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高中生原创公益音乐剧

完美
假人

Perfect Persona

2025.6.13 - 2025.6.15

上海黄浦文化中心 · 大上海新空间

Director's Portfolio

PERFECT PERSONA

An Original Musical

Direction and Book by Miller Mi and Judy Xu
Lyrics by Miller Mi

Logline

Four young women chasing viral fame at Perfect Corporation (a multi-channel network) discover they've become manufactured personas optimized by algorithms, forcing them to fight for their authentic selves before the attention economy consumes them entirely.

Synopsis

In a dystopian world ruled by the attention economy, engagement metrics are the currency of survival. Tech conglomerates measure human worth in likes, views, and shares.

Four young women—Aria, Brianna, Caylee, and Demi—chase viral fame at Perfect Corporation. Their personalities and emotions are optimized into whatever the algorithm demands. They believe they're ascending to stardom, until they realize the spotlight only illuminates manufactured personas crafted by data models.

Can they reclaim who they were before the algorithm? Or were those selves already consumed by the endless hunger for attention?



Conceptual Framework



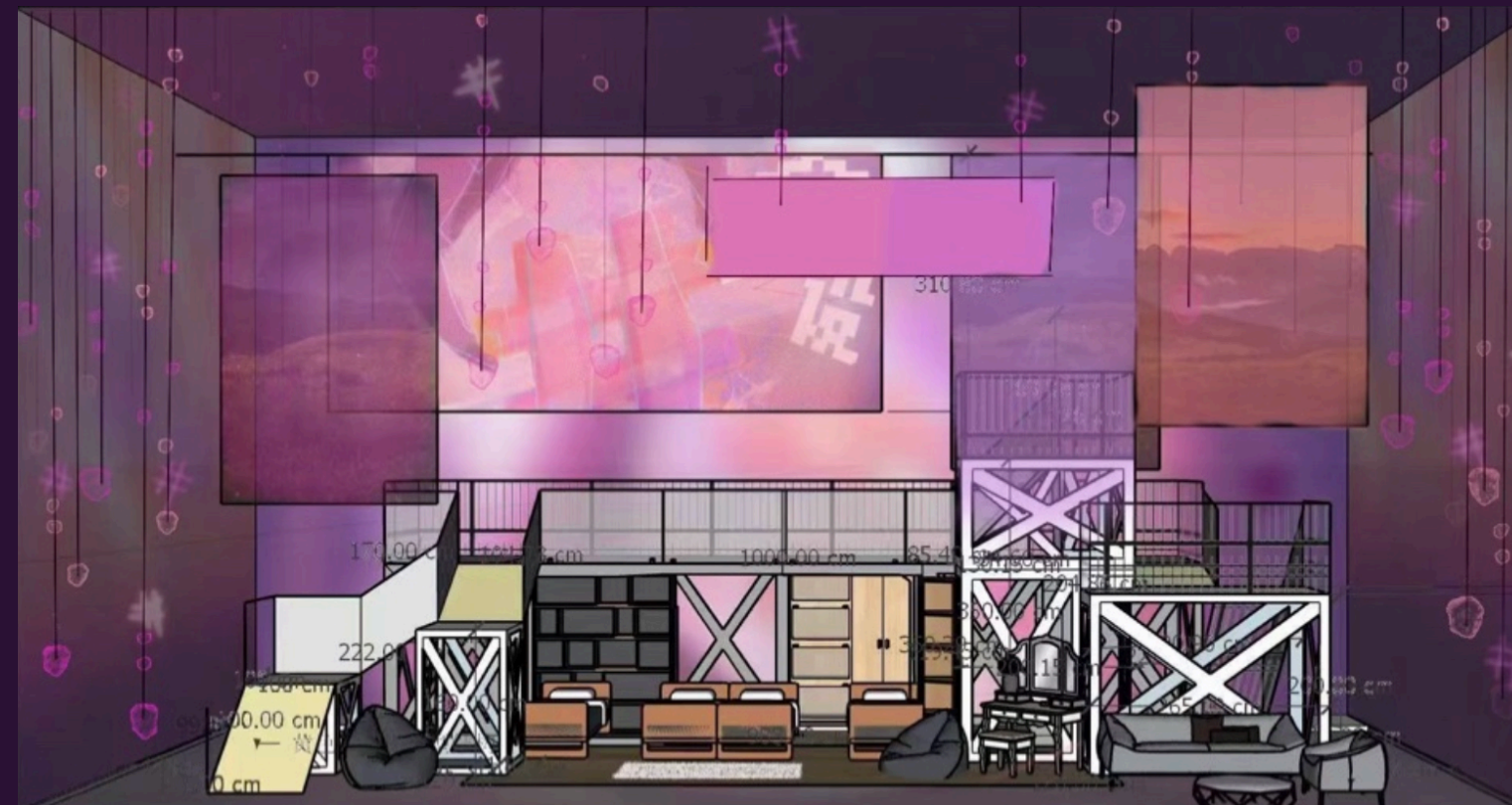
In developing *Perfect Persona*, I sought to create a theatrical experience that would serve as both mirror and microscope for contemporary teenage life—a space in which audiences will recognize themselves while examining the forces shaping their daily social performances. The musical interrogates a question haunting modern adolescence: In an age where every moment can be curated, filtered, and broadcast, who are we when no one is watching?

