

NEWSLETTER

Department of Foreign Languages & Applied Linguistics

National Taipei University

- A Special Edition of the 2013 Annual Play -

NEXT TO NORMAL

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Interview

Be Brave to Dream Big

Q: The annual play right around the corner. How do you feel now as the director?



A: Nervous, of course, but also a little excited. We started preparing for this play last year, and it's been quite a long journey. It seems like it's all coming to the end, so I am excited, wondering how the performance will be on the stage.

Q: Would you say you are more nervous or more excited?

A: I would say 50/50.

Q: Next to Normal could be viewed as a drama about love and loss, or about medical ethics. What would you say is the core theme of this play?

A: I think this play tries to keep people thinking what is being "normal". Sometimes a guy who looks ugly or who we think may do bad things may actually be a very kind person. Angel-like girls, on the other hand, may end up doing something bad.

Sometimes we think we have to see to believe, but it's not quite so. When people are trying to lead a normal life, they are actually pursuing something which is perfect.

Q: Being a director, what do you think is the biggest challenge for you?

A: Next to Normal is a musical. However, I'm not good at music at all, and I've never taken any singing classes. And, again, I don't have any professional acting experience. So you see, this job itself is a big challenge for me.

I did have some acting experience before, nothing professional though. Those experiences may help me in the way that I'd try not to let the tragedies happen again. For instance, I'll remind the acting crews not to work too hard, not to get too tired. Instead, they should take care of themselves. I just try to put myself into their shoes and imagine the kind of obstacles they may be in.

Q: What, then, is the most rewarding part of being the director so far?

A: The big think about being the director is I got a lot of chances to meet a lot of people—like the singing teachers. Also, I managed to see a lot of dramas and plays, and I got to know this field more.

I also have to contact with the stage managers and people from the company. They showed me in person what I'd call "professional attitude" toward working. They asked for the details and were willing to give us support s and suggestions. I admire their attitudes.

Q: Do you think those experiences will benefit your future life or your future career?

A: I think so. I mean more or less, because in this process, I need to communicate with others. Also I have to learn to deal with my weakness in doing this job; I have to face it. Therefore, I got to know more about myself. I've learned a lot.



Q: Do you think this drama relates to your personal life in any way?

A: Maybe. Next to Normal talks a lot about family. To me, my family has been quite important, so this drama reminds me how sweet my family is.

Q: When you were casting the actors, what were you looking for from them?

A: First, I looked at the way they interpreted and presented the lines and the songs. But then, the most important thing is if their personalities fit up with the particular roles, and if they can relate those characteristics with the roles in the play.

Also, their singing skills were very important when I did the casting, as Next to Normal is a musical, and, technically, it is not easy to perform.

Q: With this experience of directing for our annual play, would you consider working professionally in the film industry or performing arts in the future?

A: Before I became the director for Next to Normal, I was actually interested in acting and stage performance. I thought the stage would be a wonderful platform to express oneself. But I didn't have the confidence, and I doubted if I looked beautiful enough. Also, I didn't have the kind of characters to attract the audience. You need to have some certain characters so the audience will like you—which I don't think I have.

As I mentioned earlier, I've met a lot of people in this business after becoming the director. They not only have the professional skills to make a stage play possible, they have the passion in this field to keep going, even in the face of great difficulties. I don't think I have that kind of attitude—or passions.

I am a practical person, so I have to be serious about things like this. I still like acting, but I will have a second thought if you want me to work in this field in the future as a profession.

Q: I understand. Then, do you have any advice for the future directors of the annual play?

A: Be brave. Be brave to dream big. Also, be patient with people around you, and appreciate everything they've done along the way.

Tough Challenges Today, Sweet Memories Tomorrow

Q: What makes you want to be the Chief Coordinator for the annual play this year?

Q: I think it's an excellent opportunity to dedicate myself to such an important event for our class. In the past two years at FLAL, I did not get involved in our class activities a lot, so when we were about to turn juniors, I thought maybe this position would be the opportunity for me.

Q: When you were in high school, you went to Germany for a year as an exchange student. Does that experience help you now in any ways?

A: Rather than the experience of attending an exchange program in Germany, I think what helped me the most would be what I learned from ROTEX—the abilities of communication, negotiation, and organization are crucial for a coordinator.

ROTEX is an organization for Rotary exchange students who have successfully completed their exchange programs. It helps exchange students from home and overseas. At ROTEX, I often have to deal with a variety of situations, such as making suggestions for students or their parents and communicating or even negotiating in between Rotarians, parents, and students. We also organize activities for exchange students.

These experiences and, with them, the abilities I developed—communications and negotiation—paid off now as the chief coordinator for the annual play.

Q: In your opinion, what is the purpose of the annual plays? And what does it mean to you?

A: The annual play has long been the tradition in our department. What we present on the stage is one thing, what we learn throughout the process of preparation is even more rewarding. We all have to learn to communicate and cooperate with others. Everyone has to complete their multi-task duties.



In addition, the annual play has brought the entire class together; we tried hard to achieve the same goal—bringing our best to the stage. We've learned to solve problem and we did it together as a team.

