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A Co-Curricular Theatre Arts Handbook: Tips and Techniques to Use When Directing a Production at the High School Level

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A CO-CURRICULAR THEATRE ARTS HANDBOOK:
Tips and techniques to use when directing a production at the
high school level

A Project Report
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by

Paul Vernon Wickline

May, 2002

ABSTRACT

A CO-CURRICULAR THEATRE ARTS HANDBOOK: Tips and techniques to use when directing a production at the high school level

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Paul Vernon Wickline

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This project is a handbook of techniques and strategies for beginning directors of high school drama programs. Included in this handbook are sections on selecting the best productions for your actors, strategies for directing the young actor, helpful hints on how to build a successful extra-curricular drama program, and more. This project was based on a review of literature (including extant curriculum guides and articles and textbooks on directing and acting) and the author's fifteen years experience as an actor, director, and theatre arts educator.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction: the need for theatre education -- both curricular and co-curricular

The general student in the United States has no theatre education. The perceptions of the public, teachers, and principals still relegate theatre to the elective or after-school program -- if it is in the school at all. It may be time to find a more contemporary view of our society to help the public realize the importance of drama/theatre. (Wright and Garcia 26)

According to Wright and Garcia, theatre has never been a part of the curriculum for all students, and many children have never been introduced to theatre as performance as part of their school experience. Theatre as a discipline has been advocated as a school subject, but a major outcome of this approach is often school performances (product) rather than a more academic approach that allows students to learn about theatre and is therefore more process oriented (25). However, as the result of arts advocacy work by the National Endowment for the Arts and other research and reform groups (The College Board), many states are now adopting theatre curricula. According to a 1989 informal survey of forty-four states, twenty-seven have approved theatre curriculum guidelines (Bedard 35). A 1991 survey sponsored by the Educational Theatre Association (ETA) and conducted by Seidel found that schools in the U.S. are still not offering a sufficient number of drama classes in the curriculum. Only fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular activities and twenty percent offer only co-curricular activities (Seidel "Theatre Education" 2).

In a more comprehensive national survey of arts in the schools, Charles Leonard of the National Arts Education Research Center found that only in large high schools are

drama classes found with any regularity (41). The U.S. Department of Education's 2001 study revealed that only forty-eight percent of high schools offer drama/theatre instruction during the school day. Large schools (over 1000 students) were more likely to provide instruction in drama/theatre than small schools (400 students or less) with seventy-five percent of large high schools offering drama/theatre instruction compared to only 30% of small schools (Arts Education 88). Seidel's 1991 study of the status of theatre in United States high schools found that twenty-five percent of middle schools offer a drama course while only sixty percent of large high schools (over 1000 students) offer drama courses ("Theatre Education" 1-3). Seidel also found that between 1970 and 1990 the percentage of U.S. high schools with some type of theatre program declined by almost four percent. In addition, Seidel found that twelve percent of large high schools offer no theatre activities.

Even though sixty percent of the large high schools may offer drama classes, the classes are designed for students with a special interest in theatre. The same is true at the junior high school level, and other than a trip to see a play, very few students have any education in or about the theatre (Leonard 22; Seidel "Theatre Education" 30; Wright and Garcia 26). These studies indicate that the theatre arts are still considered "frills" courses by many legislators, school boards, administrators, business owners, students, and parents.

Drama is seen often as trivial and non-essential, a luxury subject and an "educational frill far from central to the training of children for real life" (O'Neill "Context or Essence" 25). According to Robinson, with the "back to the basics" and vocational push of the 1980's, theatre arts education faced opposition from vocal

individuals and groups in communities around the country. Robinson found an increase in the number of communities demanding only those courses that do the following:

1. teach "basic skills" of literacy and numeracy
2. develop cognitive and intellectual abilities
3. prepare students for entering the work force. (11)

All activities that make no obvious contribution to these ends have suffered correspondingly. As a result, funding for the dramatic arts has decreased or been eliminated and courses in drama have been cut or scaled down (Robinson 9-11; Seidel "Theatre Education" 16). Therefore, one of the challenges for theatre arts educators is to demonstrate the importance and necessity of theatre arts curricula and co-curricula in the secondary school to administrators and community members. One way to accomplish this goal is to develop a successful co-curricular theatre arts program that illustrates the many benefits of participating in a production (Brown 40).

Why Participate in Theatre Activities?

Why is the study of theatre arts important? Why is it worth including in the secondary curriculum and funding as a co-curricular activity? According to many educators, drama is a vital component of education -- as important as English, math and science. Elliot Eisner, a noted educational theorist and a strong supporter for decades of the inclusion of the arts in the curriculum, discusses the importance of art (including drama) in the curriculum in his book The Role of Discipline-Based Art Education in America's Schools:

Our culture is replete with a variety of forms of representation (dance, poetry, visual arts, drama) because humans have found it necessary to invent such forms in order to express what they want

to convey. The curricula of our schools are the major means through which our children learn the “languages” of these forms, and it is by learning these languages that they can gain access to the kinds of experience that the forms make possible. . . . When our children are unable to “read” the languages of art, or music, or mathematics, or written prose, the content these forms possess and the experience they provide cannot be known. It is in this sense that the curriculum of the school is aimed -- or should be aimed -- at the development of multiple forms of literacy. (5)

To deny students exposure to theatre arts curricula denies them the opportunity to experience or express the “language” of drama, denying them the opportunity to develop this literacy.

Eisner further presents his case for the teaching of theatre and the other arts in numerous articles and books including Cognition and Curriculum: a Basis for Deciding What to Teach in which he criticizes the narrow view of literacy currently taught, and examines the central role of the senses in understanding the complex contemporary environment. Students, he argues, need to develop their senses more fully to enhance conceptualization and expression. Teaching the arts, including drama, improves development of the senses and leads to a more complete literacy. He questions the failure of our schools to provide artistic stimuli and is concerned about the “long range consequences of such neglect”(26). For Eisner, failure to provide students with experience and training in the arts hampers intellectual development:

There is an important relationship between individual aptitudes and the forms of representation individuals are likely to be able to use

well. When the curriculum of the school defines representational options narrowly -- when such options are largely restricted to the use of literal language and number, for example -- it creates educational inequities and, moreover, fails to develop the aptitudes that many individual students possess. This in turn exacts a cost from the society at large, since the development of aptitudes is perhaps the major means through which humans contribute to the commonweal. (86)

Eisner further argues that the “senses have often been separated from the mind”(28) in psychological discourse and in the development of educational policies: “The separation of the mind and body, a separation initiated by Plato and given a strong forward thrust by Descartes, has contributed to a narrow conception of intellect” (87). As a result, courses and activities that “appear to rely upon the use of the senses or upon affect are often regarded as nonintellectual, that is, as activities that make little demand upon thinking or human intelligence. This tradition . . . is based upon a limited and . . . counterproductive view of mind. The formation of concepts depends upon the construction of images derived from the material the senses provide”(28). The belief that a separation of the mind and body exists and that the mind is superior to the body devalues drama and the arts in our schools. This marginalization of the arts has traditionally resulted in little funding for drama programs (Rough 42) and poor enrollment in drama programs in high schools across the country (Oaks 42). Corathers claims that although this attitude is changing, the theatre arts are still valued less than music and visual arts by local, district, and state decision-making administrators (9).

According to Eisner (qtd. in O'Neill "Context or Essence"), there are five important reasons for making theatre arts an important part of education:

1. The arts as leisure pursuits;
2. The arts as tools in the child's physiological development;
3. The arts as therapy -- encouraging the release of emotion and physical tension;
4. The arts as instruments in the development of creative/ problem solving abilities;
5. The arts as ways of developing understanding of academic subject matter. (25)

Although these kinds of learning identified in Eisner's five orientations may take place as a result of teaching drama, each can be achieved by other subjects in the curriculum. For Eisner (qtd. in O'Neill "Context or Essence"), the prime value of the arts in education lies in the "unique contributions it makes to the individual's experience with and understanding of the world" (29). Each of the arts will deal with one aspect of human consciousness that no other field touches on. Because of the nature of drama, the meaning is likely to be concerned with human behaviors and its consequences.

There are numerous arguments that support the inclusion of the theatre arts in the curriculum and co-curriculum. Ernest Boyer, in his 1983 report High School: a Report on Secondary Education in America, found that the arts were shamefully neglected in the schools studied in his report. Boyer believes strongly that the arts should not be considered a frill, but rather a basic element of the educational process. He notes that one strength of arts instruction is teaching non-verbal communication and the use of symbols.

He also states that “the arts not only give expression to the profound urging of the human spirit; they also validate our feelings in a world that deadens feelings” (198).

Another common argument for the inclusion of drama in the curriculum and the co-curriculum is its long history and central connection to humanity. Drama, in its many forms, is perhaps the oldest of all of the arts and the history of drama is closely related to the history of humanity:

When the first hunters recounted their adventures by means of vivid pantomime, when the first storytellers told their tales in rhythmic chants, and when the first organized groups of people found expression in the pantomime of hunting, war, and love dances, the dramatic impulse showed itself. . . . As civilization developed, drama took definite form in the worship of heavenly gods and the glorification of earthly rulers. . . . Then tales were told of noble characters engaged in mighty conflicts and humorous types stumbling along through their comic paces. . . . At last the tales produced dramatic presentations, ultimately to be written and acted in concrete form. (Schanker and Ommanney 292-293)

Philosophers and writers such as Aristotle and Perce Bysche Shelley have argued for the importance of art in the human experience. Aristotle, the world’s first literary critic, wrote about the didactic purpose and necessity of drama. According to Aristotle, drama is an imitation of life. Human beings learn through imitating and derive great pleasure from learning (par 11). Shelley stated that “a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the passions and pleasures of his species must become his own” (par 13).

Participating in the theatre arts allows humanity to imitate life, experience life from another's viewpoint and experience the passions and pleasures of others.

Eduardo Garcia, an arts education and arts administration consultant who served as the executive director of the New Jersey Literacy Task Force (a group which studied the state of arts education in New Jersey and made wide-ranging recommendations for the development of a comprehensive arts curriculum) explained quite clearly why theatre education is important in today's educational system:

If we truly believe that without arts we cannot fully express our humanity in thought and feelings, or that without the arts our lives would be enormously diminished, then there is no better or more effective example of the power of the arts to touch our humanity than theatre. This is especially true as we prepare for a millennium in which countless images will be bombarding us on yet-to-be-conceived electronic technologies. Images will be insinuating themselves into our lives at every turn, demanding we buy this or that product or act or react in certain ways. To prepare our children to discriminate among these incessant and potent images, to help them become effective consumers and responsible citizens in the new century, to help them meet today's educational goals, we must help them comprehend the power of the image and learn to demystify it. While all of the arts can play a critical role in image education, in my view there is no better way to foster this crucial understanding than theatre education, which is fundamentally image education.

To me, theatre embodies all of the qualities that we can see growing out of a full and rich arts education experience. We talk of valuable insights that students gain about themselves and about life through the arts, and more specifically how the arts teach self-discipline, problem solving, ingenuity, spontaneity, and creativity. In theatre there is all that and so much more. In theatre, the student must also learn planning, collaboration, self-motivation, and the importance of deadlines. And -- back to my point of the importance of image discrimination -- in theatre the student learns to create mood, tone, physical and emotional control, and finally, to actually create images. These are skills that are vital to becoming a better student, succeeding in the workplace, and ultimately helping one learn to become a better human being. (18)

In 1989 the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) formed the Center for Studies in Theatre Education (CSTE) to support research in theatre education (Bedard 35). In 1991 and 1992 the CSTE invited selected theatre artists and educators to meet for two one day discussions. One result of their discussions was the creation of a position statement advocating the need for drama curriculum. An excerpt from that statement follows:

In view of today's changing national, international, and human context, and the evolving need for social harmony, it is essential that a new and comprehensive world outlook be instilled in our nation's students. This world outlook should reflect values and understandings which would give students the skills to successfully

interact with all aspects of their personal and external environments.

Because theatre is the most human and social of all the arts, it can be a powerful force in education. Metaphor and ambiguity are the basic fabric of theatre; the broad spectrum of human experience is its subject. The study of theatre should, through interaction with its various forms, contexts, and contents, reveal each theatre event as a unique expression of life's experiences in all their diversity.

(20)

Educators commonly list two additional benefits of theatre arts courses:

1. Students learn to work cooperatively to achieve common goals and develop socialization skills.
2. They improve communication skills, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Klein "K-12 Drama/Theatre Research" 27; Seidel "Leaders Theatre" 930; Faust 23; Hartfield 17).

