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CUNY Around the World Final Culmination Project Reflection

On December 7th, 2023, after a year of hard work and dedication, the StageCraft Club and the Entertainment Technology department put on *CUNY Around the World!* With 8 performances spanning across different schools and cultures, I can confidently say that it was a successful show!

Wednesday, December 6th was the first rehearsal day. Five performers arrived, and we were able to write stage management calls, lighting cues, and sound mixing settings. Our QLab operator Coralie also was able to organize the QLab project in a concise way; she was familiar with the software from previous work. We assigned mics to each performer and overall, it was a very smooth rehearsal day. Most of our crew was in attendance as well, so there was a great feeling. We wrapped around 6pm, and I let my AV guys know that call time is at 11am the next day. We're all elated and excited from a successful rehearsal; we're ready for what's to come. The next day didn't come without its roadblocks.

While the crew call was at 11am, the crew leads were in at 10am. I met Nesreen at a Target nearby to buy additional concessions for the StageCraft Club and then buy coffee for the crew for the day. With the heavy items on our person, we trot our way to campus. We arrive at the Voorhees Theater and are thankfully met with some of the crew who arrived early. We settle down for a bit, set up a table with the coffee and snacks for the crew, and soak in the day for a second. Then it's time to work.

With almost all the crew in at 11:30am, we divide and conquer. Some of the crew spent time wiping seats down. A few begin to sweep between the aisles and on the stage floor. I excuse my crew for a second, and we begin turning our system on. Mixer board on, computers on, subwoofer on, and always last, speakers on. My deck audio crew goes to retrieve the mics while my QLab turns the computers on and loads up the completed files. On the board, Enson and I label every mic channel to their respective performers. Once they are all ready, we begin a mic and sound check. It all goes smoothly.

The first couple of performers arrive at 1pm. Because of a lack of knowledge on our technology, the performers spent a long time deciding their lighting choices. Our stage manager Nesreen discussed with all of the performers before and during the rehearsals about cues. This would involve when they would walk onto the stage, walk out of stage, what lighting would they do, and when they would like their music or images to play.

We spent about 4-5 hours rehearsing. One particular team of performers took a very long time to get ready to rehearse. They were onstage and they had to organize their group of 8-10 people in their positions for dancing. They're having a tough time getting in order, resulting in them taking

time up from other rehearsals. It is 5:05pm already, less than two hours before show time and more than 30 minutes after we were supposed to break for dinner. I sent most of my crew, mainly the assistant's to each position, over to break. They order some dinner for me, and I have a little less than 20 minutes to have it. We're back at around 5:45pm.

By this time, we've only teched the two dance teams, the poet, and one of the singers. Everyone else is up in the air. We couldn't even tech our MC for the night. To compensate for the lack of proper rehearsal, I had my deck audio crew turn on the mics, specifically the headset mics. Once all the singers were ready with their mics set up, I had to speak softly into the mic or tap on their mic if they're using a handheld mic. All the while their individual channels on the mixer board was on the pre-fader listen, meaning it could only be heard through headphones. I do this for all the singers and the MC's mic.

6pm rolls around and there are already a few audience members in the house. With house opening so close, there would be no time to properly rehearse with someone while also setting levels for their music, deciding on lighting, and deciding cues for all the calls. Now especially with audience members in the seats.

We start our pre-show music. 6:30pm comes and the doors are open.

The crowd begins to form in the lobby and spreads to their seats. As the crowd grows, so does the impending feeling. It's a feeling I remember having before my first couple of shows. Excitement. Anxiety. Worry. This has been a year and a half in the making; the weight of that time bore on my shoulders.

7:15pm. The show begins. The first QLab call has been made, and our MC Adam walks on stage. Professor McCullough and I discussed a day before the show; mixing this would be the easiest part of the whole show. We take care of this show without a relative hitch. Towards the end, Adam calls the crew leads over and we say our piece. We take our bow in front of friends, family, and faculty. It was a moment to remember.

As cliché as it is, the most important thing about this whole process was not the destination, but rather the journey. *CUNY Around the World* was not just a culmination project, but also a culmination of our determination and resiliency. Along the way, we earned respect for the ENT department and for the students here. We've carved a path for those who will come after us, and set up a blueprint for anyone ambitious enough. We've proven that taking on a project of this caliber is crazy but not impossible.

Lastly, being able to create bonds, memories, and friendships with these amazing groups of people will stick with me. Who knows where everybody ends up after, but I'm confident that everyone on this crew, from the top producers to the last stagehand, will do very well for themselves. I'm proud of all of them and I can't wait to see what their next venture is.