For me personally, the annual play will fill wonderful, colorful pages in our college life. The challenges will be tough, but they will all turn out to be sweet memories that we can share in our later life.

Q: What, then, do you think is the most difficult part in your position as the chief coordinator?

A: Time management. I am a double major student—FLAL and financial law. My schedule is in fact very full.

In addition, the courses I take this year are far more difficult than those in the previous years. I have to spend more time on each course, and the responsibilities of a chief coordinator are complicated and time-consuming. Therefore, how to make a balance is the most difficult task I have to deal with.

Q: You must have learned something valuable from this experience.

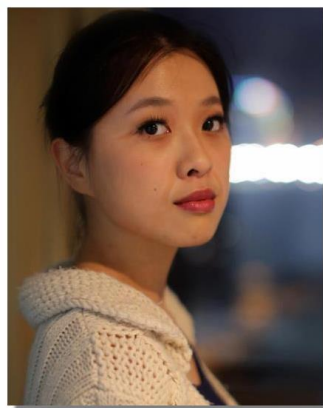
A: The answer is definitely yes. The skills of communication are essential for a coordinator, and those skills are solidified along the process of preparation.

From the very begin, we've encountered with many unexpected hurdles—obtaining the performance license from the proprietor of this musical, raising sufficient money to meet the needs of the high budget, reaching a compromise among dissenting voices, and bringing all the teams together. So you see, serving as a coordinator, I have to enhance my communication skills.

Q: So, you enjoyed being a coordinator?

A: Instead of enjoyment, I have gained a sense of achievement. I am really glad to see each stage of the preparation, despite all the difficulties, has been completed. For that, I greatly appreciate all the efforts and dedication from my fellow classmates. I am also grateful for the supports from our teachers and sponsors. We've tried our best to live up to their expectations, and I hope they will enjoy our performance.

A Mid-aged Mom Could Be a Hard Act to Follow



Q: How do you interpret your role of Diana, a middle-aged woman long diagnosed with mental illness?

A: This is a hard character to play. She is nearly 40 years old and married, with a husband—very different from my own self. But, in

my life, I have relatives and friends who have mental illness. I've heard how they dealt with it and what happened to them when the sickness broke out. I just try to imagine what it feels like to be in her situation, of losing someone I really loved.

Q: Sounds like a sad feeling inside her.

A: It is. The play we pick is quite low-key, kind of depressing, and Diana is a very depressing character. Problems kept weighing on her. I had my own sorrowful and sad memories, but they are something I am not quit used to. I am still working on it.

Q: So you have to try to involve your role Diana in your daily life?

A: Yeah, that's one way Ken, our acting coach, taught us to do to help our acting. He came and instructed us a couple of times, offering acting classes. At one point, he asked us to buy a little something, or anything that we think belongs to the character. So I bought a pill box for medicine.

Q: And you carry it with you all the time?

A: Yeah, not today, but almost all the time. I put it on my desk. Ken told us that we should take it out, look at it, and just imagine we are the character and then how it would be like? Sometimes I find myself talking like Diana when I chat with friends. It's weird, but I think it's good for my role.

Q: Is it hard to interpret the role of a 40-year-old mom?

A: It is the hardest part. I don't think I've overcome it even now. I practice by seeing movies and TV series with female or mom characters at the age of 40. I try to learn the way they speak, the way they move, and the



way they hold themselves. People at different ages indeed walk and speak in different ways. Sometimes their gestures would reveal their ages, even

without speaking a word. You know they are at their 40s or 50s.

Q: Have you discussed this with your own mom?

A: Yes, I did. But it is funny, because she doesn't think she is 40 at all; she thinks she is still 20. My mom walks and speaks like a 40-year-old woman, but she has the heart of a 20-year-old, which is kind of like Diana. The character is meant to be sexy and sharp, young at heart.

Q: How do you learn to act and sing better at the same time?

A: Let's start with acting. I learned by watching the original Broadway show, seeing the way the actors acted. Then, I listened to Ken and tried to put his suggestions into practice. I tried to make adaptations, associating Diana's life with my own personal experiences.

Singing is the difficult part. We've taken vocal lessons, and our vocal instructor gave us tips over acting, singing, hitting high notes, and generating voices which are strong enough. There are a lot of different ways, and I try to remember everything and put things into practice. In *Next to Normal*, we have to sing for two good hours, so those tips will give us the strength to sing.

Q: So which is more difficult for you, singing or acting on stage?

A: Singing. I think it's hard. For the role of Diana, it requires a wide vocal range, sometimes hitting very high notes. Well, I love singing personally, but never really hit notes that high quite so often. I still don't handle high notes very well, which is a big challenge for me right now.

Q: But I think you do very well at rehearsals.

A: Thank you, but I am afraid on the performance night, I might not have enough control of my voice. I still have to practice.

Q: What do you worry about the most in your performance?

A: Well, except for forgetting my lines, I guess it would be unexpected surprises, something you wouldn't know would happen. It could be about

the band, because it is the first time we have a band working with us. We could only hope that it goes well.