Purpose and Importance of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide a resource for beginning directors of secondary theatre arts programs. According to the 1991 Seidel survey, sixty percent of high school theatre teachers in the U.S. report that their theatre teaching position was a secondary assignment. In other words, they applied for and were hired for a position in an area other than theatre (Seidel "Theatre Education" 5). Moreover, the criteria that principals use to evaluate candidates when they are hiring an educator for the theatre position seem to reflect the view of theatre as a secondary subject. Only sixty percent of administrators report seeking strong college or degree training, and fewer than fifty

percent require a prospective teacher to have majored in theatre (6). Therefore, one can conclude that almost half of those hired for theatre teaching positions are inadequately trained to teach drama and direct theatre productions. Moreover, according to Seidel, only thirty-two of the fifty states require that theatre teachers be “college trained” in theatre. 19 of the states permit teaching with credentials other than a theatre or combined speech-theatre or English-theatre certificate. It is still possible for a teacher to have a schedule of theatre classes without necessarily having acquired any college-level training in theatre (Seidel “Theatre Education” 11-12; Educational Theatre Association 12). Clearly a need for resources exists for these inexperienced teachers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 20% of new teachers quit teaching within the first three years (Attrition of New Teachers ix). Unfortunately there is no data available concerning the percent of beginning drama teachers who quit during the first few years of teaching. Seidel found in his 1991 study that the average drama teacher has been teaching for ten years (“Theatre Education” 7), but his study did not address the longevity of beginning drama teachers. Many researchers and policymakers attribute the higher attrition rates among new teachers to their working conditions (Baker and Smith 35). Therefore, to encourage new teachers to remain in the profession, many states and school districts have launched programs to support these teachers (Archer 20; Cooperman 31).

The author of this project created this handbook to provide a resource that those new to secondary theatre arts instruction can use to support their efforts and guide their teaching/directing practices. This project is also beneficial to those teachers who have a degree in theatre but are unsure of how to begin building a theatre program once a district hires them for this position.

This project provides theatre arts educators with a variety of organizational tools to help guide them as they begin to build a program. Organization (the ability to plan ahead; to prepare and arrange an orderly, structured whole; to systematize and coordinate) is a key factor “identified as significant in attaining longevity” as a theatre arts teacher (Brown 31). According to Brown’s research into the characteristics of a theatre arts educator that contribute to longevity, organization is one of the most vital:

The findings have been rank ordered by their perceived impact on longevity, i.e., what may have caused Nan (the subject of the case study research) to remain in the field for such an extended period of time. I also considered which teacher characteristics may have benefited the students most. . . . The personal characteristics identified as significant in attaining longevity are: organization as a teaching and directing tool; the ability to deal with and embrace change; and finally, the importance of respecting students and their work in theatre. (31)

As Brown found in her case study, a teacher’s organizational skills make the demanding job of directing a high school theatre arts program easier for the teacher, students, and volunteer support personnel assisting with the theatre arts program (31).

Organization is a critical skill in teaching, but it is even more critical for the theatre arts teacher/director. Production work is a large part of the secondary theatre teacher’s job. Most theatre teachers teach a full load of classes which must be carefully planned and organized, and then head to the auditorium for another three to four hours of production work each day. The ability to handle those responsibilities with the assurance that good organization has taken care of the myriad of details could

significantly reduce the stress of directing and teaching. Considering the toll that stress takes on the professional and personal lives of teachers, it seems logical that minimizing the process of stress could only be a healthy and productive pursuit. (32)

This project provides teacher/directors with a variety of organizational tools and helpful information to assist them in organizing and developing their theatre arts programs.

Numerous forms, handouts, schedules, etc. are provided in the appendices section of the handbook for teachers to use or adapt for their own use.

A second finding of the Brown study that is reflected in this project is the importance of a theatre teacher/director's respect for students and the theatre art form (34). This concept of respect for students is addressed throughout the handbook. To build an effective theatre arts program and flourish as a theatre arts teacher/director, the teacher must respect her students and earn the respect from her students. This respect must be applied throughout every moment of the rehearsal process (34). Moreover, the teacher/director must have a respect for the theatrical art form and appropriately high standards for the work the students do as participants in this art form:

For Nan, respect and standards are inextricably linked. How is it possible for students to respect themselves if they are not doing work they, and others, can respect? How can students respect a teacher or director who has not committed herself to high standards of work and performance?

(34)

As Brown's study makes clear, trying to develop and supervise a successful theatre arts program is impossible "unless organized and flexible teachers place contractual responsibilities and behavioral expectations upon students as co-producers of theatre art

(Klein "Juror's Responses" 44). This project provides the beginning theatre arts teacher/director with activities, insights, and suggestions that are designed to help nurture a respect for others and develop high standards for the theatre arts as an art form.

In addition, the author of this project believes from personal experience that for high school theatre arts directors to build successful curricular programs that are well supported by the administration, faculty, community, and students, directors need to improve the quality of their co-curricular program and theatrical productions. This belief is also supported by research (Brown 40). According to the 1991 Seidel survey, the average educator teaches twenty-three periods per week. Of these periods, only eight are theatre classes (6). However, drama teachers frequently struggle to build and expand their curricular program only to be restricted by administrators and others who are unwilling to allow the drama teacher to teach more drama classes. The author contends that one method for building support for the expansion of a curricular drama program is to improve the quality of co-curricular productions. When the administration, staff, parents, students, and community members witness the impact a successful production can have on the school's reputation in the community and on self-esteem of those involved in the production, administrators are more likely to see a need for curricular drama classes and well-supported co-curricular activities (Clawson 6; Brown 30). This handbook was devised to help drama teachers improve the quality of their productions and thereby increase attendance at these productions and strengthen support for the theatre program.

The author developed this handbook by reviewing extant curriculum guides, research studies, theatre curriculum articles, and books on art and theatre curriculum. The author also incorporated over fifteen years experience as an actor, director, and theatre arts educator into this handbook.

Scope

This handbook will include the following information:

1. Techniques for building an “acting company” or acting ensemble within each production,
2. Strategies for working with young actors in the rehearsal process,
3. Strategies for building a strong co-curricular drama program.

Limitations

Although much of the information in this handbook is beneficial to all directors of secondary theatre arts programs, the handbook is directed primarily at beginning directors who may not have a substantial background in teaching acting or directing young actors. The author designed the handbook to assist educators without much theatre education or training.

Definition of Terms

The definition of terms will be divided into two sections: acting terms and theatre and other related terms. These terms will be found throughout this project. The definitions are taken from various sources and are for clarification.

Acting Terms:

Advocacy of Character. Getting inside your character's skin so you can understand why the character does what he does; behaving as your character and fighting as hard as he does to achieve the character's intentions (Pate, Wonzong, and Breed 121).

As If. This is an acting tool that allows the actor to transfer personal experience to the performance of the character; finding parallels between your experiences and the character's life (Moston 12).

Beats. This refers to a new section of action in a monologue or scene, shown by a change in tactics by the character (Moston 18-19).

Biographical Analysis. The process of determining all the pertinent information about the character's life, background, situation, and circumstance (Pate, Wonzong, and Breed 121).

Blocking. The movement of the actors about the stage; also the process of working out this movement and patterns of movement before or during rehearsal (Moston 19-20).

Creative Listening. Thinking as the character and listening for clues from the other characters about how you are doing and how you need to change or modify your tactics to succeed in your intention (Pate, Wonzong, and Breed 122).

Creative Responsiveness. Being open and willing to change your responses and choices on stage as your character is changing and adjusting; the inventive process of making your acting more alive. "Playing off" the other actors -- what they are giving you (Pate, Wonzong, and Breed 122).

Discoveries. Information discovered by the character, either external or internal. Those points in a scene or play where the character (usually suddenly) becomes aware of information from the outside world which has some bearing on achieving an intention (Cohen 21-22).

Given Circumstances. The available information in the play itself which tells us about the time, place, action, details, and all the available background of the characters and the situation they are in. It is absolutely VITAL that the actor make choices about who his character is and how he feels about everything that has happened and is happening to him in the play. He must then apply these choices to his work on stage (Moston 46).

Indicating. Performing an action without an intention. Indicating is a derogatory term in psychologically motivated acting. It is also allowing yourself to represent a picture of the experience and avoiding a personal commitment to the want of the character by indicating a “feeling” rather than playing your objective (Moston 46).

Inner Monologue. The continuous thinking while another character speaks, or during pauses in your own lines -- the characters thoughts, images, fantasies, etc. To create inner monologue the actor must have continuous thoughts while on stage. Life does not stop when we are silent. Actors should work on this inner monologue at home writing down all the images, ideas, thoughts, etc. that go through the actor's mind as the character they are playing. They must be right for the character. To create inner monologue you must understand the play, the meaning the playwright wishes to project, and your character. Numerous readings of the script are required (Moore 63).

Intention/Objective/Goal. The thing the character wants to achieve; the goal, the aim, the desired end the character hopes to achieve. The most important concept for an actor to understand is how to identify and play the character’s intention within the play and each scene (Bruder, Cohn, and Olnek 13-18).

Intentional Acting. The process of playing a character by acting out the intentions of what the character hopes to achieve; its very weak opposite is emotional acting -- playing emotions instead of character (Bruder, Cohn, and Olnek 13-18).

Mugging. A derogatory term for exaggerated facial expressions (Moston 71).

Nested Intentions/Actions/Tactics. The various goals a character hopes to achieve in the various scene of the play; in addition to some overall intention for the whole play, the character has numerous short term goals as well -- all are stacked inside the overall goal or intention the character has throughout the play (Cohen 24-26).

Obstacle. What keeps a character from achieving an intention; the thing (person, object, idea, fear, concern, etc.) that stands in the way (Cohen 11).

Realization. New internal information discovered by the character. Those points in a scene or play where the character (usually suddenly) becomes aware of information from inside him/herself which has some bearing on achieving an intention (Pate, Wonzong, and Breed 123).

Rehearsal Process. The process of going over a scene, either alone or with your partner, to come up with, try out, and perfect choices of action which will make your character more clear and more complete for your audience during performance (Schanker and Ommanney 356).

Scene Analysis. Breaking a scene down into its various elements to understand how the scene itself works and how your character responds to the ongoing action of the scene as it unfolds (Bruder, Cohn, and Olnek 19-39).

Scoring. The process of breaking down a scene, speech, or monologue into its separate action steps; it maps out and makes specific the sequence of choices the character makes in playing out the scene (Schanker and Ommanney 100).

Stakes. The extent or degree to which the character wants to achieve an intention; the higher the stakes the more badly, more desperately, more completely the character wants the intention (Cohen 238).

Spine. The theme or basic line of the play and is synonymous with its super-objective. In this context it is a directional term. In addition, each role has a spine that must be compatible with the overall spine of the play. If the spine of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is the study of mendacity, all the roles must be related to this objective. The actress playing

Maggie might have as her super-objective "I want to strip away the lies that prevent Brick from fathering our child" (Moston 152-153).

Subtext. Subtext literally means "under the text or beneath the lines." This is what the characters are saying underneath their lines or the "real meaning" behind the lines -- the meaning behind the words which makes them say them. The actor's continuous thoughts that give meaning to the dialogue and the stage directions. The lines of the author are dead until an actor analyzes and brings out the sense that the author intended (Moore 68-72).

Tactics. The specific actions a character takes to get rid of the Obstacles standing in the way of desired Intentions. The moment to moment involvement of the character, who is constantly selecting and acting out these actions (Cohen 24-26).

The Through Line of Action. The progressive movement from one unit of the play to the next. It assumes a series of consistent and logical actions, a pattern of behavior that is the route an actor takes to the super-objective. The attempt to fulfill the objectives of the character against a series of obstacles moves the play to a conclusion, and the through line of action is the thread that links all the character's actions (Moore 57).

Assorted Terms Used in Project

Art. Art is the "human effort to imitate, supplement, alter, or counteract the work of nature. The conscious production or arrangement of sounds, colors, forms, movements, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty, specifically the production of the beautiful in a graphic or plastic medium. A field or category of art, such as music, ballet, or literature" ("Art" 127). Theatre Art. According to Bedard, "theatre art is a dynamic, ever-changing, phenomenon that is not limited to, and does not necessarily include, text, narrative, or live performers . . . (It is) a conscious, live performance that

includes the immediate interaction between audience and artists; it involves the exchange of meaning through symbol and forms; it creates content and form out of human experiences and cultures; it expresses multiple realities (spiritual, aesthetic, political, etc.) and often incorporates other art forms (dance, music, visual arts)” (36).

