot. Although *Fefu* is realistic, the relationship of the women, in that sense, is abstract. The purposes these characters are serving is different from how a character serves a plot.(Fornes)

She explains that in “plot plays” the woman is usually the mother or the daughter.

| *Fefu and Her Friends* are very different because they don't fall into that norm. She does point out that *Fefu* is realistic and the relationships between each woman are real too, and that the purpose they have is very different from other plays.

The last play that I will examine will be *The Ruby Sunrise* by Rinne Groff. Like *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Ruby Sunrise* is written by a female playwright and centers around a female character. The play starts off with Ruby, who is living in the 1920's with her aunt after running away from her abusive father. She has a love for science and during the first act, we see her trying and succeeding with creating the first working television. In the second act, we flash forward to the 1950's and we learn from her daughter, Lulu, that her mother didn't get the credit she deserved. We see Lulu creating a teleplay about her mother's story. She tries her hardest to make it so that the story isn't rewritten, However, it is changed at the end of the play to make the character more interesting. Charles Isherwood for *The New York Times* states that the play “Is essentially a deftly structured but heavy-treading drama about the dashed dreams and tarnished ideals of two generations of spirited Midwestern women.” (Isherwood)

While the play does take place in the 1920's and then the 1950's, the themes of the



play still hold true in the 21st century. The feminist movement is still strong today. While Ruby did try to create the first working television, we find out in the play that the credit was given to a man. This still happens in our society today. The book *Catching A Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for The 21st Century* by Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, talks about this issue. They state that during the 2002 graduation ceremony at Vanderbilt University, the top students in each of the nine schools received awards. Of the nine honorees, six were women. Of the nine deans, two were women, (they were of education and nursing). The rest were men. They talk about why this was an issue stating that

Scenes such as this are so commonplace that they seem unremarkable, perhaps because, even thirty years after the start of the women's movement, we are still used to seeing men in positions of Power. (Dicker, Piepmeier 1 ).

Dicker and Piepmeier suggest that men achieving more than women has become commonplace in our society, and that this is an issue that still needs to be addressed in the 21st century. They do, however, acknowledge the strides women have made over the decades since the women's movement began. They explain that women today have more options available to them than any other time in history, and because of these options, they feel, as we ourselves have felt, that not only can they accomplish anything they want to but there are no gender-based barriers. Sexism, these women are sure, is a thing of the past.

There are many examples of men gaining more positions of power while women

are pushed aside. We can clearly see that in who won the 2016 presidential election. Most people thought Hillary Clinton would become the first female president, she had the most accomplishments in the political arena and had the most experience. However, Donald Trump won the presidency. It's worth noting he only won the electoral college and not the popular vote. David Remnick, who wrote an article for The New Yorker titled "Hillary Clinton Looks Back In Anger" points this fact out, saying:

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who, as she puts it, won "more votes for President than any white man" in American history, is not the first candidate to capture the popular vote but lose the election. She is the fifth. (Paragraph 1)

It's important that Clinton would point out that she won more votes than any white man in America. Since America began, it's been white men who have had the most positions of power politically. All of America's presidents (excluding Barack Obama) have been white men. Only 11 women in America's history have run for the presidency and received over 40,000 votes. Clinton is the only Democrat on the list. The rest are women who ran for parties like The Green Party, Socialist Workers Party, Peace and Freedom Party, People's Party, New Alliance Party, etc. Regardless of what political party the women represent, they still lost to either a male Republican or a male Democrat.

Remnick points out that this should have been an "easy" election for Clinton to win. She was running against Donald Trump, a crooked businessman and reality tv star. Remnick explains that "She lost because of the forces of racism, misogyny, and nativism that Trump expertly aroused." (Remrick, 1). Trump's entire campaign was filled with

racist comments like, for example, telling everyone he would build a wall to keep Mexican immigrants out because he believed they brought “terrible” things. “They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists.” (Trump). He said misogynistic comments about women and about Clinton herself. He said that she was a “nasty woman” during one of their presidential debates while she was trying to answer a question. There are articles filled with misogynistic comments he’s said about women from and looks, their weight, how they act. The most recent example that came to light during the election was the sexually aggressive language he used when bragging about groping and trying to have sex with women. “You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything.”