Q: So, how do you communicate with the band on the stage?

A: We couldn't communicate with the band on the stage. We can practice at rehearsals, so we get the cues to know when we go in and when they follow us. We couldn't have eye contacts with them; we have to know if I go in with the music or the band comes in when they see my motions.

Q: Ever felt frustrated during rehearsals, so you wanted to give up?

A: Forgetting my lines frustrated me, but I never thought about giving up. We are not professional actors, so there is no way to know how to make our performance look better. We know our motions on the stage, but sometimes we don't know how to make the movements smoothly. We will all feel tired sometimes, but we know we have to go on, because it is our first priority.

Q: How do you cheer yourself up when you feel frustrated?

A: I guess I'll just eat. Or maybe listen to the music.

Q: Do you have to make any sacrifices for the annual play?

A: We have to spend nearly a year to prepare and to rehearse. We do rehearsals almost every day, and it means sacrificing opportunities signing up for contests, conferences, or the sort. But I think it's worth it. And it also means sacrificing time you originally could spend with families. My parents understand this, and they support me.

Gabe and I Do Have One Thing in Common

Q: How did you feel when you were selected as an actor in the annual play?

A: Actually, I was very shocked because I didn't even go to the audition. This is not what I expected.



Q: How did they find you if you didn't go to the audition.

A: Maybe it's because I used to play in a band. I was the vocalist. So they thought I can handle the musical well.

Q: Ah, so you can actually sing?

A: Yeah, I can, but not this kind of musical.

Q: What kind of music then?

A: I was in a metal band.

Q: How have the rehearsals influenced your life?

A: Frankly speaking, it really costs me a lot of time to participate in the practices. I'm not good at acting, and I've never joined something like this. So, for me, this is a challenge.

Q: What's your biggest obstacle regarding the annual play?

A: The biggest obstacle for most of us is that we have to sing very high-keys, and sometimes we have to sing together. I think it's too hard for us, because this musical is designed for professionals but we're just students at the university.

At the same time, we have to play our roles while we are singing. When we're focusing on the vocal part, it's hard for us to concentrate on our acting part. This is another thing that's bothering us too.

Q: Are there any similar personality traits between you and Gabe?

A: The only thing I could think of is our relationship with our father. We share the same emotions. Gabe's father denies his existence, and sometimes my father does the same thing—he denies what I think and when I try to speak to him, he just neglects me and says I have to work harder with my schoolwork.

Q: You mean your father doesn't support what you like to do?

A: My father is never supportive of what I like to do and I think he refuses to try and understand what I'm doing.

Q: Are there any other connections between you and Gabe?

A: No.

Q: What would you do if you could save the family in the play from breaking apart?

A: I don't know, but I'm actually the role that's breaking the family apart. Gabe died a long time ago in the play so I'm merely my mom's imagination.

Well, maybe the only way is to make my mother believe that I no longer exist. It seems that I never died in my mothers' mind. It's hard to have her persuaded that I'm already dead. Also, when she knows that I'm dead, I can at last rest in peace. I think this is the only way to save the family—sacrifice myself.

Q: So what really keeps the family restless is that your mother kept accepting the fact that you're still alive. And then, you can't rest in peace either.

A: So, if I'm Gabe, I'd have to sacrifice myself to save the family.

I Jog and Drink Water to Sing Better



Q: There are many roles in this play. Why do you audition Henry in the first place?

A: At the very beginning, Gabe and Henry are both my choices. Dan's emotion is too heavy and too difficult for me to present. Henry and Gabe's emotions are comparatively easier because we are still that young.

Q: Henry, a 17-year-old boy, is addicted to drugs. What is in your mind while you are acting this role?

A: This is a question that has bothered me for a long time. I did spend some time watching so-called stoner in the videos and those who use drugs or marijuana. And I found that I have to be hyper without any reasons.



The happiness that a stoner feels is brought up by drugs itself. So there's no other feeling that this person has. The hyper feeling comes from the outside world, so when I act taking marijuana, I just try to be as hyper as possible.

Q: It seems that you have some difficulties singing falsetto in rehearsals. Have you done anything about it?

A: I am still working on this problem. Now I try to jog. I try to go jogging for one hour each day, and I have been doing this for two weeks. It's a little too late, I have to confess. But, it's better late than never.

And I also try to watch some vocal lessons online. There are many teachers who will video-tape and offer some tips to sing high notes, or to make your voice powerful. To sing the high notes, I try to drink water rather than sweet drinks because I used to drink lots of pearl milk tea. I heard that sweet stuff is harmful for our voice. I just try to avoid it.

Q: You have taken several singing classes. Which part impressed you the most?

A: According to the singing instructor, my pronunciation is a little bit weird because my nasal sound is heavy. The teacher is trying to help me solve this problem. I'm still working on it.

The teacher just told me to put three fingers into my mouth. I mean, vertically instead of horizontally. So your mouth will be forced to open very wide, and the teacher will ask you to sing with this position. Then, your mouth is watering and you don't make any sound at all. Actually I don't see any differences after I do this. The teacher said this posture will help us improve something I don't know...