Curriculum. According to Tanner and Tanner, curriculum is defined as “that reconstruction of knowledge and experience that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience”. It is the scope and sequence of skills to be learned in a particular subject area. Each subsequently learned skill should build upon a previously learned skill (191).

Co-Curriculum or Extra-Curriculum. The Student Services Committee of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) defines “co-curricular” as all activities that might be construed to be an adjunct to the regular curriculum in the schools. It would include such group activities as those pursued by school teams, school bands, and drama groups, and would also include such supportive curricular activities as field trips and inter-school visitations (The Role of the Co-Curricular Advisor Page).

Improvisation. Improvisation as defined by Geraldine Siks is a basic means by which a human being adapts to the ever-changing environment. In drama, improvisation is viewed as a process of extemporizing physical actions, including speech, without previous practice or rehearsal. Improvisational skills and concepts are acquired as the child develops and becomes involved in a variety of experience (37).

Creative drama. Rosenberg and Prendergast define it as “an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-oriented form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon experiences, real or imagined. Creative drama rarely

results in a formal production. How the participants grow, not how they perform, is the essence of creative drama” (11).

Side Coaching. This is the link between director/coach and the actors/players.

Sidecoaching are questions/phrases/instructions given to the actors/players as assists while the game or activity is being played (Spolin Theatre Games for Rehearsal 113).

Drama Warm Ups. Drama warm ups are activities ranging from stretching and physical movement exercises to vocal warm up exercises to short impromptu pantomimes and improvisations (Schanker and Ommanney 66).

Theatresports. According to Belt and Stockley, theatresports is a format for improvisational theatre that uses a competitive sports angle as a theatrical convention. Actors improvise scenes using audience suggestions in competition with each other for points or audience favor. The judges look for narrative and entertainment value. The audience is an active and important part of a theatre sports performance” (viii).

Pantomime. According to Snyder and Drumsta, pantomime is “a sequence of facial expressions, gestures, hand operations, body positions, and movements that are taken from life. Used imaginatively by the actor, a pantomime can tell an entire story without a word being spoken” (24).

Drama Games. According to Neelands, drama games are “traditional games or variations used to establish trust, confidence, or to establish rules; games are selected to simplify a complex experience; games are put into the context of drama rather than played for their own sake” (15).

Process Drama. According to O’Neill, process drama is exploratory dramatic activity where the emphasis is on process rather than on product. Process implies a continuing event rather than a conclusive product and process drama is a technique to establish an

“imagined world, a dramatic ‘elsewhere’ created by the participants as they discover, articulate, and sustain fictional roles and situations. As it unfolds, the process will contain powerful elements of composition and contemplation, but improvised encounters will remain at the heart of the event” (Drama Worlds xvi).

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Overview

The review of literature will be divided into the following sections:

1. The benefits of participating in the theatre arts and theatrical productions.
2. Benefits of participating in a co-curricular theatre arts program.
3. The current state of co-curricular drama programs in the United States.

The Benefits of Participating in the Theatre Arts and Theatrical Productions

According to Kent Seidel, the Director of Outreach and Membership for the Educational Theatre Association, very little theatre arts research has been conducted:

Research in theatre education is a relatively new phenomenon, although, to be fair, so is the concept of theatre as a part of the school curriculum. Theatre education is even now in an exciting evolutionary stage: not long ago school theatre was about the “class play”; today it is a recognizable subject area that can be a distinct and valuable part of a comprehensive curriculum . . . As we develop new methods and goals for teaching theatre, we necessarily develop and increase research in the area (Seidel “Theatre Education” 3).

The available evidence strongly supports the benefits of participating in theatre arts activities – both curricular and co-curricular.

Writers (Aristotle, Postman 3; Esslin) and researchers/educators (Boyer 98; Klein “K-12 Drama/Theatre Research” 27; Hobgood 16; Girault 11; Gillespie 31; Faust 23; Colby 3; Bradburd 27; Belt and Stockley 5; Rosen 18; Siks 7) have advocated for the

study of theatre arts for numerous reasons, from the effectiveness of using drama in the regular classroom to enhance student learning (Postman 5), to the benefits of the study of drama to transmit cultural literacy (Gillespie 31). The American Theatre Association Policy Paper entitled "Theatre in General Education" put it best:

Theatre, of all the arts, engages human beings most directly in an exploration of human experience. It is a participatory activity dependent upon cooperation at a basic level of physical sharing and at the most heightened level of imaginative sharing. It involves the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of individuals in a group situation where they are involved in the creative act. This most human of the arts is essential for general education at all levels. (3)

Success in School. The arts, including theatre, have a far reaching potential to help students achieve education goals. According to Murfee, schools that incorporate drama, art, and music into the curriculum have found that teaching the arts has a significant effect on overall success in school. Because the arts are closely linked with important events in history and ideas, students who have a good background in the arts are likely to have a richer source of information and insight to draw upon, compared to those who do not study the arts (3).

For example, students who are involved in the arts, including theatre, outperform their non-arts peer on the Scholastic Assessment Test, according to The College Entrance Examination Board. In 2001, SAT scores for students who studied the arts more than four years were sixty-five points higher on the verbal and thirty-seven points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework or experience in "Acting/Play

Production.” In 2001 students involved in “Acting/Play Production” mean verbal score was 541 while students with no arts coursework scored 476. The mean math score for students involved in “Acting/Play Production” was 531 compared to 494 for students with no arts coursework. The longer students studied the arts (four or more years) the higher they scored compared to students with no coursework or experience in the arts. The scores for those who are involved in each of the arts are consistently and significantly higher than those who are not (National Association for Music Education). Several studies indicate that students can make significant growth in many academic areas through their participation in the theatre arts (Andre and Holland 437; Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 11; Clements 272; Dwinell and Hogrebe 2; Ingersol and Kase 5; Marsh 2; Ridel 10; Rosen 2; Williams and McColleston 5).

The 1999 report “The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows” was the final product of the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP). This project was a three year review of 188 arts education studies conducted over the past fifty years. REAP used meta-analysis (combining a large number of studies and comparing the findings) to create a study of studies. The report only included quantitative research. REAP researchers found a significant link between classroom drama and language development (National Art Education Association 1). The eighty studies that the researchers cite in their report chapters focused primarily on pre-K through third grade students who enacted stories, rather than just reading them, in a classroom environment. According to the researchers, the students in these studies consistently showed improved reading, writing, and oral expression skills (2). Although these studies were focused on mostly classroom drama and not “theatre,” researchers believe that the research has value for middle and high school theatre programs.

According to one of the researchers, Ann Podlozny (qtd. in Palmarini), there is a “marriage of the verbal findings we confirmed about classroom drama that can certainly be applied to the theatre production model that is so common in theatre programs for older students” (15).

Perhaps no report has been more influential than the 1983 College Board’s Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able To Do. This document (known as the Green Book) makes the definitive statement that students will profit from intensive preparation in at least one of the four arts. According to the College Board, the arts are one of the six core curriculum areas that high school students should master if they want to be successful in college:

The arts -- visual arts, theatre, music, and dance -- challenge and extend human experience. They provide means of expression that go beyond ordinary speaking and writing. They can express intimate thoughts and feelings. They are a unique record of diverse cultures and how these cultures have developed over time. They provide distinctive ways of understanding human beings and nature. The arts are creative modes by which all people can enrich their lives both by self-expression and response to others. (16)

The College Board (qtd. in Corathers) also stated that students would profit from intensive preparation in a theatre program that teaches the following:

- The ability to identify and describe different kinds of plays from different historical periods, using the appropriate vocabulary.

- The ability to analyze the structure, plot, characterization, and language of a play, both as a literary document and as a theatre production.
- The ability to evaluate a theatre production.
- The ability to express oneself by acting in a play or improvising, by writing a play, or by directing or working behind the scenes of a theatre production. (8)

Since 1983, as a result of the College Board's recommendations, many state departments of education and school districts have acknowledged the importance of the arts in education and have developed theatre art curricula (Corathers 1), increased certification requirements for theatre educators (Corathers 2), and increased funding for theatre programs and improved theatre performance spaces (Seidel "Theatre Education" 17). Administrators across the country recognize the potential theatre programs have for educating students.

Drama Teaches Us about Our Past, Present, and Future. Drama is a powerful art form and some of its power lies in drama's didactic nature. Tanner (Basic Drama Projects) supports the importance of study in the theatre arts as an important step in understanding ourselves and our history.

To know the history of theatre is to know the development of mankind. As the theatre grows, man grows; when it flourishes, man flourishes; and when it is suppressed, man walks in darkness. . . .

Theatre and man are as related as mirror and reflection, as self and shadow. Study theatre of a particular era and you learn the religious, social, political, and economic influences of that time. You learn the

people's desires, ideals, and needs. And perhaps more important, you gain insight into the present from what has gone before. A comparison of past eras not only emphasizes the evolution of drama, but it elucidates the theatre of today and prognosticates that of tomorrow. (x)

According to former Secretary of Education William Bennett, students “cannot understand the present if they have no understanding of the past” (qtd. in Rooney 6). Bennett reasoned that by not understanding the past, young people will not be equipped to handle their lives; consequently they will not be able to succeed. Students need to have knowledge of past civilizations and “an excellent way to learn about and from the past is through the study of theatre history and the great plays of the theatre in a theatre arts curriculum”(Cook 8).

The influence of drama on our lives in the twentieth century is profound. As theatre historian and critic Martin Esslin pointed out, drama so infuses our understanding that it is now a new way of thinking about life:

Never before has drama been so pervasive in the lives of people. Drama has become one of the principal means of communication of ideas and, even more importantly, modes of human behaviour in our civilization: drama provides some of the principal role models by which individuals form their identity and ideals, sets patterns of communal behaviour, forms values and aspirations. More than ever, therefore, there is a need for us to understand what drama can and cannot express, how it formulates and transmits messages, what techniques it employs to convey them to its audience and how that audience can and does grasp, ingest, and understand the

meaning of these messages -- explicit or implicit, consciously understood or subliminally absorbed. (13-14)

Neil Postman, author, theorist and chair of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at New York University, believed children need a drama-centered curriculum:

Children need a curriculum that would have at its core the drama of knowledge; a curriculum that would allow children to create meaning from the disparate and disconnected facts that fill the world; a curriculum that would demonstrate how language can be used to give motive and structure to behavior; a curriculum that would convey the idea that all your life is a drama -- an improvisation, if you will -- in which the point is not to make things happen but to make meaningful things happen. (6)

Postman believed that it is possible through the use of drama in the curriculum to “provide the young with a sense of the enchantment of learning” and show them that the “quest for knowledge is part of a great human drama in which they are entitled to participate” (6). By utilizing drama in the classroom as a teaching tool to teach concepts in science, math, and the language arts, and allowing students to “play” to learn, they are more likely to develop a love of and enjoyment for learning. James Moffett, another educational theorist, has also argued for a student-centered language arts curriculum with drama as the matrix of all language activities. He believes teachers can use drama elements and processes to “expand a child’s verbal and cognitive capacities across the whole spectrum of discourse” (A Student Centered 4).

Drama Helps Build Character. Although the author could find little “hard data” to support the following assertions, many educators believe that study in theatre also

provides both social and individual achievements. Work in drama helps both onstage and backstage participants to become resourceful, imaginative, dependable, cooperative, mature, self-confident, and proud of their achievements (Faust 24). Researchers Beales and Zemel found in their study of 40 high school students that the 20 enrolled in a high school drama program showed significant improvement in areas of “social presence, tolerance and achievement” (46). David Hornbrook, a leader in theatre curriculum design in England, wrote that drama is one of the key ways in which youth can gain “an understanding of themselves and of others, confidence in themselves as decision-makers and problem-solvers, can learn to function collaboratively, and can explore a range of human feeling, social situations and moral dilemmas” (9). Many other educators support this assertion (Clements 272; Prokes 35; Stewig 189; Siks 27). Seidel found in his 1996 study that students develop significant leadership skills by participating in a theatre arts program:

1. Students learn to work with a heterogeneous group on complex tasks. The combination of collaborative artistic work and the day-to-day operations of the program results in the students learning to build community, a key skill for leaders to possess.
2. Students learn to assess themselves and others, and to continuously improve from their mistakes. Failures become learning experiences as they focus on the complete process and encourage each worker to contribute his or her own individual creativity to improving the work of the group.
3. Students learn that vision is an effective way to guide a group of workers. Their management efforts in small and large groups and their

artistic endeavors work to teach them basic skills involved in creating a guiding vision and in effectively communicating such a vision to others. ("Leaders' Theatre" 930)

Drama Develops Creativity and Communication Skills. Recent studies support the belief that taking part in drama activities helps develop creativity. In 1975 Ridel investigated the effects of creative dramatics on ninth grade students and concluded that the drama activities that were integrated into the arts program aided in the development of imagination and communication. The author documented positive behavior changes in verbal and nonverbal communication skills, creative thinking and attitudes during the course (5). Ridel also found that in belonging to a group that works toward a creative goal in activities involving "dramatics," students can develop qualities that promote maturity: teamwork, co-operation and dependability (6). In a 1982 study, Clements evaluated thirty-seven thirteen to seventeen year old students using the "Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking" after they had participated in a year long teen drama program. The author found that the thirteen to seventeen year olds who participated in the study were more likely to think more abstractly and creatively and have more self-confidence after participating in the teen drama program on creativity (272-276). The researcher found a significant level of improvement with the more experienced theatre students involved in the teen drama program.