Trump clearly states that if you are a man who has money and power, you can do anything. His supporters discarded his comments as “locker room” talk and that it wasn’t a big deal after he made a public apology. The example of Hillary Clinton losing the election to Donald Trump, even though it was obvious that Trump had no experience in politics and has a clear distaste of anyone who wasn’t a white male, shows us that misogyny and the male patriarchy are still a fear in the 21st century. There are many people who will disregard women who are accomplished because of what one man says about her.

One final example I will use of men in positions of power over women would be Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony against Brett Kavanaugh. He was one of Trump’s nomi-

nees for the Supreme Court. We found out that Ford, who is a professor of Psychology at Palo Alto University and a research psychologist at Stanford University of Medicine, was sexually assaulted by Kavanaugh during the summer of 1982. There were many people who were quick to condemn Kavanaugh who thought he shouldn't be confirmed as a Supreme Court Justice because of his actions. Many people already didn't like his conservative views, for example saying, that birth control pills were abortion-inducing drugs. There were also people who didn't believe Ford and thought she wanted to ruin his reputation. Even though she was the one who had the most to lose, she was received death threats against her life, not Kavanaugh.

Ford was made to testify about her experience during a Senate judiciary committee. She was stoic and gave her testimony with grace, having to recount a very traumatic part in her life. The same couldn't be said about Kavanaugh. He was yelling and very emotional. Many people pointed out that if that's was Ford, people would attack her even more. This shows the underlying hypocrisy we have towards how women should act. It also shows how a man will react when they feel like power of the male patriarchy is being threatened. In the end, Kavanaugh was appointed to the Supreme Court, something that will have an impact on all Americans, especially women, for years to come.

In a Times article written by Haley Sweetland Edwards titled *How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Change America* she states

The facts remain unsettled, and Ford's testimony may not prevent Kavanaugh's confirmation. But it was a powerful warning that wealth, status and a record of professional accomplishments were no longer enough to override credible allegations of sexual assault, no matter when they occurred. To young men, it was a message that drunken violence could shadow them all their lives. And to victims, Ford's testimony was an invitation to speak up, no matter how powerful the accused, no matter how long ago the attack. People will listen, the country seemed to reassure them. We will believe you. (Edwards, 2)

Edwards explains that Ford's testimony gave people the platform to speak up about their experiences, and the example that the public will believe them and stand behind them. The people who are accused of such acts as sexual assaults can't hide behind their wealth and status in society.

However, the fact that Kavanaugh was appointed to the Supreme Court, even after what Ford said, shows us that there are many who are not comfortable with women speaking up and making their voices heard. The reason I used historical events that are happening today is to showcase how far women have come both on and off the stage. In this essay I talked about women's roles in theatre and how that has changed over the decades. Most roles women had weren't always ideal. But as the decades progressed and women got more rights and freedoms than ever before, the roles for women in theatre became more complex. The roles they have been given in the past few decades have shown how they will challenge the status quo and stand up to the injustices many women face. That they won't be silent, I believe that we will see even more of this in the years to come. .



## Bibliography

**Dudden, Faye E. *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870.***

**Yale University Press, 1994.**

Dudden's book explores Women in American Theatre in the 18th and 19th century. Dudden talks about how people perceived women on the stage. It also explained how Women on the stage were drastically different from women off the stage. She explains that theatre and sexuality were closely linked and many people thought it was immoral.

**Stetz, Margaret D. Mrs. Linde, Feminism, and Women's Work, Then and Now** [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15021860701717878](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15021860701717878).

Stetz writes about the feminist connections and ideals that can be seen in Henrik Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*. She explains that Ibsen was a head of his time and went against Societal norms when it came to Women, this can be seen in his two female characters, Nora Helmer and Kristine Linde.

