

Only the pristine skills of a set designer can ultimately produce a world that manages to tickle our thoughts without blatantly screaming out commentaries. One would think that, over the course of a play's rehearsal, when characters are coming and going, and doing their thing onstage, that various points of interest would pop out of the script, causing an unwanted renovation to everything that's been built, or that an experimental backdrop would speak too much of the obvious. However, that's what months of planning prevent.

"Surprisingly very little gets changed over the course of the play," Viczko says. "It's usually the little things, like chairs, that get changed because sometimes you can't sit on the arms. But then if I switch chairs, I hate the upholstery, so I have to go to props and ask them if we can afford to reupholster it."

Little things and big things, a set designer is in control of it all. But what happens once the curtain goes up?

"Once the show opens, I usually spend a couple of days wondering what I'm going to do with myself, but most of the time I'm right onto the next show," Viczko says.

Acting

"You have to laugh when doing this play," says Lora Brovold, who plays Mrs Klein's ambitious young pupil, Paula. For Brovold, acting is obviously a job that must be taken very seriously, but at the same time, it's a field where you get to work with others on a hugely emotional level, and laughter is often inevitable. Like the jokes and onstage giggles, though, mentorships can also evolve from a performance such as *Mrs Klein*, especially when you're sharing the spotlight with veteran Edmonton artists.

"I've admired the work of Coralie Cairns [playing Mrs Klein] and Caroline Livingstone [playing Melitta, Mrs Klein's daughter] for a very, very long time, and it's great working with them," Brovold says. "They're both so smart and passionate, and very generous actors."

Actors, for the most part, are the visible proof that something constructive has gone on behind the curtains. Although a lot of the work is left up to the individual to sort out, there's also a lot of teamwork involved, and whether it means bouncing ideas off of one another or supporting someone to delve deeper into their role, acting is, by-and-large, a group effort.

Aside from the collaborative effort needed to put on a production like *Mrs Klein*, though, there's also a crucial independent element.

"When you have [the characters'] level of intelligence coupled with such a passionate thrust, along with their journey towards the kind of love they want to get, and maybe need, all together, it's quite challenging," Brovold explains. "We're looking at a play that's written for the time period of 1934."

"For my character, I'm looking at historical references and that sort of thing, so it's very demanding," Brovold continues. "It's a lot to put together, but that's what makes it exciting too, because you're always finding new things."

Technically, from performance to performance, the show remains the same. However, the way actors deal with nerves and the downtime they have between scenes differs each and every night.

"It's really different from actor to actor," Brovold says. "Sometimes it can be hectic backstage, and sometimes it's not. Preparation is always key, but by that point, you know what's coming next. You just have to sit and wait for it."

Actors are obviously talented at what they do, but that doesn't mean mastering a German accent or a meek persona are easy, like what Brovold has to do in *Mrs Klein*. Becoming someone you're not—especially someone like Paula, a character so enveloped in the concept of psychoanalysis—takes a lot of work, as does making sure you don't go overboard and continue to possess some crazed personality once you step off stage.

"Getting out of character isn't as difficult as getting into it, but for me, I still like to relax after a performance," Brovold explains. "Unwinding is good, like grabbing nachos and drinks or something. If I didn't do that, I'd probably go insane."