According to Geraldine Siks, a leader in the "creative dramatics" movement of the 1950's, drama is by its very nature a group art:

It calls for teamwork . . . requires cooperation in planning, playing, and evaluating . . . provides a play situation where children experience basic rules in living with others. They learn to take

turns, respect one another, avoid interruptions. Each child is given the opportunities to be both a leader and a member of a group working together in some form of concerted effort for the success of a scene. . . . A child constantly yields to discipline as he joined with others to create and express. (27-28)

Through dramatic activities like improvisation, process drama, and creative dramatics, students learn how to relate to one another as they communicate their thoughts and feelings in individual and group experiences (Siks 7; Spolin Improvisation for the Theatre 4). They develop more confidence and better interpersonal communication skills and gradually the student learns to enjoy rather than fear the opportunity to stand up and share his ideas, opinion, and views (Siks 23).

Students can gain confidence and poise from frequent participation in theatre arts performance activities (Belt & Stockley 2; Rosen 15). In a study conducted by Robert Rosen, the author found statistically significant increases in oral communication and in student attitude toward self and theatre. Posttests found that students made fewer extraneous movements, such as fidgeting and shifting postures, and they demonstrated more focused eye contact and control of their facial features. They were on the whole much more audible and demonstrated less of a tendency to speak fast or too slowly. Their voices were clearer and they spoke with more animation and feeling. They seemed to be much more comfortable in speaking expressively to the group (17). Improved body coordination and vocal flexibility that young people need for everyday communication also result from active participation in the theatre arts class (Stewig 191; Rosen 15-18).

Through Drama Students Develop Aesthetic Judgment. Furthermore, as students obtain a wide theatre background, they not only gain appreciation of the great arts, they

also develop standards of judgment whereby they can recognize, respect, and demand quality theatre while rejecting that which is inferior (Seidel Theatre Education 4).

Several state theatre arts curriculums have as a major goal the ability of the students to form aesthetic judgments (Iowa 16; Washington 38; Maryland 3).

The Inter-Disciplinary Nature of the Drama Classroom and Rehearsal Period.

Drama is not a frill, it is a vital, integrating study. It is one that brings together philosophy, politics, economics, and sociology. It is a unifier of a sense of values and responsibilities. It has a legitimate place in the education of all our citizenry. It is fundamental education. (Girault 10)

The theatre arts curriculum is an ideal place for integrating the curriculum. Pam Ware, past president of the Theatre Education Association, believes that “a broad, integrated curriculum is the ideal, and ought to be our long term goal” (Corathers 3). More than any other subject, theatre arts allows for and encourages curriculum integration. It is a “complex and synthetic field which embraces or involves just about every other area of study which may be found in the curriculum: literature, history, philosophy, psychology, technology, and the arts” (Combs 2). A well-designed theatre curriculum can help students develop an understanding of the arts, humanities, history, and literature and develop writing skills, build communication skills, and even develop a respect for physical fitness.

Many educational theorists and educators have condemned the “stranglehold of disciplinary knowledge on the curriculum” that seems prevalent in the American educational system (Tchudi 53). Stephen Tchudi, a proponent of interdisciplinary education, argues that traditional disciplinary learning is fine for organizing principles

and procedures for scholars, but is “a poor way of structuring learning for the novice. To organize teaching in the elementary and secondary schools along disciplinary lines is to impose a “product” pattern on a “process” of inquiry, and mastery”(54). He presents the recent (late 20th century) success of English as a holistic study rather than the old style “particle or bits-and-pieces approach” of “spelling by lists, writing by patterns, editing by grammar, literature by history or literary structure” (54). He argues that a holistic study is also valid in the sciences, history, mathematics and the extras:

The pedagogy that has pushed us toward integrated, process models is not limited to language learning and applies to the mastery of other fields as well. If whole English is better than particle English, then it stands to reason that interdisciplinary whole education is probably better than language arts instruction that still limits its goals to reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
(55)

A. Graham Downs, executive director of the Council for Basic Education, understands the value of an interdisciplinary theatre curriculum. He even proposes that the best drama teaching is interdisciplinary:

All great drama teaching must be interdisciplinary . . . must connect drama with the arts, the arts with the humanities, the humanities with the total culture of the period. . . . Can you imagine teaching Macbeth without permitting and encouraging a student to steep him or herself in the manners and mores of Elizabethan England? In the history and culture and music? And

then surely Shakespeare's genius can be understood for what it is.

(6)

Downs believes the theatre classroom and the production rehearsal period are ideal places to teach subjects like history and develop skills like writing and the capacity for independent thought.

John Kerr, a drama instructor at Pierce College in Washington State and former high school drama teacher, illustrates the potential of the drama classroom to teach other disciplines. In July of 1996 at Central Washington University's Summer Theatre Teachers Program, he presented a week long seminar in theatre curriculum and program development. During this course he explained how he integrates various content areas into his theatre curriculum. Because he begins his classes with ten to fifteen minutes of drama warm ups and physical activities every day, his students receive physical fitness training. The students spend this time stretching, taking part in physical activities such as mime and other types of strenuous activity, interacting with one another to create imaginary environments, objects, etc.

Kerr also teaches writing skills and the writing process and incorporates a variety of writing assignments into his curriculum. Students complete character, plot, and scene analyses on a regular basis, read a variety of plays outside and inside the classroom, write concept statements for these plays from the viewpoint of a designer and director, practice playwriting skills, attend productions in the community and write critiques, and complete many other writing activities. When his stagecraft students draft plans for building the sets for the school production, construct the sets, and choose lighting instruments to light the sets they must learn and demonstrate math (geometry and arithmetic) and science (physics) skills.

Eva Roupas' "Drama Exposed" curriculum is an excellent example of an integrated theatre arts curriculum. A theatre teacher at Salem High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Roupas built an advanced theatre class around integrated learning that benefited not only her students but the entire student body. She founded "Drama Exposed" in 1991 -- a high school repertory company that creates and performs any and all orders received from Salem teachers regardless of the subject area. A subject teacher fills out an order form explaining their subject area need and gives a date and time, what level the class, and other pertinent information. The repertory company then works to prepare and present a dramatic visual of the material. The company has done performances for social studies, English, history, foreign languages, math, marketing, science, and home economics classes (15).

Many schools and communities offer "Social Issues" performance possibilities. Students develop scenes, monologues, improvisations, movement pieces, and dances around a particular theme like date rape, teen pregnancy, AIDS, child abuse, environmental destruction, recycling, eating disorders, etc. They develop a program and present it to elementary, middle and high school students, community organizations, hospitals and similar institutions. They must research the issue, seek out professional guidance and advisement, and develop a presentation appropriate for their target audience. "Issue drama" is an excellent tool for integrating other subjects into the drama curriculum and is becoming a more common element of theatre programs in U.S. secondary schools (McCullough 1; Rogal 10).

Additional Benefits of Drama. Researchers have found the following additional benefits of studying and/or participating in the theatre arts.

1. The arts augment students' creativity and their ability to solve problems (Clements 272).
2. The arts are a vital component in human cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 25; Dwinell and Hoglebe 1; Wilkinson 10).
3. The arts increase communication skills so integral to success in today's complex society (Bernstein 219).
4. The arts augment literacy skills to include cultural literacy and literacy of non-verbal symbols and stimuli (Gourgey 2; Knudson 60; Ridel 1).
5. The arts develop the participant's self-esteem helping students gain a more positive self-concept (Kraft 20).
6. The arts provide students with training in diversity and tolerance through the exploration of civilizations and cultures of yesterday and today (Gimmestad and De Chiara 49).
7. The arts provide numerous career opportunities both in the entertainment industry and in the non-profit sector (Pitman 14).
8. The arts are a valuable teaching tool in working with special populations such as students with physical or mental handicaps, those with limited English proficiency, or the economically disadvantaged (Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 1; Alexander and Hayes 9; Bernstein 220; Gourgey 1; Smith 22; Snyder-Greco 13).

In his 1996 study “The Relationship of a Theatre Production to Students’ Attitudes Toward School and School Climate In An Inner City High School,” researcher Gabriel Gribetz at New York University found that a theatrical production that is sponsored and supported by the faculty and administration can have a significant impact on school climate. The researcher witnessed increased intimacy between faculty members and students, an increase in mutual respect between staff and students, and a high level of camaraderie among student participants (929).

John McLaughlin, in his book Building a Case for Arts Education: An Annotated Bibliography of Major Research, 1990, found after analyzing the research that had been done between 1970 and 1990 that “high quality arts education programs, based on a curriculum, taught by qualified teachers, and supported by arts resources from cultural institutions and artists, have been proven to support other quality goals of schools.” Clearly much research supports the argument that participating in and studying the theatre arts can have a significant effect on the academic, social, and personal growth of students.

Benefits of Participating in a Co-Curricular Theatre Arts Program

Most of the research conducted over the last several decades concerning the benefits of participating in co-curricular activities has focused on sports. Although there are similarities between participating on a sports team and being a member of an acting company, the author chose to focus primarily on the research available on non-sports co-curricular participation. There are few studies available which focus on just drama activities. More common are studies that examine the effects of participating in co-curricular activities as a whole.

John Dewey's maxim "an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory" (Democracy and Education 169) guides much of the thinking of supporters of co-curricular theatre programs. Recent research in non-sport co-curricular activity programs shows that adolescents can benefit significantly from their participation in co-curricular programs. By offering co-curricular programs, schools provide opportunities for student participation in activities that influence personality development and socialization (Simeroth 5). Several studies have investigated the relationship between co-curricular participation and self esteem. Murtaugh suggests that participation in activities that peers value is associated with greater peer approval that leads to higher self-esteem (24-28). In another study, researchers Williams and McCollester (11) examined the direct relationship between participation in a co-curricular drama program and student self-esteem. Results showed that participation in the drama club had a positive influence on students' self esteem and reduced their at-risk behaviors. Those who participated in other co-curricular activities (172 of the 244 students) did not show the same growth as those involved in the drama club (72 of the 244 students). Previous research conducted by Andre and Holland also supported these findings and discovered that students who participate in co-curricular programs are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviors (437-466).

Participating in a co-curricular program also has many academic benefits. Results from a study by Young, Helton, and Whitley found that family, school-sponsored co-curricular activities, and community activities all had a significant impact on the academic engagement, performance, and social-emotional growth of the adolescents in the study (6). In a 1986 study by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), researchers found that 80% of high school seniors participated in co-curricular

activities. “Students who ranked high on four related performance measures (course credits, hours of homework, test scores, and grade average) tended to be more involved in extracurricular activities” (2). In fact, the more activities students were involved in, the higher they ranked.

Certainly, participation does not guarantee improved performance as a student. What is clear from the OERI study is that co-curricular activities are attracting many bright, high-performing students. However, in light of the studies cited previously, an argument can be made that participating in co-curricular activities improves self-concept and an improved self-concept can lead to more academic success. Herbert Marsh conducted research as part of the High School and Beyond study between 1980 and 1984. Out of 10,613 students, a sample size of 4,000 was assumed for the purposes of statistical testing. Marsh found that of these students “participation in extracurricular activities has typically been found to facilitate academic outcomes rather than to detract from them . . . participation in extracurricular activities enhances self-concept and the improved self-concept has positive effects on other outcome” (27).

Researchers interested in exploring the effects of participating in theatre arts productions need to conduct further quantitative, qualitative, and case study research to explore the direct connection between extracurricular participation and personal, social, and academic growth.