Q: I think he is trying to remind you that your mouth should be open wide.

A: He also pointed out my facial muscles are too stiff, and that I should try to relax my whole body. He once tried to press my chest so hard that it could become the support of my voice.

Actually it's amazing. At the very beginning, without his help, I need to sing very, very hard and with all of my concentration to hit the high notes. But with his help, I can hit the high notes easily. It is really amazing.

But that is not my biggest problem now. I think my biggest problem now is to relax myself and soften my voice.

Q: We are going to perform a musical with a live band. What do you think about this idea?

A: The band itself is very wonderful because all the players are all experienced and I heard they all get paid to perform outside the school.

And I think they help the actors a lot because with their music, we can get involved ourselves into the music more.

We actors, after all, were not trained at young age to sing. So, with their music, things are different. They indeed help us a lot—not only to fit in the songs, they also help us to sing in the right tempo and at the right pitch. We are very grateful for them.

Q: Have you met some obstacles in acting?

A: The biggest problem is that Henry and Natalie are lovers in the play, so I need to cooperate with Lulu, and we need to have the so-called chemistry between us. I think this is the most difficult part, because we've been friends for the past three years, so it's a big challenge to create the chemistry between us.

We Had a Good Laugh at Cracked Voice in Singing



Q: Natalie is a serious girl in the play. Do you think there is something in common between you and the role you play?

A: In some specific situations, we are somewhat similar. For example, when Natalie faces her mother's illness, she is tough and strong. I think I'm that kind of girl. When I was in my childhood, I went through similar situations and I was tough and strong, just like Natalie.

There are differences between Natalie and me, for sure. For example, Natalie doesn't interact well with her families—like Diana and Dan, while



our families are very close. I have very good relationship with my parents, my brothers, and sisters.

Q: Natalie and Henry have very close relations in the play. Do you have any difficulties acting out the role intimately with Henry?

A: It is perhaps the most challenging part for me, because Josh and I have been very good friends, or even best friends, since we were both freshmen.

We always hang out in the same small group among classmates. In some

situations, honestly, when I have interactions with Josh, I simply take him as a girl. So it's hard to imagine that we need to have some intimate relationship in the drama. So when we rehearsed, I just couldn't help but laugh when I saw his face.

Q: You mean you've known him too well?

A: Yes. And his girlfriend, who is also our classmate, is one of my best friends too. So, it is embarrassing when we have to play as a couple in the play. It is a great challenge for me.

Q: Do you have any other obstacles acting out the role of Natalie?

A: Like I just said, I keep very close relationship with my own families, so it is hard for me to imagine and interpret Natalie, whose family ties are very different from mine. So it is also a challenge for me, because my parents love me so much, and yet I have to act as if I had a twisted relationship with my families. Acting out convincingly on the stage is indeed a great challenge.

Q: Have you personally been changed by the role you play in any ways? I mean Natalie is strong and tough, not to be defeated easily.

A: What impressed me the most is that I think Natalie is such a genius in music. When I learn the songs she sings, I just think that she is such a talented girl. For example, the song "Super boy and invisible girl" is difficult to sing because its tempo is hard to count. I always made mistakes singing that song.

Also, Natalie is very intelligent, spending a lot of time studying math and physics. I myself is not a genius, and I am not spending a lot of time on my schoolwork, so I feel overwhelmed playing her role.

Q: You mean you don't work as hard at school like Natalie?

A: I am just not that kind of a girl. I don't spend a lot of time on schoolwork; I would rather spend time on my own life. If she has a goal to reach, she will reach it. For example, once she is determined to want to get into Yale, she will work hard to achieve it.

Q: Is there anything you want to learn from the role of Natalie in the play to make yourself a better person?

A: I think there is one thing—time management. If you want to be a genius like Natalie, time management is very important because otherwise you can't handle a lot of things at the same time. In order to do all things well

on your schedule, you need very good time-management skills. That's the kind of thing I want to learn from Natalie.

Q: Is there anything interesting at the rehearsals you want to share with us?

A: Of course, we have a lot of fun, despite all the pressures we have been under during the rehearsals.

For example, *Next to Normal* is a musical, so we have to sing a lot of songs. When someone's voice cracked in singing, we got amused. Diana has a lot of songs to sing, so it's pretty normal for her to crack her voice once or twice in a day. And when that happened, others got a few good laughs because it just seemed funny. That happened to be our relaxing moments.

We are, after all, just college students, rather than professional actors, so we have been under tremendous pressure. When someone gets a crack voice, others laugh and feel relaxed.

Q: So you actually have a good time when someone's voice cracks?

A: Not just that. When Josh forgets his lines or when I forget about the timing to sing "Super boy and invisible girl", we will remind each other in many different ways—like in hushed voices or my moving our eyebrows—and we would laugh about it. We sort of have a good time in helping each other out during rehearsals.



It will be another day when I wake up

Q: You are the music director of our annual play, but you also play Dr. Madden. Why?



A: Well, I didn't audition for that role, because it is originally a male role. I actually preferred the roles of Diana and Natalie, because I love their songs in this musical.

