



Excerpt from
Divisions, Scene 4

PATTY
Good. Now, what would you do if you were crowned Miss Majorette?

GINA
I mean, hopefully it will lead to a scholarship so I can go to a good college.

PATTY
Say it with confidence. They want a girl who presents herself as a winner.

GINA
If I were to win Miss Majorette, I would try to get a scholarship.

PATTY (as a judge)
What is your greatest ambition in life?

GINA
Mom, this is silly.

PATTY
No, it's not. Just answer the question honestly. Tell the judges you want to win a world championship. Tell them you want to coach young girls just like your mother coached you and her mother before her.

GINA
Honestly, I would go to college to study math.

PATTY
Oh, not this again.

GINA
What? I really like math. I like solving problems. I'm one of the best in my class.

PATTY
What could you possibly do with a math degree?

GINA
I could be an engineer or maybe an accountant. There are lots of finance jobs I learned about at the school job fair. I could even be a cryptographer.

PATTY
That doesn't even sound like a real thing. Gina, no one goes to college to study math.

GINA
Where do you think math teachers come from?

PATTY
That's what you want? To teach a bunch of kids to count?

GINA
Math isn't counting, mom. I'm talking about differential equations. Imaginary numbers. Calculus. I don't know if I want to teach, but there are a lot of things I could do with math.

Practice, Drill, Perform: The Development of a Play about Competition
By: Steph Bottum

Inspiration

I was a regionally and nationally competitive baton twirler for seven years. I feel that it is an under represented sport. More importantly, I wanted to examine the long term effects of intense competition on a young athlete's psyche.

Why does it need to be
a play?

As a theatre major, I feel that I naturally gravitate towards plays when I'm writing. I felt this story needed to be a play because I wanted to showcase the art behind baton twirling. I want the audience to see a baton rotating so fast, it seems impossible to catch. I want the audience to hear and feel the unique vibration of a baton crashing against the stage. I want the audience to see and feel the tension between an obsessive mother and an ambitious daughter.

What is the purpose
behind writing the
play?

I really wanted to examine a mother/daughter dynamic in which a mother is haunted by her failed dreams and imposes them on her daughter who goes along with it for years. However, as the daughter grows and starts to mature in her teen years, she becomes her own person and resents her mother's imposition.

During the revising process, the play was coming together as a whole, but it wasn't flowing in a cohesive way. So, I re-arranged the scenes and really explored what was driving Gina (ambition) and Patty (obsession).

Divisions Scene Breakdown

Scene 1: Gina and Shelby in the locker room preparing for competition.

- The girls are chatting and Shelby invites Gina to spend the night at her house.
- Gina's mother (Patty) enters to hurry Gina along.
- Gina asks Patty permission to go to Shelby's house, Patty denies as Gina needs to focus on practicing.
- Gina realizes all that she's missing out on.

Scene 2: Patty becomes Gina's coach

- Gina struggles with her mother being even more involved in every aspect of her life.

Scene 3: Patty as a young twirler.

- Patty flashes back to 1983 when her mother was her coach.
- The audience experiences what drove Patty to be the way she is.

Scene 4: Patty and Gina fight.

- Patty, still in her kind of fantasy, is in Gina's room in front of a mirror pretending she is at a baton competition.
- Gina silently observes until Patty is done, at which time she brings Gina to the mirror and makes her do the same.
- Gina confesses she would rather go to college to study mathematics than continue twirling.
- Patty's frustration rises until she says something unforgivable.
- Gina smashes her own hand in rebellion.

Scene 5: Patty finds an outlet.

- Gina is struggling with her broken hand and Patty refuses to help.
- Patty reveals that she found a young girl to coach in wake of coaching Gina.
- Gina doesn't know how to respond to Patty's new student.

What risks are being taken?

Tension builds throughout the play, as Gina and Patty's relationship weakens. Gina finds herself questioning what she wants in life as opposed to what Patty has told her she wants in life. Gina wants to quit twirling after ten years of practicing and competing. Patty, of course, won't have it. Emotions run high. Gina reveals that she knows her mother's deepest secret. Patty reveals she considered terminating her pregnancy with Gina. Gina takes a baton trophy and breaks her own hand, as it is (in her mind) the only way to escape becoming obsessive, like her mother.

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