

The process of creating *The Dream Factory: 60 Most Fascinating People* took place over the course of two years. While the show itself morphed and changed drastically from when I first joined the team in the spring of 2017, certain core objectives remained prevalent through the process, including narrative, character, and audience immersion.

When director Andrew Wehnke first began bringing actors into the devising process, he often had the actor meet the two of us at a neutral location and chat. Instead of a conventional audition process, we would talk with the actor and gauge their ability to engage in conversation, their willingness to collaborate and help create new work, and their overall fit within our ever-growing company of actors. More towards the beginning of the process, we were more focused on character, and Andrew would seek out actors who fit into the roles of the actual people who inhabited Andy Warhol's Factory. As we dove into devising and creating content, Andrew and I worked to direct the actors toward more specific channels. Andrew prompted the actors to improvise scenes with certain tasks in order to explore what conflicts occurred within the character dynamics. This helped establish relationships between characters as well as create beginnings to possible story lines. While these earliest explorations occurred, I went through extremely simple exercises with the actors to try and discover what the physicality was for each character. In our project the actors are never offstage, so they had to learn how to completely embody their characters, both mentally and physically. I was fascinated by how the most subtle change I would apply to an actor's posture would seemingly change the biology of their character. As we got into more of a plot line and began creating scenes that fit more directly into the story world we created, I played with the line between blocking and choreographing. A common structure of devising a scene would be the following: Andrew would pose a situation

which the actors would act out. Afterwards, he would give notes on what direction the improvisation went in, and after they repeated the scene a couple of times, I would be able to grasp the overall structure of the scene, and I would have the actors emphasize the highs and lows with movement, levels, moments of stillness, and etc. While they weren't doing set phrase work, these hybrid scenes of movement and dialogue put us into a unique story world that wasn't quite in reality but was very much a place a person could become immersed in. Once I added in dancers to the production, a new layer the story world revealed itself and helped the most climactic moments become larger than life. My process with the dancers and actors was different, as I brought the dancers in much later in the process and had already much more of an established idea of what they would be doing during the scenes. Once Andrew explained to me an outlined structure of a scene, we would insert the actors to see how the scene would begin to come to life, and then I would fill in the scenes with dancers and codified movement to better establish the aesthetic of each scene, as well as heighten the experience for the audience. Before I taught each scene to the dancers, I explained the context and what the scene would lead to next. I ensured that I could always tie the movement to the narrative somehow. Since I was so driven by the narrative, I had leeway for the dancers to personalize the work and to make choices in the moment. The clear story world and narrative I worked within granted me with the ability to give the dancers a task to explore and improvise. Then I went in and fine-tuned their choices to fit appropriately. When I worked with the actors and dancers together, I worked to see how the two parties supported each other and supported the bigger picture of the production. We established that the dancers would not have character tracks in the way the actors did. The audience were advised not to speak to the dancers or follow them, making the dancers passive on the spectrum

of immersion in the show. Their role changed from scene to scene. At times, they were more background and texture to the space, reminiscent of the performers in Brooklyn club, House of Yes. Other times, they supported the narrative of the actors and helped move the action along, almost like a type of electric silver Greek chorus, bringing two characters together romantically for the first time, physically lifting characters in the air, or acting as characters in the actor's memories and fantasies. Additionally, the actors at times would dance with the dancers, or would act as a barrier between the audience and the dancers, keeping everyone safe while still remaining in the story world.

The choreography in this piece served as my way to communicate the climate of the overarching plotline, while the dialogue provided more context and detail. Aesthetic and atmosphere were integral to each scene in the show, and since each scene was supposed to feel like a new idea, I had to make the movement fresh and different in each scene, as well. I wanted an audience member to be able to enter the main space and quickly read the mood of the room, whether or not they had been following the track of the performers in the space. In a realization Andrew and I made in the fall semester, we discovered that the show should feel like a party that everyone wants to be a part of. Once I entered that mindset, I wanted the audience to be excited and entertained by the choreography, but even more, I wanted them to feel welcomed and comfortable enough to join in on the fun. The performance took place over one evening for the Superstars in this factory of artists. The audience had the opportunity to follow the actors and learn the secrets of The Factory. They watched it unravel from its seemingly glamorous and shiny presentation until it was left with next to nothing. The night served as an opportunity for the audience to watch, explore, dance, and feel fascinating.

The score of the piece was chosen by Andrew and mixed together by our sound designer, Keaton Comiskey. The three of us worked together to find a balance and flow that worked for the production. Since this was a completely new work, the duration of scenes fluctuated often, songs were cut, added and moved around frequently. Each song signaled a new scene or new idea, and I used the score as an indication to how the world functioned at that moment. I worked with the score and narrative in tandem to inform how each scene should be shaped and created. The scripted words weren't set until late in the process and were changing constantly up until our final shows, and much of what the actors said changed every night depending on audience interaction. Therefore, I depended more on the sound score to create the rises and falls in the choreography, as I could use the music as more of a constant than I could with the dialogue. I wanted every scene to have a narrative through-line that I could map out, even if I was the only one who could directly identify it. For me, that is the way I could keep the movement from derailing to something that is more movement for movement sake. It was important to me that every moment was purposeful, and not an unconnected embellishment.

Creating this work was an extremely frustrating, educational and rewarding process. One of the biggest challenges I faced was the sheer size of the production. With about thirty-five performers, four performance spaces and a group of audience members exploring the space, there were more moving parts to this show than any other I have worked on before. Specifically with the dance cast, I struggled to choreograph pieces when there were cast members missing, which was often the case. When all the dancers were present, I had to still imagine where the actors fit in, and vice versa when I rehearsed with the actors. When I had both the actors and dancers in the space together, I had to imagine where the audience fit in. Additionally, the set

and size of the space had to be imagined. Still on top of that, I had to not only imagine the layers that were missing, but I had to continuously remind and communicate to my cast where there were aspects missing and how they fit in to what they were doing. I often felt more like a director than a choreographer, and I had to work to keep my vision clear. Andrew and I stayed in communication before and after each rehearsal, which kept us prepared and on the same page. We had to learn to balance what was too much information to give to the performers at once, and what was too little and made them feel in the dark. I never let myself sink into the work and become comfortable with the state it was in, because changes were necessary every day to better the show. Fortunately, I felt confident with my ability to communicate with the director and writers, and we were able to quickly and efficiently come up with solutions to each challenge we encountered.

Although it was an ambitious undertaking, focusing on the journey of the audience and the journey of the characters kept me on track. The process of creating *The Dream Factory* taught me about storytelling, world building, working with performers, working with audience members, and about myself as a creator.