Q: So, is it difficult to interpret the role of Dr. Madden for you?

A: Yes, because the role is different from the person I am. Dr. Madden is cool, and she is a professional in the way she treats her patients. I am not that kind of a person, but I have to interpret the role for the play. I learned by watching the video clips from the Broadway theatrical show.

Dr. Madden is a complicated role to play, because she is a rock star in her free time, and at the same time, she is a professional doctor, who is serious when treating her patients. It's hard to interpret this role.

Q: Have you met any other difficulties interpreting the role?

A: There is one. As I mentioned, the role of Dr. Madden is originally a male in the Broadway version, and we transfer that into a female for the annual play. However, the songs for Dr. Madden are still meant to be sung by male voices, so I end up having to sing in male notes, which are lower in their pitch and, therefore, is difficult for me to sing.

Q: You are the music director and you also have a role to play, so how do you manage your time?

A: To be honest, it's very tiring to have two positions at the same time. Being an actress is already a challenge, and as a music director, I have to team up the band and the acting crew. Also, I have to take notes when the actors are taking singing classes. When the vocal coach is not with us, I have to help them practice. It is a little tiring, physically and mentally.

When the actors are singing along with the live band, it is another story, because most of them didn't have any such experiences. It is hard for them to get into the songs only with background music, so I have to teach them, and offer cues for them to cut in at the right timing.

Q: How is the band coping with the situation?

A: I have to discuss details of the songs with the players of the band. There are six of them, and they are very experienced. Also, they are very busy outside the school—they have their own band and they also teach in music classes as drum, guitar, or keyboard tutors. They are very busy, so it's very hard to get everyone to practice together.

Q: The annual play will be in just a few days, are you nervous?

A: Of course. I'm very nervous.

Q: So how do you cheer yourself up if you feel nervous or upset?

A: I sleep. I take long sleeps. After waking up, it's another day. So I can keep working.

Q: I am just curious about if you have stage fright? If you do, how do you overcome it?

A: I think, for sure, everyone has stage fright. We have to sing and act at the same time, and we have to remember the notes and the lines. It's very difficult. Especially, there will be many friends and our own families sitting in front of us, looking at us when we are on the stage.

And since I am both of the music director and an actor, so when I am not acting, I still have to worry about other actors. I have to know whether they are singing at the right time, whether they are out of pitch, or whether they have other problems with the band players. So it is very challenging.

Q: How do you overcome that scary feeling?

A: Originally, I think the only way is to be on the safe side by practice, practice, and practice. Now that the big day is near, I could only let it be. Come what may, I think.



Getting rid of the lines helped me remember all of them

Q: Why did you audition for the role of Dr. Fine in *Next to Normal*?

A: In the very beginning, I just wanted to play a role which is not too heavy or stressful for me. Other roles in this musical have very strong or negative feelings, and they have to sing and have to remember a lot of lines. Basically, I don't think I am qualified to be one of the main characters.



And in fact, initially, the role I picked was Dr. Madden. The role of Dr. Fine wasn't even in the audition. So when I was informed that I will play Dr. Fine, I was very surprised and confused. However, I am glad now to be Dr. Fine after I know this character better.

Q: I know that you are also a member of the public relations team. How do you manage your time to do both well?

A: It is very hard to get sponsors. I usually use the break time between classes or after-class hours to make phone calls. When the prospect companies say "No" to us, it is very frustrating. As to the role of Dr. Fine, I often work during evening hours, or in the morning before classes.

I like to work in the morning, because the lines for Dr. Fine are long and difficult to remember. I have to remember a lot of names of medicines I have never heard before.

Q: You also need to sing some songs in the play, right?

A: Yes! Yes!

Q: So you also need to remember the lyrics.

A: Yes, often I will listen to the songs I have to sing before I go to sleep. I will lie on the bed and listen to the music. Sometimes I will fall asleep.

Q: Leaving the music playing?

A: Yap. So sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I find that my

cellphone's battery is gone.

Q: You just said that you feel frustrated if the company says "No" to give us sponsorship. How do you cheer yourself up when you feel frustrated?

A: Dr. Fine doesn't have to appear on the stage as frequently as Diana or Dan, so I don't have that much pressure like them. However, I still have some frustrations. For example, when I cannot fluently speak out my lines, I was really upset.

At first, I would try my best to repeat it again and again, and I just wanted to conquer it. I forced myself to practice one more time and one more time, but the situation did not become any better.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know why. Just like the sentences with lots of medications or the lines about treatments, I don't know why, but I just forget the next sentence all the time.

Q: Is it because you have to remember lots of medications?

A: At first, I forced myself to repeat the lines, but the situation became worse. So I changed my mind, trying to throw all the lines, sentences, and all the names of medications away. I just want to get rid of them. I freed myself by reading comics and novels. But most importantly, I tried to forget that I am one of the characters. I try to listen to the beautiful music or beautiful songs from *Next to Normal* or watch the Broadway versions of *Next to Normal*. I just pretended that I was an audience.

Q: Did it work?