The production's central concept revolves around performance within performance—teenagers who are already performing their lives on social media now perform those same struggles on stage. This layered approach reflects the multiplicity of selves that social media demands: the authentic self, the performed self, the self we wish we were, and the self others perceive. The musical form becomes a metaphor for this condition: just as characters in musical theatre burst into song to express what cannot be spoken, teenagers craft online personas to communicate feelings they cannot voice face-to-face.

Scenic Design

The production's visual vocabulary deliberately balances realism with abstraction, creating a world that feels simultaneously grounded and heightened. Working closely with my design team, we developed a colorful, saturated palette that appears celebratory, bright, and vibrant (especially through lighting), creating contrast and tension in juxtaposition with the psychological darkness of the plot. This tension became central to our storytelling: what appears beautiful on the surface doesn't always stand up to scrutiny. The set incorporated realistic elements and abstract projections visualizing the digital landscape. Social media notifications, comment threads, and scrolling feeds appeared as literal text across the performance space, making visible the psychological architecture structuring teenage social life. At key moments, these projections overwhelmed the stage, swallowing performers in cascading streams of judgment. This allowed us to externalize internal experience: the crushing weight of negative comments, the addictive rush of validation, the vertigo of impossible standards.

Set

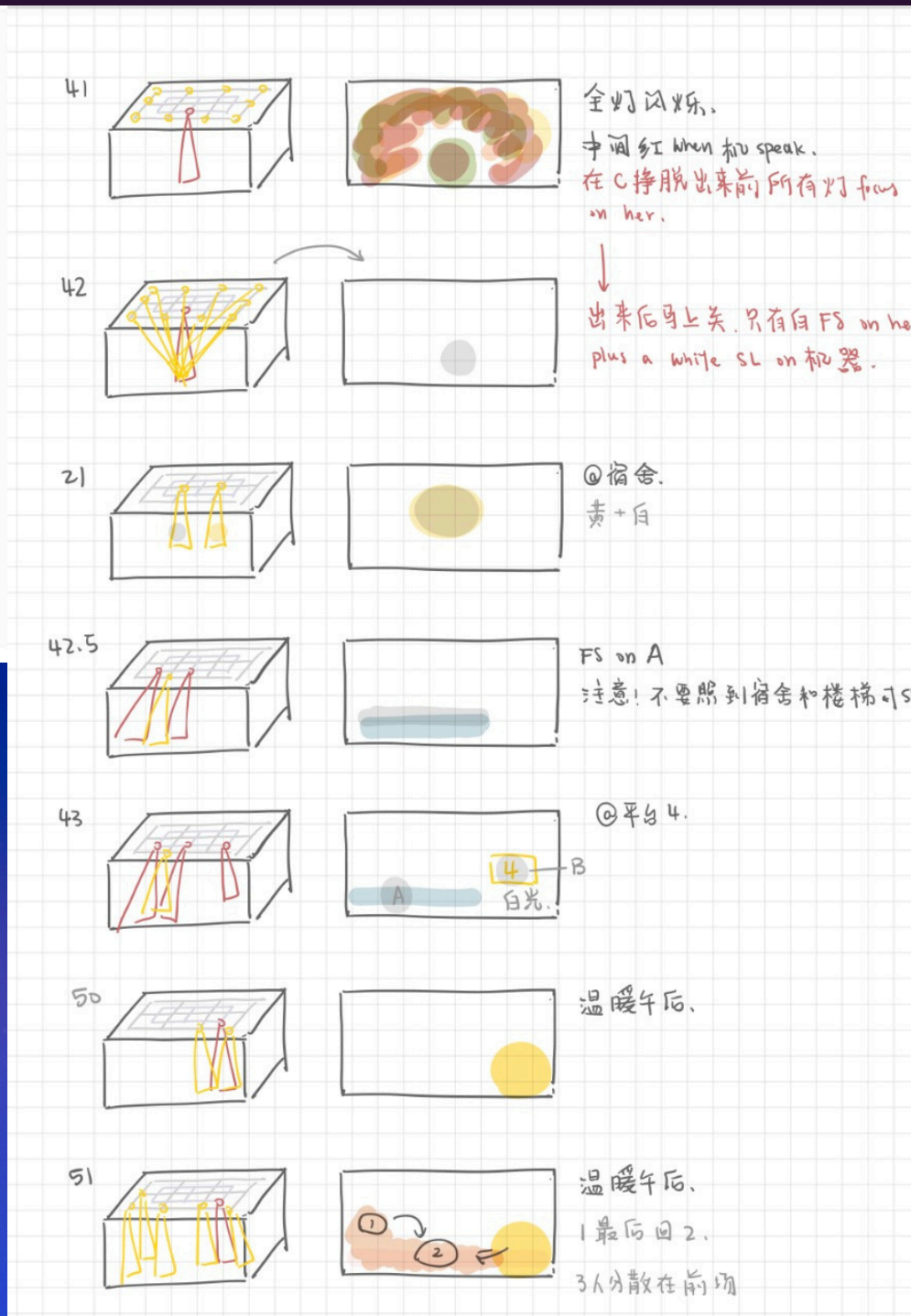


Set Design in collaboration with Izozkia Li

Costume



Lighting



Mise en scène