Current State of Co-Curricular Drama Programs in the United States

Much of the information for this section was acquired from Seidel’s landmark 1991 study: “Theatre Education in United States High Schools: A Survey Report.” This survey was “the first comprehensive survey of educational theatre in this country in more than twenty years” (Seidel “Theatre Education” 2). Although there is curricular overlap

in the information that follows, this section of the review of literature is meant to provide an understanding of the current state of co-curricular drama programs in the United States.

Data regarding state and district curriculum guidelines and goals also suggest that many schools are on their own in defining the theatre program: thirty-two percent of schools that offer theatre classes and productions report that no such guidelines or goals exist (4). Despite the lack of guidelines, goals, or procedures for the theatre director to consult, researchers found that eighty-eight percent of the nation's high schools have some sort of theatre activity (2). However, only fifty-nine percent offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular theatre activities (2). Sixty-two percent report a co-curricular drama club or organization (2). The average portion of the student body that is involved in theatre classes and productions is about eight percent (2).

According to Seidel ("Theatre Education"), high school theatre teachers believe strongly that participating in co-curricular productions has many benefits for students. Teachers rated class work and productions as having roughly equal potential for teaching students in the following areas: self-discipline, creativity, group dynamics and problem solving, self-confidence, interpersonal and groups communication skills, and aesthetics and criticism (4). Above all other benefits, both teachers and principals identified "humane goals" as the most important reasons for offering theatre education and co-curricular productions in the schools. The highest-ranked choice from among a number of rationales for educational theatre was "to enable students to grow in self-confidence and self-understanding" (4). Other highly ranked reasons for teaching theatre included "improving students' interpersonal skills," "improving students' ability to think creatively," and "improving and increasing students' appreciation" and "understanding of

human values” (4-5). This study suggests that both teachers and administrators alike understand the value and importance of a theatre arts program.

The Production Program in American High Schools. Seidel’s study (“Theatre Education”) provides theatre arts educators with a clear picture of the current state of co-curricular secondary theatre arts programs.

- Almost ninety percent of American high schools offer their students some kind of theatre activity, either productions, classes, or both (2).
- Eighty-one percent of teachers consider play production work to be part of their theatre course work (10).
- The typical theatre teacher stages one full length drama, one full length musical, and one or two one-act productions each year (10).
- Fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular theatre activities (2).
- Fifty percent of high schools report some sort of annual student directing activity – primarily cuttings, scenes and one acts (9).
- Principals generally have a high opinion of the value of theatre to students involved in classes and productions (2).
- Principals are less aware of the value, or potential value, of a successful theatre program to the rest of the student body and to the school’s standing in the community (2).
- The factors that theatre teachers consider most important when they select a script for production are as follows and in order of priority:
 1. The number of men and women in the cast.
 2. The size of the cast.

3. The availability of student talent.
4. The appropriateness of the theme.
5. The appropriateness of the play to the student's level of understanding (10).

The Theatre Educator in American High Schools. Seidel ("Theatre Education" 5)

also determined the average theatre educator's education, training, and experience and identified what administrators' believe are important attributes of a theatre teacher.

1. Theatre teachers:

- Over half of the theatre teachers in the United States high schools hold advanced degrees (2).
- More than sixty percent have updated their theatre training with university coursework in the past three years. However, many still consider themselves inadequately trained for some of the requirements of their jobs, particularly technical theatre (2).
- Fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular activities (2).
- Sixty percent of teachers report that their theatre position was a secondary assignment: They applied for and were hired for a position in an area other than theatre (2).

2. Administrators:

- Sixty percent of administrators are seeking strong college or degree training. Fewer than fifty percent require a prospective teacher to have majored in theatre (2).
- Forty percent of administrators require a B.Ed in Theatre (2).

- Nine percent require an M.Ed in Theatre (2).
- Nine percent considered a minor in theatre sufficient (2).
- Thirty-six percent look for some sort of certification in theatre (2).

The findings of the Seidel study regarding the experience of high school drama educators are supported by additional research. In a more recent survey (Clark iv-v), the researcher found that in the state of Mississippi, forty-three percent of theatre teachers had less than three years experience teaching theatre; however, these same instructors had an average of fifteen years of teaching experience in other academic areas. Seventy percent of the teachers were forty years of age and above. Eighty percent of respondents had majored in areas other than theatre. Although this is not a representative example since Mississippi is one of the nineteen states that permit the teaching of theatre with credentials other than a theatre or combined speech-theatre or English-theatre certificate, it can be inferred that many of these states have similar problems with inexperienced teachers teaching and directing theatre programs.

In a 1990 study of the theatre arts in senior high schools of Nebraska (a state that according to the Seidel survey requires theatre teachers to hold credentials based on some combination of theatre arts and speech training) researchers found that most theatre teachers have minimal to no training in play production and theatre curriculum and less than two-thirds of the teachers teaching theatre are endorsed to teach theatre (Murphy 5).

According to a 1988 study of Oregon theatre educators (Educational Theatre Association 12), Oregon is one of only twenty states that require theatre teachers to be certified. However this requirement is only true if theatre courses make up half or more of the teacher's assignment, and state regulations permit teachers to be miss-assigned for one or two class periods daily. This study showed that in 157 districts, fifty-three teachers

were teaching drama without certification. The average theatre teacher in the United States teaches twenty-three class periods a week and only eight of these classes are theatre classes. Therefore, the average theatre teacher only teaches theatre classes thirty-three percent of the time. Clearly, Oregon's requirement that theatre teacher's be certified if they teach theatre at least fifty percent of the time is not going to apply to many high school theatre directors. Despite Oregon's good intentions, one can conclude that few of Oregon's theatre teachers are qualified to teach theatre.

As the Seidel, Clark, and Murphy studies illustrate, a need exists to provide a significant number of theatre directors/teachers with resources that will assist them in planning and preparing curricular and co-curricular theatre programs.

Definition of a Strong Theatre Program. Seidel ("Theatre Education" 13) characterizes a strong theatre program by the following:

1. Teacher Indicators

- The teacher hold a master's degree or higher.
- The teacher has a theatre major.
- The teacher has directed more than one full-length play or musical outside the high school or university degree.
- Students participate in directing projects.
- Teacher has taught theatre longer than the average. (10.5 years)
- Teacher has taken coursework in the last three years to update training.
- Teacher has attended four or more theatre or education related meetings in the last three years.
- Teacher belongs to a state, regional, or national theatre association.

2. School Indicators

- Theatre teacher receives a stipend above the regular salary for directing productions.
- Percent of students in theatre classes/productions above average. (8% is average)
- Theatre program has sole use of rehearsal/performance space.
- School employs an outside consultant to help develop the theatre program.

3. Program Indicators

- Professional theatre artists visit the school once a year or more on average.
- The school has a theatre club or organization.
- Touring of productions is done.
- Three or more full-length plays are staged annually.

Seidel also found that as teachers develop their skills and expand their theatrical experiences, their programs grow:

Our analysis shows that the higher a teacher scores on the strong teacher indicators, the higher the “combined influence” program indicator areas will score. In other words, there is evidence that a strong teacher can positively influence administrative and environmental factors that might ordinarily limit these program areas – the existence of a student organization, the number of plays staged annually, whether touring is done, and whether guest artists visit the school – creating a stronger overall theatre program. (“Theatre Education” 14)

One of the most important findings of this study was the discovery that “a strong teacher makes the biggest difference between a typical program and an above average one. When we compare the programs in the top twenty-five percent with those in the

middle of the spectrum, many of the factors making the biggest difference are those that are most influenced by the teacher” (15). This study makes it clear how critical the teacher is at the secondary level. For theatre programs to develop and for students to benefit from their participation in these programs, theatre teachers must further their education and training and seek out expert assistance (Hobgood Finding the Key 16-17).

Summary

Theatre arts education is a vital part of an effective education. Literature exists which attests to the potential of theatre arts curriculum to help students develop personally, socially, and academically. The benefits of theatre arts to help students with non-traditional (verbal and mathematical) learning styles are also clear. The theatre arts offer a way of thinking, of organizing information and ideas, of contemplating concepts, ethics, and values. Theatre arts are not for a privileged few, but for the many and are central to general education. The theatre arts are not just a form of recreation, but are vital to our education, well-being and happiness.

Chapter Three

Methods

Author's Intent

My intent was to create a handbook for directors to assist them in directing a theatrical production and in creating a successful theatre program. As I began my career as a theatre educator in 1991, I realized few resources were available to help guide the development of my drama program. Although I had taken many theatre arts classes as an undergraduate at Western Washington University and received a double major in Drama and English, I didn't feel prepared to begin developing a drama program at the secondary level. Most post-secondary theatre arts programs are designed to prepare students to work in the professional theatre world, not to teach at the high school level. Therefore, I developed this project to assist beginning directors as they begin to direct their productions and build their theatre programs. I also wanted to read research, journal articles, books, curriculum guides and other materials to explore how other veteran teachers have developed successful drama programs.

Procedures

This project is the culmination of eleven years (1991-2001) of reading and experimentation. In the fall of 1991, I began teaching language arts, speech, and drama classes and directing drama productions at Walla Walla High School. Since no co-curriculum guide or texts existed for the speech and drama courses, I began exploring how other teachers had developed their curriculum and drama programs while at the same time trying to plan and teach the classes. Directing the first few productions posed a tremendous challenge. Although I had majored in theatre at Western Washington University and participated in many collegiate theatrical productions, I was unsure of the

best techniques for directing high school actors and for building the theatre program. This situation inspired me to learn more about theatre arts curriculum, techniques for directing adolescent actors, and strategies to build a successful co-curricular drama program.

In 1991 and 1992 after preliminary research and experimentation, I began to develop a variety of techniques and strategies for directing young actors and began to build a program at Walla Walla High School. However, to increase my knowledge of the best practices in teaching theatre arts and to broaden my theatre knowledge, I chose to take a leave of absence from Walla Walla High School and attend Central Washington University.

During the 1995-1997 school years, I completed over ninety credits in a wide variety of courses in the theatre, education, and English departments. Course work included classes in advanced acting styles, scene and lighting design, puppetry, scenic drafting, stage combat, movement, directing, musical theatre directing, history of education, philosophy of education, educational research and methods, and teaching English composition. During the 1996-1997 school year, I also served as a graduate assistant teaching "Introduction to Theatre" and "Singing For The Actor" courses. In the summers of 1996 and 1997, I participated in the Summer Drama Teachers' Institute at CWU as both an instructor and student. During this institute I had the opportunity to participate in numerous discussion sessions with other theatre arts teachers from around the northwest. The information I received from the courses and discussions was incorporated into this handbook. I also gathered information through informal discussions with a variety of teachers and incorporated many suggestions into this project.

I was also involved as an actor in or a crew member of ten productions at Central Washington University during this two-year period. I oversaw two eight-week touring productions (Robin Hood and The Comedy Of Errors) working as an actor, company manager, and workshop instructor for these productions during spring quarters of 1996 and 1997. The experiences I gained as an actor, company manager, and technical crew member were incorporated into this curriculum.

Time was spent at the Central Washington University and Washington State University Libraries searching the databases for research reports, textbooks, journal articles, and curriculum on the arts, theatre curricula, co-curricular program design, and directing theory. The libraries' collection of theatre journals is minimal so the interlibrary loan service was utilized with success. The ERIC Microform collection was most useful with the author finding numerous research articles and curriculum guides. The research found was read and analyzed.

I also used the internet extensively to locate further sources for this project. Contacts were made with theatre arts educators through the bulletin board service America Online and the World Wide Web. Discussions took place and course syllabi, goals and objectives were obtained from these educators. I joined several listservs and took part in conversations via email with educators across the country. I also contacted numerous arts advocacy agencies to request information regarding arts curricula, educational legislation, and educational outreach programs. The information received from the above resources was incorporated into the project.

I also began serving as a member of the board of directors for the Washington Association of Theatre Educators beginning in 1996. Through participation on this board I was able to meet with other drama teachers throughout the state discussing curriculum,

methodology and other issues connected with this project. In addition, I attended two ARTSTIME conferences in 1999 and 2001 as both a participant in and a presenter of several workshops.

Upon returning to Walla Walla High School in 1997, I began to implement the research conducted and apply the knowledge and skills attained in the graduate program. I used my curricular classes and co-curricular productions as a laboratory to apply what I had learned from my reading and coursework at Central Washington University. Between 1997 and 2002, I began building a successful drama program that has become a source of pride in the Walla Walla community. In the fall of 2000, I began to write the major sections of the director's handbook.

