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## THE GANGSTER PLAY – STATEMENT OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

*The Gangster Play: Circus Circus (Forcibly Adapted from Brecht's The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui)* is a piece devised by Illinois Theatre. Aimed to confront numerous topics often pushed to the side, this piece helps tell the company members' stories. The company consisted of 20 actors who worked to devise and perform the piece. The company and creative team collaborated extensively to create the world of the show effectively. From the start of the sound design process, the challenge was figuring out how to best support a show that did not yet exist. I immediately started creating a sound library that the cast could access throughout the devising process, filled with small and large compositions I had made to give them something to play with.

After the scenic design was finalized, I refined my system design to enhance the immersive experience we wanted to create in the round. The show would have a lot of dark undertones to change the audience's perspective on chosen topics. With that knowledge, I made a system that could fully cover the space in a traditional and psychological sense, allowing sound to be heard in many different locations, feeling like a group experience and a personal experience. While making the system design, I worked with the lighting designer to find where they had placed specials so I could put small speakers with them to create an audio-visual effect when lighting used those specials. We would often turn specific lights on and play sounds from the same location to shift attention. I also worked with the props and scenic designers to create two wireless practical speakers that could be used throughout the space. The finalized system allowed me to make sounds louder and more overwhelming or softer and more targeted at the audience members. I also utilized different frequencies and sound locations to evoke different emotions from the audience and make them feel how the company members onstage felt.

Once the show moved into rehearsals and devising, I spent as much time as possible in the room with the company and the directorial team. As each company member developed the story they wanted to tell, I brainstormed how to best support them and help the stories flow from one to the next. Each company member had a very different story, and while some were as clear as a direct monologue, others were told more indirectly throughout the performance. A significant focus of my design was creating sonic themes and moments that would carry throughout the whole show that helped the pieces flow together. I met many times with each company member to talk about what their story meant to them while the directorial team and I worked to make the production cohesive. I created a positive relationship with the company members so they felt comfortable bringing ideas and problems to my attention. Whether it was a particular sound they felt belonged in the world or issues with timing cues like gunshot and bones cracking, we were able to talk and find ways to solve each problem, like adding an onstage monitor just above the center of the space to help cue them for difficult cue moments via metronome.

The performance's last sound cue was one of the show's most significant moments. While the whole company lay lifeless on the ground, a collection of over a hundred recordings played through 31 speakers, each speaker getting its unique recordings. These recordings pulled out lines from the show that we wanted to resonate with audience members to help them understand the company and challenge their thought processes as they left the performance. This cue allowed me to use the system to its full extent, having each audience member get a different experience and allowing for psychological exploration. Going from a more subtle sound design to an influx of sound at the end of the performance created a moment to reflect on as an audience member. At the end of all the recordings, a collective gasp recording played with a gasp for air coming from each company member, followed by the lead company member gasping and laughing, bringing the group back to life for the bows.

This show challenged me to push the boundaries of my creativity and find ways to connect with each team member throughout the creative process. It allowed me to explore different kinds of art and topics I wouldn't have explored on my own and to discover how much I loved creating new work. This project allowed the company and designers to create a powerful message that each individual helped to create and convey.