Costume Design in collaboration with Iris Li
Lighting Design in collaboration with Christy Liu and Austin Wong

Performance Style and Audience Engagement



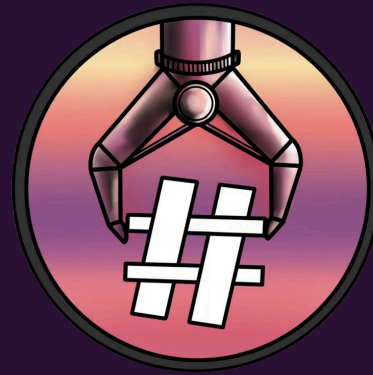
I approached performance style as musical theatre in its fullest sense—a mode where music, movement, and text form an integrated expressive vocabulary. This unity, however, is punctuated by breaking the fourth wall at strategic moments, in order to implicate the audience in the work's critique. Rather than explaining their experiences, performers direct judgment outward toward spectators—just as they receive it online—transforming viewers from comfortable observers into “targets” experiencing the vulnerability of living under constant digital scrutiny. Staged in a 250 seat black box, the play’s mise en scene reinforces vulnerability through intimacy: the proximity of audience and actors collapses the protective barrier traditional proscenium configurations typically provide. This intimacy serves the show's overarching goal: not merely to depict social media's problems but to activate reflection and change. By directing judgment outward, *Perfect Persona* forces spectators to confront their own complicity in online culture.

Collaborative Process



My directorial methodology combined structure with openness, recognizing that a show about authenticity versus performance required a rehearsal process valuing both. I maintained creative and processual transparency with all collaborators and strove to remain receptive to their creative contributions. Certain moments demanded precise execution to achieve theatrical impact, while others benefited from the spontaneity and authenticity emerging from improvisational exploration. I approached this methodology by creating a rehearsal environment where actors felt safe to take risks.