As a result of the popularity and quality of co-curricular drama productions, administrative support for the curricular program has increased. Student participation in the drama classes and co-curricular productions has increased. The curricular drama program has expanded from one drama class offered in 1997 to four drama classes offered in 2001.

Chapter Four

A Co-Curricular Theatre Arts Handbook: Tips and techniques to use when directing a production at the high school level

Overview

This project is a handbook of techniques and strategies for beginning directors of high school drama programs. Included in this handbook are sections on selecting the best productions for your actors, strategies for directing the young actor, helpful hints on how to build a successful extra-curricular drama program, and more. This project was based on a review of literature (including extant curriculum guides, research reports, articles and textbooks on directing and acting) and the author's fifteen years experience as an actor, director, and theatre arts educator.

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Tips and techniques to use when directing a production
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INTRODUCTION

Directing and working with adolescent actors is a challenge. Creating a handbook that proffers advice on directing a high school theatre program is a challenging task. No two drama teachers are alike. Each teacher's training and experience differs. The circumstances surrounding each teacher can be quite different. The facilities they work in, the history of their drama programs, the amount of support for the drama program from the school administration and community, and the student population the teachers work with will certainly vary from school to school.

Despite the many differences between drama teachers and their programs, there are many commonalities that beginning drama teachers share. There are also many "best practices" and proven methods of building and establishing successful drama programs which apply to all drama directors regardless of their training, experience, facility, or students. This handbook is an attempt to provide the beginning director with a manual of suggestions for building a successful drama program and directing a successful theatrical production. The purpose of this handbook is to offer both beginning and experienced directors solutions to the problems inherent in establishing and developing the high school theatre program.

There is no reason why high school theatre shouldn't be engaging, professional, entertaining, and, in every respect, excellent examples of the art. Good play production and direction is defined, not by the size of your budget, the type of facility the director has to work with, or the age of the actors, but by the play and what the director is able to create from the script and the performances she is able to draw from the actors.

Many people assume (since it is high school theatre) that if the students had their lines memorized and read the lines with volume and energy, the production was a success, even if the production really wasn't very good. Some high school directors are happy with this. They convince themselves that since they don't have much of a budget and since they are only working with high school age actors that the production isn't expected to be very good. Because of this thinking, the production usually isn't. These directors believe there is no way they could produce successful productions regardless of

what they did. Besides, no one attends the high school productions anyway, so why bother.

Speaking from experience, the high school drama director's task is incredibly challenging, time consuming, and often exhausting. In addition to teaching a full schedule of five to six classes (typically English and drama classes) daily from 8:00 to 3:00, planning for these classes, and correcting the papers and assignments generated by these classes, the high school drama teacher has to spend at least three hours in the afternoon or evening directing the seasonal production. Since most high school drama directors produce two to three major productions a year (some produce more), this means she will have to maintain this schedule for most of the school year. In addition to this hectic schedule, she must find the time and energy to complete the following tasks for each production she produces:

- Purchase the building materials, and build the sets for the productions; (Unless of course she has a person who has volunteered to be the technical director and set designer/builder. The school district usually isn't going to fund this position. You as the drama teacher are expected to serve in this capacity.)
- Design the light plot -- hang, focus, and gel the lights, create the light cue sheets and program the light board (if you have the luxury of a computerized light board)
- Work with a costumer (frequently a devoted parent who can sew but has no other qualifications) or find/rent the costumes herself;
- Create the poster, press releases/press kits, and advertising for the productions;
- Create the layout, collect and input the information for the programs.
- Create or order the tickets;
- Recruit and train the ushers;
- Recruit and train the spot light and light board operators;
- Recruit and train the sound board operator;
- Design the sound -- sound effects, underscoring, etc.;

- Hunt down, borrow, create, or buy the props;
- Select and order the makeup and design and teach the students how to do specialty make-up (middle and old age, bald cap application, etc...)
- AND MUCH MORE...

The high school drama director rarely has an adult assistant or assistants to help with the many demands of a production unless she is willing and able to pay for this assistant from the proceeds of the production or is lucky enough to find capable individuals who are willing to donate the time needed to accomplish these tasks. Yes, you can find parents to volunteer from year to year to work on some of these tasks, but unless you have an extraordinarily devoted parent or community member, the turnover rate is high. My experience has been that parents are interested in helping with ticket sales and costume construction only if their child is in the production of the moment. This is very different from most music programs where students are in a large band or choir for the entire year or several years. Getting consistent support and help from music parents tends to be far easier than getting assistance from drama parents because of the more permanent nature of the music students participation in the music program. Therefore, the director has to find the time to train each of these new support staff members. Sometimes it is just easier to “do it yourself!”

Long time drama teacher Debra Dion Faust discusses the kind of time demands typically placed on the advisor/director of a drama program in her November 1995 article in the English Journal.

Once schools have begun to budget in-class time for teachers and students of fine arts, they’ll need to go a step further. They’ll need to address the crippling number of hours required to administrate an active drama program. Even with student help and growing parental involvement, I spend many hours reading potentially performable scripts; drawing up a budget; inventorying materials and equipment for each show; going through assorted catalogues and ordering supplies; running to fabric shops, second-hand stores, and seasonal yard sales to buy cheap costumes and set supplies; striking and re-storing a set and cleaning the

stage and wing areas; arranging for mass washing and dry-cleaning of used costumes after a show; and re-cataloguing all of the above for use again. That's in addition to the hours spent organizing student rehearsal schedules; planning the set; lighting and costume designs; and arranging for and overseeing the student and adult work crews and regular acting rehearsals.

During dress rehearsal week of any show I arrive at school each day by 7:00 a.m. and leave before the custodians lock up by 10:30 p.m. A quick calculation shows I have put in over 75 hours on the premises before Friday is over and I still have to be here for 5 or 6 hours on both Saturday and Sunday as well. On Monday morning, it's back to business as usual, trying to catch up all the grading that fell behind while I was putting every spare second into getting the show ready for opening night. (25)

In addition to the above demands, the typical drama teacher must serve on numerous "volunteer" committees, conference with parents and students, and so much more. In addition, she has to manage the incredible amount of minutiae that fills every "free" moment of a teacher's school day, from filling out attendance slips to preparing for activity assemblies, and so forth. As discussed by Ms. Faust, sometime during the school day she has to order props, costume pieces, lumber and materials for the set, pre-block the scenes for the afternoon's rehearsals, return a call to a parent about his son's low grades, and so much more.

When the high school director arrives at after school rehearsals, not only must she stage the production, work on character development, and contemplate the technical demands of the production like every director in collegiate and professional theatre, but she must also teach actors who don't know how to act, to act! THIS is the biggest difference between high school and collegiate and professional theatre. The high school director must spend a considerable amount of her time in the rehearsal process teaching the actors the fundamentals of the acting discipline. She must also stimulate the actors' creativity and teach them how to use this creativity. Certainly those students who were drawn to audition and were eventually cast in her production have shown that they can

move reasonably well, speak clearly and with some “emotion,” and can be heard past the tenth row of the theatre. Beyond that, many beginning directors will find that few actors can actually “act.” They don’t understand and have never heard basic acting concepts like “playing intentions,” “exploring subtext,” or even basic technical concepts like “counter crossing” to balance the stage picture. The director must teach her actors all of this and so much more. Moreover, she must do it while she is doing everything else a director must do during the rehearsal process of a production.

Obviously much of this acting training should occur in the classroom. However, the fact is that currently most schools offer few courses in “drama” and many of your “best actors” or the students who may be your best choices to fill the roles in your production are also your best students and already have a full schedule of English, math, science, foreign language, and music classes. These students simply can’t fit your drama class into their already crammed schedules. Even if the teacher is lucky enough to entice this young actor into her drama class, he will likely be in this class with thirty-five (or more) students, some of whom have little interest in drama or acting but were forced to take the class because they “needed the credit.” The likelihood that the student will have the opportunity for valuable, individualized attention is slim.

Regardless of these challenges, the high school drama director can and should produce quality theatrical productions. Why is this so important? Well, for most people in America, unlike other countries and cultures, attending a high school theatre production may be their first exposure to the theatre. For many people who attend our productions, whether they are students, parents, or community members, if they do not like our production (usually they were bored because of the overall poor quality of the production), these first time theatre patrons may not become return customers, in our theatre or any other. I remember this daunting fact every time I begin a production with my young actors. The impact your production can have on first time theatergoers is frightening in its implications. Every high school director is a “real director.” It makes little sense not to be a good director as well.

As a high school drama director since 1991, and an actor and director in high school, college, community, and professional productions since 1980, I have learned that

high school actors are capable of producing truly outstanding productions. As my program has grown and I have been able to work repeatedly with students whom I have worked with in productions and in the classroom, I have witnessed the power that successful productions can have on students involved in the production as well as those in attendance. I have witnessed a community express its support and appreciation of what the theatre has done for these young people. I have heard comment after comment on the quality of the productions. For example, when budget cuts were recently discussed by the school and district administrations, I heard over 150 students, parents, and community members stand before the school board to voice their support of the drama program. Some of these individuals were community members with no personal ties to the high school drama program. They had simply attended the productions and had been impressed by the quality of theatre produced by “high school students.” As a result of the increasing quality of the productions, I have been able to recruit talented and dedicated students into the co-curricular and curricular drama program. From one class of 32 drama students five years ago, I now have four drama classes with over one hundred students involved. David Grote describes similar program growth in his excellent book Play Directing in the School.

I do not consider myself an extraordinary theatre arts educator or stage director. The advice I offer (and it is *advice* not prescriptive, dogmatic maxims) is based on a combination of research and experience. As a first time director, I had few resources I could utilize to help me build the drama program. Although I am not finished building my drama program (and I will never be finished renovating it,) I know considerably more than I did a decade ago. My hope is that beginning directors can learn from this handbook and begin to build a successful drama program with high quality productions at the center of this program. Despite the incredible amount of work required in developing and directing a co-curricular drama program, I wouldn't and couldn't stop doing what I do and become “just a teacher.” When my career as a drama advisor is over, I'll be done as a teacher too. I can't imagine doing the one without the other. I don't think I want to. Directing successful productions and watching the students you work with and the people

whose lives are touched by the work you do with these young actors is incredibly rewarding.

So, if I have frightened you with my description of the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of a high school drama director, I apologize! Clearly, there is great personal fulfillment in doing this job well. If you are like me, you will work after school and on the weekends for almost every week of the school year, yet you will earn less than the assistant tennis coach who only works for a couple months out of the year! You will have to continually fight for the theatre arts program and its elimination from the school curriculum and work hard to recruit students into your program. But, if you find the right students to work with who are as passionate about the theatre and creating “something from nothing” as you are, you will find that the personal rewards of directing a successful program far outweigh the lack of financial reward and recognition.

Since there are many texts available on the fundamentals of directing, teaching acting, script analysis, and the many other aspects of directing, this manual focuses on techniques and strategies for beginning directors of high school drama programs. As I have mentioned, directing a drama program and a theatrical production at the high school level is different than directing a production at the collegiate or professional level. Although directors face similar directorial problems in both the secondary and collegiate/professional levels, there are many problems unique to the high school drama director.

Included in this handbook are sections on training young actors, selecting the best productions for beginning actors, strategies for directing the adolescent actor, and helpful hints on how to build a successful co-curricular drama program. This handbook is meant to be one possible resource for you to use as you begin building your co-curricular program. Included in this handbook is information I have found helpful and useful as a director of a high school theatre program.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA PROGRAM: AN OVERVIEW

You have been hired as the drama teacher or somehow been informed that you are now in charge of the drama productions in your school. Where do you begin? How do you start? Well, take a deep breath and relax. (It may be the last opportunity you have to do so for quite a while!) You are not alone!

Many new high school drama directors feel unsure of how to begin building a drama program. The task ahead of you can seem incredibly daunting at times, like Sisyphus rolling that rock up the hill! Although many college programs provide a solid foundation in script analysis, directing, and acting techniques, fewer college programs provide training or experience in directing a **high school drama production and building a co-curricular program**. If you are like many high school drama directors, you do not even have a degree or certification in the theatre arts. So, where do you begin?

Asking a novice to take on the sponsorship of a co-curricular drama program, with its many technical requirements (not to mention the coordination of vocal and instrumental direction and choreography for a musical) is just a little insane! The stress is even worse if the advisor is also a beginning teacher! So, where do you begin!?