A: Yes, it worked. The songs and music in *Next to Normal* is so beautiful and I think I was touched. So perhaps getting rid of all lines for three or four days somehow worked. It was amazing, anyway, that I now remember all the lines, although I don't know how and why.

Q: Besides the long lines, what is the most difficult part in playing Dr. Fine? Have you ever thought of giving up?

A: No, I never thought about giving up. I know it is a very precious chance for me to play this role and to participate [in] the annual play, so if I give up, it will make



As to the most difficult part in playing Dr. Fine, I think it's that I cannot easily get into the situation or the feelings that Dr. Fine has. She is professional and indifferent to other people, and sometimes she is stubborn.

A: We are different, totally different. So I have to pretend that I am indifferent to all of my friends. Sometimes, when they are telling jokes, I will try not to laugh so loudly or I will try to calm myself down. I have to practice to be Dr. Fine to make myself more related to what Dr. Fine is.

A: I have learned to manage my time better, or I will have no time for my school works. Also, I think acting Dr. Fine makes me understand myself better.

A: Yes. Previously, I thought I was a kind of person like Dr. Fine, but when I tried to act out her role, I know that I am not the professional type of person.

A: Whenever I wear high heels—I don't know why—I will feel nervous. I am also excited, because my parents, my friends, and our teachers expect our performance very much. I hope all of us can perform well and get a lot of applause.





Analysis on 2012 THSR TV Commercial: *Buying Fish* Sheila 李宛潔



In 2012, Taiwan High Speed Railway released a TV commercial by the topic of *Buying Fish*. As always, the commercial touches the softest part in the audience's heart and makes them shed tears within one minute with a simple but impressive story.

In the story, the father goes shopping in a traditional market. From his conversation with the vendor, the audience knows that he has a daughter who is probably working or studying away from home. Since she is coming back home, the father decides to buy a kind of fish which is comparatively big, expensive, and nutritious. However, before long, he gets a phone call from his daughter, saying that she might not be able to come home. Although the father says "That's OK, come back when you have free time," the audience can easily sense that he actually feels disappointed. After he finishes the call, he tells the vendor that he will buy the small fish instead. As the audience hears the background music, they also see the father riding his bicycle heading home on his own. After the sight of the father's back fades out, the audience later sees a train quickly passes in the dark.

A main reason of the success of this commercial is the attentively created ambience, which is in the sense of melancholy and nostalgic. In the first 12 seconds or so, the ad creates a nostalgic atmosphere to attract the audience, particularly for people working away from home. In addition, the scene is set at a traditional market, which may remind the audience of the markets in their childhood neighborhood and arouse their memories of going to the markets with their family. What's more, the characters all talk in Taiwanese, a dialect which makes Taiwanese people associate with home and family. The use of the native language further enhances the feeling of nostalgic. Finally, the music which comes out at the later part, saying "Don't mind" again and again serves as a coherent and touching background for the story. Although the lyrics go "don't



mind, don't mind," the audience knows that in fact, the father minds and misses his daughter very much. With all these conscientious settings, the story paints an impressive picture in the audience's mind.

Another important element of a successful ad is to involve and therefore arouse the audiences' sympathy. For those who work or study away from home, like the daughter in the commercial, must have a father or mother who are willing to let them go and welcome them back at all times. Most parents act similarly to the father: They happily prepare a big dinner to welcome their children back. However, when the children cancel their plans, the parents often settle with the disappointment and expect the next time they call or go home. As the audience sees this commercial, they might feel like going home or even feel guilty of being far away from their families for a while. Although people are born with different personalities, when they are in front of a particular event, it is likely that they are overwhelmed by similar emotions. The commercial takes advantage of this characteristic of people to arouse their sympathy.

After the audiences finish watching this commercial, most of them may be indulged in missing their homes and realize how important families are.

Therefore, THSR will expect people to buy a ticket to go home, which is the goal of this commercial.



Comparison of Touching Advertisements

Annie 江郁涵



Advertisements could serve many different purposes, no matter to boost sales or to promote a company's image. Because of its powerful and pervasive influence on the society, company owners cannot underestimate the profits it may bring. Within a few minutes, people might be convinced by an advertisement and throw away the principles or beliefs they have always been following. For advertisements that do make some changes in people's lives, we can say that they have great convincing power.

A successful advertisement can benefit both the advertisers and audience at the same time. Take the advertisements designed by Thailand insurance company for example, they both send out meaningful messages regarding love and care and reach the goal to provide reasons for people to buy their services. Actually, three commonly used techniques,



which trigger the audience's intention to take out money, can be discovered in the two advertisements.

First of all, the main theme of the advertisements focuses on the issue of life and death by portraying the love among a family. The advertisers subtly point out two of the most important values in the world: time and our relationship with others. Half reminding and half warning, the advertisers force people to think what really matters in our lives, something we cannot give up easily. For instance, one of the advertisements describes the unselfish love between father and daughter, and the other depicts the ever-lasting love of a father to his son. Both of them raise the serious question "For whom do we live?" Indeed, we are not able to retrieve the love when someone leaves us or the time had passed, and yet love is eternal if we treasure every single moment to be together and seize every possible chance to love in time. In a light of this, the Thailand insurance

company urges us to buy their services if we want to cherish the love we have and enjoy it in the years to come. The company also suggests, actually, we can start making differences "Right

away", which is equal to say, "Buy our insurance now!" That is how the advertisements catch audience's eyes in the first place: involving people dreading of losing someone important and offering the solution subsequently.