Conclusion



Ultimately, *Perfect Persona* functions as social commentary that refuses to let audiences simply be entertained. The musical's message—stay true to yourself—seems simple, but the production reveals how profoundly difficult this becomes when every aspect of teenage life is mediated, measured, and made public. The show doesn't offer easy answers but asks young people to develop critical consciousness about forces shaping their behavior, to recognize when they're performing rather than being, and to consider what they sacrifice for digital validation.

The psychological toll of living online (the anxiety of constant self-presentation, the trauma of public humiliation, the addiction to metrics of worth, etc.) forms the musical's emotional core. Rather than simply depicting suffering, the work creates conditions for recognition and change. By making visible what usually remains hidden in private screen-time, by asking audiences to witness and reflect, *Perfect Persona* seeks to interrupt the new mode of social code that social media encourages. My hope is that audiences leave having experienced a form of connection—immediate, embodied, unmediated—that reminds them of what is possible beyond the screen and inspires them to choose genuine self-expression in a world that relentlessly demands performance.

Blocking Script



Set Design: Collaboratively designed with Izozkia Li

Selected Scene from an original musical *Perfect Persona*

Scene 9

Caylee heads to the Enhancement Zone. Aria and Demi are in the dormitory doing their own things. Aria is busy looking for something. Demi is studying new material nearby.

Aria(Surprised): *Aria x → L*
Wait! Demi, help me find a yellow slip of paper with a picture of the enhancement machine on it. (Aria gets up and searches urgently)...I'm sure I put it under the bed, but now it's gone...

Demi: *DSL*
What are you talking about? What yellow slip? Wait... did you get a Persona Enhancement Program ticket? When did that happen?

Aria (interrupting Demi): *Aria x USL*
Oh no, oh no! I can't find my modification ticket! I think Caylee might have taken it.

Demi: *Demi x → Aria*
How would she know you have a modification ticket?

Aria:
Right after we joined the company, after the tryout event, the boss gave me a modification ticket. When I got back to the dorm, only Caylee was there. She asked me what the boss had talked to me about. The boss told me to keep it secret, but she kept pestering me, so I ended up telling her the truth. She even asked weird questions about modification conditions and identity verification.

Demi: *Demi x DS*
That explains why Caylee has been acting so strange lately—she must have already undergone enhancement.

Aria: (Clenching fist)
So you mean... she's already been modified?

Demi:
Very likely. After all, modification tickets can be reused.

Aria: *Aria x → Demi*
So, is enhancement really a good thing? Does it turn people into someone else? Is the boss trying to make us all into people like Caylee? I don't get it—why can't we just be ourselves? Is it all just for clout and popularity, and we can't even be who we really are?

Demi:
The company only cares about one thing—perfectly polished personas.

Aria: *Aria x → L, S*
Demi, I'm really scared now. I was about to go for enhancement, hoping to find a sense of belonging in a new persona. But will we be forced to turn into people like Caylee?

Demi:
You have to be mentally strong and learn to separate your real self from the persona to protect yourself. But she was gutsy—stealing your ticket to modify herself like that. If they find out, not only will she be kicked out, but her whole family will be blacklisted.

Aria: *Demi x → F, Aria R*
That serious? We have to stop her. We can't let her keep going down this path. But, I heard the Enhancement Zone is in the Restricted Area. Only those with a modification tickets are invited to enter. We can't get in there.

Demi:
Come on, I have a way.

Aria: *Aria x → Demi*
We have to be rational, Demi. We need to think of a proper plan. What if we get caught too? Then we'd really be finished.

Demi:
I can get in. I... I have a card.

Aria:
What? That's the Restricted Area!

Demi: *Demi & Aria x → SR, →*
We'll talk about that later. Saving Caylee is more important. Come on, let's hurry!

(Demi pulls Aria, and they run to the Restricted Area entrance. Demi swipes the card, allowing both to successfully enter.)

AI:
Welcome.