**Reid, Kerry. "Arthur Miller, a Man Who Gave Women the Last Word." Chicago Tribune , 9 Mar. 2005.**

Reid talks about how Arthur Miller wrote his female character. She points out that the female character were only there to cater to the male character and to move along their storylines. This shows how women were represented on stage in the 1950's after World War II

**Miller, Arthur. Death of a Salesman. 1949.**

The quote is from one of Arthur Miller's play. Linda Loman is the only female character in the play, we see her miserable at how her husband is acting and that he hasn't accomplished that much. However, she won't leave him.

**"Postwar Gender Roles and Women in American Politics." US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives** [history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/Changing-Guard/Identity.com](http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/Changing-Guard/Identity.com)

The essay talks about post gender roles and women in american politics after World War II. The essay points out that while many women worked during the war years, after the war and as we went into the 1950's, women lost their jobs and had to return to being housewives. In the 1950's America was more focused on having the ideal family. That meant women were meant to stay home and take care of the house and the children, while the men were out working.

**The Path of 'Fefu,' From a Gun Joke to a Feminist Play ...** [www.americantheatre.org/2017/07/05/the-path-of-fefu-from-a-gun-joke-to-a-feminist-play-sans-plot/](http://www.americantheatre.org/2017/07/05/the-path-of-fefu-from-a-gun-joke-to-a-feminist-play-sans-plot/).

**Isherwood, Charles. "Dreams, Compromise and a Talking Box." The New York Times, The New York Times, 17 Nov. 2005,** [www.nytimes.com/2005/11/17/theater/reviews/dreams-compromise-and-a-talking-box.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=0125623E889C3DB6313852C6716744AA&gwt=pay](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/17/theater/reviews/dreams-compromise-and-a-talking-box.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=0125623E889C3DB6313852C6716744AA&gwt=pay).

**Rosalyn Baxandall, and Linda Gordon. "Second Wave Feminism ." A Companion to American Women's History, by Nancy A. Hewitt, Blackwell, 2005.**

This piece talked about second wave feminism. Both Baxandall and Gordon point out that during the second wave feminism, women fought for more rights including reproductive rights, employment rights, health rights, etc.

**Dicker , Rory, and Alison Piepmeier. Catching A Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for The 21st Century . Northeastern University Press , 2003.**

Explains how after almost 30 years of the women's movement and fighting for their rights, Current day can still seeing many more men in positions of power than women.



**Remnick, David. "Hillary Clinton Looks Back in Anger." The New Yorker, The New Yorker, 31 May 2018,**

[www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/09/25/hillary-clinton-looks-back-in-anger](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/09/25/hillary-clinton-looks-back-in-anger).

Remick talks about how Hillary Clinton was the one many people thought would become president during the 2016 election. However, she lost to Donald Trump. He talks about how she had many more votes than other white male presidential nominees before her. She had won the popular vote, but lost the electoral college.

Edwards, Haley Sweetland. "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America." Time, Time, 4 Oct. 2018, [time.com/5415027/christine-blasey-ford-testimony/](http://time.com/5415027/christine-blasey-ford-testimony/).

Edwards talks about Christine Blasey Ford's testimony in front of the senate committee about Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulting her in the 1980's. Edwards pointed out that while her testimony didn't stop Kavanaugh from being appointed. It showed America that no matter how much wealth and status you had, people will make their voices hear, that women in particularly aren't afraid to talk about something like sexual assault.

## Technical Essay

Working on The Role of Della was a wonderful experience. In my artistic aims, my goals were that this performance would showcase all the hard work I put into my time here at Purchase. The performance dealt with a category of theatre I had never dealt with previously, which was comedy. The role of Emma was also a character I had never dealt with before: the role needed me to be conniving and rude. It needed me to be loud; All these things were very different from who I am. I'm usually very timid and sometimes shy. So this role would make me get out of my comfort zone. I knew it was going to be a challenge. I believe that I succeeded at that. At every performance, the audience laughed at the jokes and many people were in shock when the twist happened. That was another aim I hoped succeed and it did. I was very pleased with the results. I believe the performance really showcased the crazy things women have to go through in the audition room.

Most women don't get to even audition because they aren't the right type, and many casting agents have high expectations of women that sometimes many women can't meet. The Role of Della shows the audience the lengths actresses will go to get a role. In Emma's case, she's willing to lead another actress on and sabotage her chances at getting a role that could possibly change their lives.