Second, the portrait of the gripping plot is simple and straightforward. One of the advertisements describes a girl who feels ashamed that her father is a mute, but in the end she realizes that "No father is perfect but a father will always love perfectly." Likewise, the other advertisement also portraits the relationship in a family: a dying father's love to his wife and his newly born son. Since the main ideas in both advertisements are quite clear, the advertisers move people in the most natural way by depicting heart-wrenching stories. Without too much metaphors or complicated scenario, the two ads are easily understood for all ages. Even though some people are not going to buy the insurance, they still learn a lesson from the advertisements because they fear of experiencing what the characters in the two stories have been through.

Third, the technique of concealing the company logo in the stories serves as a good disguise for their hidden intentions. If the logo of the Thailand insurance company does not come out in the end, the two advertisements are more likely to be public-service ads instead of product ads. In other words, if we do not watch the ads carefully, we can barely find that they are in an attempt to sell products to us. It is smart to use this kind of technique because the audience can follow the tragic flow in the advertisements from the very beginning to the end, and not aware that the value or concept introduced by the advertisers has already been implanted in the audience's minds. However, if audience knows the company's intention in the

first place, they might naturally hold a biased or denying attitude when watching the ads, or they may even change the channel immediately.

In conclusion, a successful ad not only can reach its original purpose of selling products or promoting ideas, but also teach people how to love eternally. If advertisers can take advantage of the above three advertising techniques; namely, arousing people's fear of losing what they cherished, providing simple but clear stories, and hiding the intention of selling products, the ads could be as touching and effective as the ones Thailand insurance company has designed.

Advertisement Analysis


Linda 王毓翔

"The times people have meal with families will make families become closer." This is the slogan in a commercial of Tokyo gas. An event that might happen in the family nowadays was featured in this commercial. In the commercial, the father cooked fried rice for his daughter every time when his wife was angry. One time, he asked his daughter whether the fried rice was delicious or not; the daughter did not answer but kept eating. Few years later, he divorced with his wife and the daughter became a senior high school student.

Since the daughter became older, she spent more time eating with her friends but not his father. When the father told the

daughter "The dinner today is fried rice", the daughter said "I have already eaten" then went to her room. In the end of the commercial, the daughter told the father that she wanted to eat the fried rice made by him three days before she got married. The father was happy and asked the daughter "Is it delicious?" again, at this time, the daughter smiled with tears in eyes and told him "It is very delicious." Underneath the commercial, these familiar scenes represent the common social phenomenon.

Many scenes of the commercial are familiar to the audience so it successfully catches the heart of the audience. One of them is when the daughter told her father "I have already eaten outside." This scene make many audiences cry because it seems that the daughter does not want to accompany her father. The emotion is intensified when the camera shows the father's expression after he heard what the daughter said. He looked upset but did know what to do. The scene is the climax of the commercial. It happened suddenly when the narrator said "When I became a senior high school student....." then the narration stopped and that scene happened. Although the climax happened in silence, it was still shocking enough for audience to know the estrangement



The little child could be held
by his father just in time.



know the ending of the

commercial. One other scene that arouses sympathy in the audience is when the daughter finally told her father the fried rice was delicious before she was going to leave her father and get married. This part represents Asian children's implicit love toward their parents. Asian children usually do not directly tell their parents how much they love or thank them but express their love indirectly. Using familiar instance to allow the audience to make association between the father-daughter love they see in the commercial and the love they share with their own family, Tokyo Gas builds this harmonious image advertising which successfully win the audience's impression and heart.



Audiences watch this commercial with the daughter's narration playing in the background. When she tells the story in the past, the scene is a little darker; when she tells the present story, it is brighter. Besides, audience can see that the father becomes much older but the daughter grows up and becomes beautiful. When children are growing, their parents are ageing. After seeing the commercial, the audience, particular those who are of the similar age of the daughter, might think "How much time can I have meals with my families?" By working the audience identify with the emotions described in the commercial, Tokyo Gas tactically leads them to identify with the product as well.

This commercial also makes good connections with the product, gas, and the new social form, single parent. When it comes to gas, people might associate it with kitchen or cooking. In generally, the one who cooks for the family is mother. However, there is only a father who cooked for his daughter in the commercial. This commercial showed that even a single father who was not good at cooking still want to cook for his daughter. Parents' love for children is very simple because they only want their children to eat well and health then to grow up safely. The connection to cooking successfully hit the button of people who do not eat what their families cook for a long time. Audience will recall the tastes of the food filled with families' love.