Aria:
So you do have a card...

Demi:
Hurry, don't get noticed. *Demi & Aria x → CS (on platform)*

(They walk in carefully, looking around. They find the room filled with various devices and display screens, the walls plastered with materials about online marketing, traffic, and labels. Suddenly, they discover a document on a table revealing the truth behind B's cyberbullying.)

Aria(Picks up the document in shock, saying angrily in a low voice):
Oh my god, the project management office is behind all these marketing accounts! The online harassment of Brianna was all orchestrated by them! All those insults she took—fake!

Demi: (Utterly shocked, eyes filled with rage)
Disgusting... I never thought the people I trusted would do something like this. Clout hides so much filth behind the scenes.

Aria:
Demi, look at this... This is Caylee's file! She was one of the participants behind the attack on Brianna. *(Aria and Demi continue searching through the materials, growing increasingly angry and uneasy. They discover the Planning Department not only manipulated the cyberbullying but was also involved in controlling and leaking employee privacy. As they uncover more darkness, Demi's face turns pale.)*

Demi: (Voice slightly trembling, a flicker of fear in her eyes)
How could she be involved?

Aria:
Probably betrayed Brianna again for her own gain.

→ Caylee mr USL →

Blocking Script

Demi:

Maybe she's a victim too, forced by the boss. We have to get her out before the enhancement completes. Every time someone enhances, they fall deeper in, until they don't even recognize themselves anymore.

(Demi and Aria quickly stand up and head towards the Enhancement Zone. At this moment, a black figure flits past not far away.)

Aria: (Running forward urgently)

Caylee, is that you! Caylee! Don't run!

Caylee:

How did you get in here?

Aria:

Caylee, listen to us! Don't go through with the enhancement. It's not too late to turn back! Don't lose yourself!

Caylee: Caylee →, x → CS

No, no one can stop me. It's already too late. *(Caylee walks into the enhancement chamber again)*

Demi: Demi & Aria x → SL, →
Come on! Let's follow her!

M8. "I Want/I Want It All" Reprise

Caylee (Sings): Take this chance, this is what I've long desired DSC

Aria: What do we do? The program has already started! Aria & Demi x → DSC, SL of Caylee

Caylee (Sings): Seize the chance to prove myself, I'm not afraid to loss

Demi: (Staring at the control panel, suddenly points at the screen): Come on, let's go in and stop her! Demi x → SR of Caylee

Caylee (Sings): I just want to escape failure

Caylee (Sings): I want

Aria: Caylee!

Caylee (Sings): I want it all

Aria: Stop it!

Caylee (Sings): The ease, the confidence

Demi: Caylee, can you hear us?!

Caylee (Sings): I want, I want it all

The center of attention, the tide of clout

I want to be the best

Demi: x DS

The program has entered the automated stage. The only way to stop it is by forcing an intervention.

Aria: x DS

Forcing an intervention? Won't that trigger the alarm?

Demi: Demi & Aria x back

Doesn't matter. We have to save her. There's no other choice!

Machine (Speaks):

Automated label adjustment complete. Suggested next program date: 7 weeks later.

Boss ntr VSL, →
(Aria and Demi force an intervention on the enhancing system. The alarm in the Enhancement Zone blares abruptly, red lights flash frantically, drawing the boss's attention. Aria and Demi continue calling Caylee's name loudly, trying to pull her out.)

Boss:

Who's in there? How dare anyone trigger the alarm in the Enhancement Zone? Stop right there!

Caylee:

I want it now!

Caylee (Sings)

Let me see your capabilities

No matter consequences, I don't care what it takes

I want, I want it all

I will keep enhancing, never gonna stop!

(Caylee stumbles, breaking free from the restraints, leaps out of the enhancement machine.)

Caylee: (Softly) Caylee x DS

Aria? Demi?

Boss: Boss x DS

Who is there making all these trouble! You'd better not let me catch you!

Demi (Pulling both of them):

Run! They've found us! Demi & Aria & Caylee Ex DSR

(Aria, Caylee, and Demi quickly run out of the Enhancement Zone. Blackout.)

Photos

