

A Play in Sketches

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I set out this summer to write a play consisting of various vignettes or sketches which would be linked together with an overarching theme and focus on the relationship between two main characters that were trying to come together but were further divided because of the chaotic and absurd world that they inhabited. I was ideologically inspired to write this play by modern and contemporary sketch comedy and absurdist drama and literature in English and Spanish and personally inspired by a desire to articulate my own experience as a person of color through the lens of absurdist comedy.

By the end of the summer, I wanted to have a completed play so that I could direct it the following semester at Bowdoin. Additionally, while some sketches would be performed live onstage, others would be filmed to further divide the two main characters, play with their points of view, and to mirror the relationship between people and technology and mirror my own sense of identity that I feel as a Latinx person.

In order to tackle this complex idea, I sought out to take a playwriting class at NYU Tisch, as I had written sketches for comedy groups on campus at Bowdoin but was never taught the intricacies of playwriting. I also took a class in long-form improvisation from the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater Training Center, which allowed me to learn more about comedic writing in an academic setting. Both of these schools were in New York, which gave me the opportunity to see more avant-garde theater and films that would otherwise be difficult to find produced. The playwriting class gave me structure to work on my play and better understand the medium as well as required reading which gave me new inspiration outside of what I had researched before applying for the fellowship. The improv class was supposed to be a way for me to help generate more story ideas for my sketches, following the improvisation to written model pioneered at the Second City. However, the class gave me more than just ideas which found themselves into my sketches. It also taught me the value of game, meaning the first unusual thing in a scene that is repeated and heightened to create comedy, which is quite different than emotional stakes which was heavily discussed in my playwriting class. The combination of the two took my writing to a new place. In exploring this idea, I ended up writing five sketches and a longer one act that incorporates elements of sketch and improv into a longer, more cohesive story that comes from my own personal experience.

As my writing developed over the summer, I found myself writing a lot more social satire instead of absurd or surreal plays. There definitely are odd elements in my sketches but they do not stray as far from reality as I thought they would. It's much closer to my own commentary on society from my perspective as a Latinx person growing up in white dominant environments as opposed to a world-driven reimagining of the world. These sketches will become an independent study that I will continue to work on and direct over the course of my senior year. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity further develop as a writer and be able to find comedy out of my personal experiences in a medium that I am now much better acquainted with.

Faculty Mentor: Davis Robinson

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