This commercial creates a warm atmosphere. It depicts familiar scenes to arouse the audience's interest and highlight a sad and yet inevitable alienation between parents and children relationship. As the commercial of the gas company whose customers are families, the commercial successfully catch its customers' eyes. Besides, this commercial is not only a commercial but also

works a little like a public service advertisement. Thanks to this advertisement, people who are not interested in the gas systems still get something from this advertisement because they will recall the warm of families and cherish their families more after watching the advertisement.



Why Homosexuals Cannot Get Married?

Lori 張薔文



LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride) holds a gay parade annually; this year, the parade was held on October 27th. By using the slogan "Revolutionary Marriage: Equal Marriage Rights and Diverse Partnership," LGBT wanted to address the issue of same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage is a controversial issue that few public people want to get involved because our society is not open-minded enough to

accept it. People claim that gay marriage is unavailable since gay parents cannot produce children, gay parents will raise more gay children, and gay parents will hinder their children from success. However, are those arguments reasonable?

Firstly, people are against homosexual marriage as they are unable to produce children. However, the main purpose of marriage is not to get children. Couples get married because they love each other and are willing to be responsible for each other. They want to share their life—no matter good or bad—with their beloved ones, and grow old with each other. Wanting children may also be one of the purposes, but some couples still do not want children in their marriage. Moreover, the elder and the patient of infertility also cannot produce children. Can we inhibit them to get married? The answer is definitely not. Thus, homosexuals do have rights to get married as long as they are true love.

Secondly, people oppose gay marriage because they think gay parents will raise gay children. Nevertheless, children who are raised by straight parents also can become homosexuals. The evidence is that most of gays in our society are brought up by straight parents since same-sex marriages are rare in our society now. In addition, there is no direct influence that homosexual parents will raise a homosexual child. For instance, Zach Wahls, raised by a lesbian couple and famous for giving a touching speech in the Iowa House, is a straight. He claims that his parents' sexual orientation does not influence his at all.

Thirdly, people disapprove gay marriage as they consider that children growing up in a gay family are unable to succeed due to lacking both a male and a female model. Take Zach Wahls for example: he does



well on his academic performance, he has his own small business, and he becomes famous after delivering the speech defending same-sex marriage on TV. He also does well in his life even though he does not have a father. Besides, if we assume that a child brought up by only a male or female parent will fail, how about kids growing up in a single-parent family? Many successful people are also reared by a single parent, such as Lance Armstrong, JK Rowling, and Barack Obama. Generally, children's success will be influenced by their parents, but their personal efforts are more important.

People who are against same-sex marriage can think up of any reasons to inhibit it. However, most of those reasons are just the mask for their prejudices. They think homosexual relationship is unnatural and abnormal because it is different from heterosexual relationship. This thought represents a phenomenon which is deeply rooted in our human society: the minority is subordinate to the majority. We cannot accept people who are too unique. However, homosexuals are just as same as we are. We cry when we are depressed, we laugh when we are happy, and we curse when we are irritated. We have no differences. Therefore, why homosexuals, who are as same as us, are forbidden to get married?



Groping Hand on the Bus

Nora 邱萱

As a girl, I have learned to be careful when being alone. If I have to go home late at night, I will call my family first and inform them my location. If I pass by bus station full of beggars, I will shun from those hands and approaching strangers. The reason why I am so cautious is that I've gone through a terrible experience on the bus two years ago.

It was a Saturday night. There were fewer cars and pedestrians on the street; even shops and stands closed earlier than weekdays. I am on the bus heading for home because I went to a club activity in the school; when I sat down on the bus chair at the window side, I was quite exhausted. Leaning against the window, I felt the tremble of the big moving vehicle and listened to the stop-broadcasting machine that kept talking despite I was the only passenger. I stared outside the window and gradually fell asleep.

I woke up in about ten minutes on account of a feeling that someone beside me was touching my right thigh. It was a middle-aged man in a gray suit. He crossed his legs and put his jacket on them. It was obvious that he tried to cover this behavior of touching me by hiding

his groping hand under the jacket. I was totally stiff at that moment. I tried to look for help by searching any eyes that might witness this harassment, but my effort was in vain--- all the passengers sat on their seats and no one even felt something wrong. I decided to sit up and cross my legs as well in order to get away from his hand. Unfortunately, as soon as I changed my position, he changed his position, too! Thus, he could reach my body again.



Within a few seconds, a lot of thoughts and possible solutions ran through my mind. I could have screamed immediately or called the matter to everyone's attention; I could have moved to another seat or pressed the ring and gone off the bus at the next stop. However, all I did was just sitting there as a ramrod, trembling, and not being able to utter a word. Finally, the bus stopped at the main station, and I stood up firmly and left the bus with fear and anger. I was so frightened and even felt like vomiting, yet at the same time I was angry with myself for not building up the courage to reveal that pervert.

Although parents and textbooks teach us to ask for help when we're in danger, I still feel panic and helpless, not knowing what to do. As a consequence, I learn to be alert whenever I am alone; besides, I am willing to offer helps for sexual harassment victims on public transportation because I can understand their dilemma. The most valuable thing which I learned from the experience is that, in a sexual harassment situation, never compromise to such an inferior position you are: you are definitely able to save yourself if you make a brave and proper decision.