Another point I made in my artistic aims was that I wanted to work more with other THP students at Purchase. This aim was also met through this performance experi-

ence. I worked with three other seniors on this project. Sarahanne played Elizabeth in the play. This was also her senior project. We got along really well. The other senior I worked with on this project was Alex. She was our director, but this wasn't her senior project.

Jessie was the third actress; she played the real casting agent. Jessie and I have known each other for a while and had a few classes together last semester, so it was nice to be acting alongside her again. When we first started she asked when we were available and she set up a calendar that had all of our rehearsals. Keeping track of rehearsals and actors was easy because there were only three of us.

Each rehearsal we set up space with a chair and a table, seeing how the set is very minimal. We then proceeded to warm up and from time to time did a few vocal warm-ups. Rehearsals were efficient. We went through the play usually twice because of how short it was. Alex gave us notes and we would do another run through keeping those notes in mind. Tech week was fairly smooth as well. We had two-run throughs before the dress rehearsal on the Tuesday before the festival. Alex gave us an off-book date, which we followed. Being off book was very helpful. It helped me especially focus on what my character would be feeling or thinking at that moment. It also made me more comfortable in the character. I was worried we would be spending long nights in rehearsals, but it worked out that we didn't need to spend the maximum hours they had given us. During tech week we as a cast had to help with load in and then load out. I had dealt with helping set up sets before because of production practicum so I knew what to expect for both

days. Overall, in terms of costumes, we were allowed to wear our own clothes, but we had to wear something that represented our characters. That's why I decided on wearing black pants and a nice long-sleeve shirt. I wanted to show what I think my character would wear for an audition and I thought it was a great contrast to Jessie's character outfit. She wore a dress with a black blazer, very work professional looking

Another aim I talked about in my artistic aims was about the classes I took both at Purchase and in my community college. I believe those classes I took helped me greatly with my senior project. Also, the festival was a very different experience from my previous stage experience at Rockland Community College. At RCC they were mostly full-length plays, most of the casts were huge, and they were also performed on a bigger stage than the Passage Gallery. With the festival, it felt very intimate because of how small the space was. There were only two other productions that went up with us, that only had a few of actors in them. So it wasn't hard getting to know who was who.

Transitions and Tech Week were easy, other productions I have been a part of, we would have waited hours till tech was over, and even then we hadn't done a full run-through. With the festival, we were able to do two run-throughs and still leave the Passage Gallery early. It also felt more professional, everyone seemed to be on top of their game, maybe because it was most of the actor's senior project. I believe my experience with this festival was the best experience I have experienced in College. This was one of the first productions I have been a part of at Purchase College. While I did do a staged

reading during the spring 2018 semester, being a part of the festival production is very different from the stage reading. It took a lot of time and effort, but I believe the final product was a success.

The one mini challenge we as a cast faced during tech week was just how small space would be in the Passage Gallery. During tech week we had to change how Elizabeth would enter when the play started. During rehearsals we had Sarahanne going through a door, **however**, because there were no doors on stage, Sarahanne had to sit in the audience and then walk on when it was her cue. We also had to change how we had positioned the chairs and the table. We had it originally facing the audience, with us, the actors, turning in a way so we wouldn't show our backs to the audience. However, because of how small space was, that wouldn't be possible. So we had to move the table and chairs on an angle, to make sure that we didn't have our backs to the audience. They were small problems we were able to fix fairly quickly. I think this was a better set up so the audience could see us more clearly and see our facial expressions.

Being a part of *The Role of Della* was a great experience and in my opinion was a great option for my senior project. I did have some apprehension going into it, seeing how this wasn't a play that I proposed in front of the board of study. I had originally proposed a full-length play, However, I think everything worked out for a reason. I believe putting up a full-length play would be way more stressful and take up way too much time. I believe that the story was simple but it said so much through the characters and

their actions. It was a great comedy piece and I'm glad I got to be a part of it. I believe all my artistic aims were met in this project. It was something that I was about for and helped me get to know many more people at Purchase and the connections I have made here will definitely help me in my future endeavors once I graduate.