First of all, I believe it will be helpful for you to know what the typical drama program and drama teacher looks like in the United States. In 1991, Kent Seidel supervised the Educational Theatre Association's comprehensive study of high school theatre programs in the United States. The information in this report is helpful for all drama teachers to consider.

1991 Seidel Study

According to Seidel, data regarding state and district curriculum guidelines and goals suggest that many schools are on their own in defining the theatre program:

- Thirty two percent of schools that offer theatre classes and productions report that no such guidelines or goals exist.
- Despite the lack of guidelines, goals, or procedures for the theatre director to consult, researchers found that eighty-eight percent of the nation's high schools have some sort of theatre activity.
- However, only fifty-nine percent offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular theatre activities
- Sixty-two percent report a co-curricular drama club or organization.
- The average portion of the student body that is involved in theatre classes and productions is about eight percent.

Theatre teacher/directors believe strongly that participating in co-curricular productions has many benefits, rating class work and productions as having roughly equal potential for teaching students in the following areas: self-discipline, creativity, group dynamics and problem solving, self-confidence, interpersonal and groups communication skills, and aesthetics and criticism.

First, both teachers and principals identified "humane goals" as the most important reasons for offering theatre education and co-curricular productions in the schools. The highest-ranked choice from among a number of rationales for educational theatre was "to enable students to grow in self-confidence and self-understanding." Other highly ranked reasons for teaching theatre included improving students' interpersonal skills, improving students' ability to think creatively and increasing students' appreciation and understanding of human values. This study suggests that both teachers and administrators alike understand the value and importance of a theatre arts program.

The Production Program in American High Schools

Here is a snapshot of the co-curricular production program in United States high schools.

- Almost ninety percent of American high schools offer their students some kind of theatre activity, either productions, classes, or both.
- Eighty-one percent of teachers consider play production work to be part of their theatre course work.

- The typical theatre teacher stages one full length drama, one full length musical, and one or two one-act productions each year
- Fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular theatre activities
- Fifty percent of high schools report some sort of annual student directing activity – primarily cuttings, scenes and one act plays.
- Principals generally have a high opinion of the value of theatre to students involved in classes and productions.
- Principals are less aware of the value, or potential value, of a successful theatre program to the rest of the student body and to the school's standing in the community.
- The factors that theatre teachers consider most important when they select a script for production are as follows:
 1. The number of males and females in the cast.
 2. The size of the cast.
 3. The availability of student talent.
 4. The appropriateness of the theme.
 5. The appropriateness of the play to the student's level of understanding.

As I will discuss in later chapters, the director should really begin by considering the quality of the script as one of the most important factors in selecting a script for production. However, sometimes directors are forced to consider scripts for other reasons. The survey didn't address this issue.

The Theatre Educator in American High Schools

Who else is teaching theatre arts classes and directing productions in our high schools?

- Well over fifty percent of the theatre teachers in the United States high schools hold advanced degrees. (Not necessarily in the theatre arts)
- More than sixty percent have updated their theatre training with university coursework in the past three years. However, many still consider

themselves to be inadequately trained for some of the requirements of their jobs, particularly technical theatre.

- Fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular activities.
- Sixty percent of teachers report that their theatre position was a secondary assignment: They applied for and were hired for a position in an area other than theatre.
- Forty-seven percent of theatre teachers in the United States do not have a paid assistant to help them design or direct productions.
- Sixty percent of administrators are seeking strong college or degree training.
- Fewer than fifty percent require a prospective teacher to have majored in theatre.
- Forty percent of administrators require a B.Ed. in Theatre
- Nine percent require an M.Ed in Theatre
- Nine percent considered a minor in theatre sufficient
- Thirty –six percent look for some sort of certification in theatre

The ETA study also found that as teachers develop their skills and expand their theatrical experiences, their programs grow.

Our analysis shows that the higher a teacher scores on the strong teacher indicators, the higher the “combined influence” program indicator areas will score. In other words, there is evidence that a strong teacher can positively influence administrative and environmental factors that might ordinarily limit these program areas – the existence of a student organization, the number of plays staged annually, whether touring is done, and whether guest artists visit the school – creating a stronger overall theatre program. (14)

The findings of the ETA study regarding the experience of high school drama educators are supported by additional research. In a more recent survey (Clark iv-v), the researcher found that in the State of Mississippi, forty-three percent of theatre teachers

had less than 3 years experience teaching theatre; however, these same instructors had an average of fifteen years of teaching experience in other academic areas. Seventy percent of the teachers were forty years of age and above. Eighty percent of respondents had majored in areas other than theatre. Although this is not a representative example since Mississippi is one of the nineteen states that permit the teaching of theatre with credentials other than a theatre or combined speech-theatre or English-theatre certificate, it can be inferred that many of these states have similar problems with inexperienced teachers teaching and directing theatre programs.

In a 1990 study of the theatre arts in senior high schools of Nebraska (a state that according to the ETA survey requires theatre teachers to hold credentials based on some combination of theatre arts and speech training) researchers found that most theatre teachers have minimal to no training in play production and theatre curriculum and less than two-thirds of the teachers teaching theatre are endorsed to teach theatre (Murphy 5). According to a 1988 study of Oregon theatre educators (as quoted, in Seidel Theatre Education 12), Oregon is one of only twenty states that require theatre teachers to be certified. However this requirement is only true if theatre courses make up half or more of the teacher's assignment, and state regulations permit teachers to be miss-assigned for one or two class periods daily. This study showed that in 157 districts, 53 teachers were teaching drama without certification.

The average theatre teacher in the United States teaches twenty-three class periods a week and only eight of these classes are theatre classes. Therefore, the average theatre teacher only teaches theatre classes thirty-three percent of the time. Clearly, Oregon's requirement that theatre teacher's be certified if they teach theatre at least fifty percent of the time is not going to apply to many high school theatre directors. Despite Oregon's good intentions, one can conclude that few of Oregon's theatre teachers are qualified to teach theatre.

As the Seidel, Clark, and Murphy studies illustrate, a need exists to provide a significant number of theatre directors/teachers with resources that will assist them in planning and preparing curricular and co-curricular theatre programs.

Definition of a Strong Theatre Program

The Educational Theatre Association characterizes a strong theatre program by the following (13):

Teacher Indicators

- The teacher hold a master's degree or higher
- The teacher has a theatre major
- The teacher has directed more than one full-length play or musical outside the high school or university degree.
- Students participate in directing projects
- Teacher has taught theatre longer than the average (10.5 years)
- Teacher has taken coursework in the last three years to update training
- Teacher has attended four or more theatre or education related meetings in the last three years.
- Teacher belongs to a state, regional, or national theatre association

School Indicators

- Theatre teacher receives a stipend above the regular salary for directing productions
- Percent of students in theatre classes/productions above average (eight percent is average)
- Theatre program has sole use of rehearsal/performance space
- School employs an outside consultant to help develop the theatre program

Program Indicators

- Professional theatre artists visit the school once a year or more on average
- The school has a theatre club or organization
- Touring of productions is done
- Three or more full-length plays are staged annually.

One of the most important findings of the Seidel study was the discovery that “a strong teacher makes the biggest difference between a typical program and an above

average one. When we compare the programs in the top twenty-five percent with those in the middle of the spectrum, many of the factors making the biggest difference are those that are most influenced by the teacher” (15). The Seidel survey makes it clear how critical the teacher is at the secondary level. For theatre programs to develop and for students to benefit from their participation in these programs, theatre teachers must further their education and training and seek out expert assistance (Hobgood, Finding the Key 16-17).

Because you are reading this handbook, you obviously wish to build upon your knowledge and experience as a theatre arts educator and stage director. If you are reading this handbook because you have recently been hired as or somehow inherited the title of “the drama director” at your high school, I assume you are hungry for practical advice about what to do with your program and with your young thespians.

As I mentioned above, most high school teachers who are in charge of the drama program at their schools were hired as English or speech teachers first, and acquired the drama program as a secondary assignment because they had “been in a play” or were simply interested in “giving it a shot!” Since only thirty-six percent of principals look for a teacher who has some sort of certification in theatre to teach theatre classes and direct productions, the chances are that if you are part of the sixty-four percent without certification, you may not feel fully qualified to direct your schools drama program right now. The first step in developing a successful program is to understand the importance and value of including drama courses in the school curriculum and to be able to discuss with others (school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, students, community members, etc...) why theatre arts courses are so important to a “basic” education.

The next chapter is included in this handbook to provide the theatre arts teacher with research and expert opinion that speaks to the importance and value of teaching courses in the theatre arts at the secondary level. This information can be tailored to the needs of individual theatre arts educators. Only recently have researchers begun to explore the benefits of an education which includes instruction in the arts. Some of the most promising research in the last ten years has explored the benefits of participating in

the theatre arts. Searching the ERIC system on the internet or in your local college library is likely to turn up more current studies than those included in the next chapter. Utilize the resources available to you to find the most recent research to provide to your administrators and parents.

CHAPTER TWO

RATIONALE FOR DRAMA IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Before we begin to look at how to build the drama program, it is important to look at **WHY** a drama program is so important in our nation's high schools. For the purposes of this handbook, "drama program" refers to curricular drama classes, co-curricular drama productions, and the assortment of co-curricular drama activities that most drama teachers participate in with their students.

If you are tempted to skip past this chapter and move into the "practical" methods sections, please return to it and read it when you have time. I firmly believe that as teachers and practitioners of the theatre arts, we are our own best advocates for our programs. Included in this section is helpful information about the importance of a theatre arts education. You can and should provide parents, administrators, and community and school board members with this information at every opportunity.

The Need for Theatre Education -- Both Curricular and Co-Curricular

The general student in the United States has no theatre education. The perceptions of the public, teachers, and principals still relegate theatre to the elective or after-school program -- if it is in the school at all. It may be time to find a more contemporary view of our society to help the public realize the importance of drama/theatre. (Wright and Garcia 26)

According to Wright and Garcia, theatre has never been a part of the curriculum for all students, and many children have never been introduced to theatre as performance as part of their school experience. Theatre as a discipline has been advocated as a school subject, but a major outcome of this approach is often school performances (product) rather than a more academic approach that allows students to learn about theatre and is therefore more process oriented (25). However, as the result of arts advocacy work by the National Endowment for the Arts and other research and reform groups (The College

Board), many states are now adopting theatre curricula. According to a 1989 informal survey of forty-four states, twenty-seven have approved theatre curriculum guidelines (Bedard 35). A 1991 survey sponsored by the Educational Theatre Association (ETA) and conducted by Seidel found that schools in the U.S. are still not offering a sufficient number of drama classes in the curriculum. Only fifty-nine percent of U.S. high schools offer both a theatre course for credit and co-curricular activities and twenty percent offer only co-curricular activities (Seidel "Theatre Education" 2).

In a more comprehensive national survey of arts in the schools, Charles Leonard of the National Arts Education Research Center found that only in large high schools are drama classes found with any regularity (41). The U.S. Department of Education's 2001 study revealed that only forty eight percent of high schools offer drama/theatre instruction during the school day. Large schools (over 1000 students) were more likely to provide instruction in drama/theatre than small schools (400 students or less.) seventy-five percent of large high schools offered drama/theatre instruction compared to only thirty percent of small schools (Arts Education 88). Seidel's 1991 study of the status of theatre in United States high schools found that twenty-five percent of middle schools offer a drama course while only sixty percent of large high schools (over 1000 students) offer drama courses ("Theatre Education" 1-3). Seidel also found that between 1970 and 1990 the percentage of U.S. high schools with some type of theatre program declined by almost 4 percent. In addition, Seidel found that twelve percent of large high schools offer no theatre activities.

Even though sixty percent of the large high schools may offer drama classes, the classes are designed for students with a special interest in theatre. The same is true at the junior high school level, and other than a trip to see a play, very few students have any education in or about the theatre (Leonard 22; Seidel "Theatre Education" 30; Wright and Garcia 26). These studies indicate that the theatre arts are still considered "frills" courses by many legislators, school boards, administrators, business owners, students, and parents.

Drama is seen often as trivial and non-essential, a luxury subject and an "educational frill far from central to the training of children for real life" (O'Neill 25).

According to Robinson, with the "back to the basics" and vocational push of the 1980's, theatre arts education faced opposition from vocal individuals and groups in communities around the country. Robinson found an increase in the number of communities demanding only those courses that do the following:

1. teach "basic skills" of literacy and numeracy
2. develop cognitive and intellectual abilities
3. prepare students for entering the work force. (11)

All activities that make no obvious contribution to these ends have suffered correspondingly. As a result, funding for the dramatic arts has decreased or been eliminated and courses in drama have been cut or scaled down (Robinson 9-11; Seidel "Theatre Education" 16). Therefore, one of the challenges for theatre arts educators is to demonstrate the importance and necessity of theatre arts curricula and co-curricula in the secondary school to administrators and community members. One way to accomplish this goal is to develop a successful co-curricular theatre arts program that illustrates the many benefits of participating in a production (Brown 40).

Why Participate in Theatre Activities?

Why is the study of theatre arts important? Why is it worth including in the secondary curriculum and funding as a co-curricular activity? According to many educators, drama is a vital component of education -- as important as English, math and science. Elliot Eisner, a noted educational theorist and a strong supporter for decades of the inclusion of the arts in the curriculum, discusses the importance of art (including drama) in the curriculum in his book The Role of Discipline-Based Art Education in America's Schools:

Our culture is replete with a variety of forms of representation (dance, poetry, visual arts, drama) because humans have found it necessary to invent such forms in order to express what they want to convey. The curricula of our schools are the major means through which our children learn the "languages" of these forms, and it is by learning these languages that they can gain access to the kinds of experience that the forms make possible. . . . When

our children are unable to “read” the languages of art, or music, or mathematics, or written prose, the content these forms possess and the experience they provide cannot be known. It is in this sense that the curriculum of the school is aimed -- or should be aimed -- at the development of multiple forms of literacy. (5)

To deny students exposure to theatre arts curricula denies them the opportunity to experience or express the “language” of drama, denying them the opportunity to develop this literacy.

Eisner further presents his case for the teaching of theatre and the other arts in numerous articles and books including Cognition and Curriculum: a Basis for Deciding What to Teach in which he criticizes the narrow view of literacy currently taught, and examines the central role of the senses in understanding the complex contemporary environment. Students, he argues, need to develop their senses more fully to enhance conceptualization and expression. Teaching the arts, including drama, improves development of the senses and leads to a more complete literacy. He questions the failure of our schools to provide artistic stimuli and is concerned about the “long range consequences of such neglect”(26). For Eisner, failure to provide students with experience and training in the arts hampers intellectual development:

There is an important relationship between individual aptitudes and the forms of representation individuals are likely to be able to use well. When the curriculum of the school defines representational options narrowly -- when such options are largely restricted to the use of literal language and number, for example -- it creates educational inequities and, moreover, fails to develop the aptitudes that many individual students possess. This in turn exacts a cost from the society at large, since the development of aptitudes is perhaps the major means through which humans contribute to the commonweal. (86)

Eisner further argues that the “senses have often been separated from the mind”(28) in psychological discourse and in the development of educational policies: “The separation

of the mind and body, a separation initiated by Plato and given a strong forward thrust by Descartes, has contributed to a narrow conception of intellect” (87). As a result, courses and activities that “appear to rely upon the use of the senses or upon affect are often regarded as nonintellectual, that is, as activities that make little demand upon thinking or human intelligence. This tradition . . . is based upon a limited and . . . counterproductive view of mind. The formation of concepts depends upon the construction of images derived from the material the senses provide”(28). The belief that a separation of the mind and body exists and that the mind is superior to the body devalues drama and the arts in our schools. This marginalization of the arts has traditionally resulted in little funding for drama programs (Rough 42) and poor enrollment in drama programs in high schools across the country (Oaks 42). Corathers claims that although this attitude is changing, the theatre arts are still valued less than music and visual arts by local, district, and state decision-making administrators (9).

According to Eisner (qtd. in O’Neill), there are five important reasons for making theatre arts an important part of education:

1. The arts as leisure pursuits;
2. The arts as tools in the child's physiological development;
3. The arts as therapy -- encouraging the release of emotion and physical tension;
4. The arts as instruments in the development of creative/ problem solving abilities;
5. The arts as ways of developing understanding of academic subject matter. (25)

Although these kinds of learning identified in Eisner’s five orientations may take place as a result of teaching drama, each can be achieved by other subjects in the curriculum. For Eisner (qtd. in O’Neill), the prime value of the arts in education lies in the “unique contributions it makes to the individual’s experience with and understanding of the world” (29). Each of the arts will deal with one aspect of human consciousness that no other field touches on. Because of the nature of drama, the meaning is likely to be concerned with human behaviors and its consequences.

There are numerous arguments that support the inclusion of the theatre arts in the curriculum and co-curriculum. Ernest Boyer, in his 1983 report High School: a Report on Secondary Education in America, found that the arts were shamefully neglected in the schools studied in his report. Boyer believes strongly that the arts should not be considered a frill, but rather a basic element of the educational process. He notes that one strength of arts instruction is teaching non-verbal communication and the use of symbols. He also states that “the arts not only give expression to the profound urging of the human spirit; they also validate our feelings in a world that deadens feelings” (198).

Another common argument for the inclusion of drama in the curriculum and the co-curriculum is its long history and central connection to humanity. Drama, in its many forms, is perhaps the oldest of all of the arts and the history of drama is closely related to the history of humanity:

When the first hunters recounted their adventures by means of vivid pantomime, when the first storytellers told their tales in rhythmic chants, and when the first organized groups of people found expression in the pantomime of hunting, war, and love dances, the dramatic impulse showed itself. . . . As civilization developed, drama took definite form in the worship of heavenly gods and the glorification of earthly rulers. . . . Then tales were told of noble characters engaged in mighty conflicts and humorous types stumbling along through their comic paces. . . . At last the tales produced dramatic presentations, ultimately to be written and acted in concrete form. (Schanker and Ommanney 292-293)

Philosophers and writers such as Aristotle and Perce Bysche Shelley have argued for the importance of art in the human experience. Aristotle, the world’s first literary critic, wrote about the didactic purpose and necessity of drama. According to Aristotle, drama is an imitation of life. Human beings learn through imitating and derive great pleasure from learning (par 11). Shelley stated that “a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the passions and pleasures of his species must become his own” (par 13).

Participating in the theatre arts allows humanity to imitate life, experience life from another's viewpoint and experience the passions and pleasures of others.

Eduardo Garcia, an arts education and arts administration consultant who served as the executive director of the New Jersey Literacy Task Force (a group which studied the state of arts education in New Jersey and made wide-ranging recommendations for the development of a comprehensive arts curriculum) explained quite clearly why theatre education is important in today's educational system:

If we truly believe that without arts we cannot fully express our humanity in thought and feelings, or that without the arts our lives would be enormously diminished, then there is no better or more effective example of the power of the arts to touch our humanity than theatre. This is especially true as we prepare for a millennium in which countless images will be bombarding us on yet-to-be-conceived electronic technologies. Images will be insinuating themselves into our lives at every turn, demanding we buy this or that product or act or react in certain ways. To prepare our children to discriminate among these incessant and potent images, to help them become effective consumers and responsible citizens in the new century, to help them meet today's educational goals, we must help them comprehend the power of the image and learn to demystify it. While all of the arts can play a critical role in image education, in my view there is no better way to foster this crucial understanding than theatre education, which is fundamentally image education.

To me, theatre embodies all of the qualities that we can see growing out of a full and rich arts education experience. We talk of valuable insights that students gain about themselves and about life through the arts, and more specifically how the arts teach self-discipline, problem solving, ingenuity, spontaneity, and creativity. In theatre there is all that and so much more. In theatre, the student

must also learn planning, collaboration, self-motivation, and the importance of deadlines. And -- back to my point of the importance of image discrimination -- in theatre the student learns to create mood, tone, physical and emotional control, and finally, to actually create images. These are skills that are vital to becoming a better student, succeeding in the workplace, and ultimately helping one learn to become a better human being. (18)

In 1989 the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) formed the Center for Studies in Theatre Education (CSTE) to support research in theatre education (Bedard 35). In 1991 and 1992 the CSTE invited selected theatre artists and educators to meet for two one day discussions. One result of their discussions was the creation of a position statement advocating the need for drama curriculum. An excerpt from that statement follows:

In view of today's changing national, international, and human context, and the evolving need for social harmony, it is essential that a new and comprehensive world outlook be instilled in our nation's students. This world outlook should reflect values and understandings which would give students the skills to successfully interact with all aspects of their personal and external environments.

Because theatre is the most human and social of all the arts, it can be a powerful force in education. Metaphor and ambiguity are the basic fabric of theatre; the broad spectrum of human experience is its subject. The study of theatre should, through interaction with its various forms, contexts, and contents, reveal each theatre event as a unique expression of life's experiences in all their diversity.

(20)

Educators commonly list two additional benefits of theatre arts courses:

1. Students learn to work cooperatively to achieve common goals and develop socialization skills.

2. They improve communication skills, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Klein “K-12 Drama/Theatre Research” 27; Seidel “Leaders Theatre” 930; Faust 23; Hartfield 17).

The Benefits of Participating in the Theatre Arts and Theatrical Productions

According to Kent Seidel, the Director of Outreach and Membership for the Educational Theatre Association, very little theatre arts research has been conducted:

Research in theatre education is a relatively new phenomenon, although, to be fair, so is the concept of theatre as a part of the school curriculum. Theatre education is even now in an exciting evolutionary stage: not long ago school theatre was about the “class play”; today it is a recognizable subject area that can be a distinct and valuable part of a comprehensive curriculum . . . As we develop new methods and goals for teaching theatre, we necessarily develop and increase research in the area (Seidel “Theatre Education” 3).

The available evidence strongly supports the benefits of participating in theatre arts activities – both curricular and co-curricular.

Writers (Aristotle, Postman 3; Esslin) and researchers/educators (Boyer 98; Klein “K-12 Drama/Theatre Research” 27; Hobgood 16; Girault 11; Gillespie 31; Faust 23; Colby 3; Bradburd 27; Belt and Stockley 5; Rosen 18; Siks 7) have advocated for the study of theatre arts for numerous reasons, from the effectiveness of using drama in the regular classroom to enhance student learning (Postman 5), to the benefits of the study of drama to transmit cultural literacy (Gillespie 31). The American Theatre Association Policy Paper entitled “Theatre in General Education” put it best:

Theatre, of all the arts, engages human beings most directly in an exploration of human experience. It is a participatory activity dependent upon cooperation at a basic level of physical sharing and at the most heightened level of imaginative sharing. It involves the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of individuals in a group situation where they are involved in the

creative act. This most human of the arts is essential for general education at all levels. (3)

Success in School

The arts, including theatre, have a far reaching potential to help students achieve education goals. According to Murfee, schools that incorporate drama, art, and music into the curriculum have found that teaching the arts has a significant effect on overall success in school. Because the arts are closely linked with important events in history and ideas, students who have a good background in the arts are likely to have a richer source of information and insight to draw upon, compared to those who do not study the arts (3).

For example, students who are involved in the arts, including theatre, outperform their non-arts peer on the Scholastic Assessment Test, according to The College Entrance Examination Board. In 2001, SAT scores for students who studied the arts more than four years were sixty-five points higher on the verbal and thirty-seven points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework or experience in "Acting/Play Production." In 2001 students involved in "Acting/Play Production" mean verbal score was 541 while students with no arts coursework scored 476. The mean math score for students involved in "Acting/Play Production" was 531 compared to 494 for students with no arts coursework. The longer students studied the arts (four or more years) the higher they scored compared to students with no coursework or experience in the arts. The scores for those who are involved in each of the arts are consistently and significantly higher than those who do not (National Association for Music Education). Several studies indicate that students can make significant growth in many academic areas through their participation in the theatre arts (Andre and Holland 437; Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 11; Clements 272; Dwinell and Hogrebe 2; Ingersol and Kase 5; Marsh 2; Ridel 10; Rosen 2; Williams and McCollester 5).

The 1999 report "The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows" was the final product of the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP). This project was a three year review of 188 arts education studies conducted over the past fifty years. REAP used meta-analysis (combining a large number of studies and comparing the findings) to create a study of studies. The report only included

quantitative research. REAP researchers found a significant link between classroom drama and language development (National Art Education Association 1). The eighty studies that the researchers cite in their report chapters focused primarily on pre-K through third grade students who enacted stories, rather than just reading them, in a classroom environment. According to the researchers, the students in these studies consistently showed improved reading, writing, and oral expression skills (2). Although these studies were focused on mostly classroom drama and not “theatre,” researchers believe that the research has value for middle and high school theatre programs. According to one of the researchers, Ann Podlozny (qtd. in Palmarini), there is a “marriage of the verbal findings we confirmed about classroom drama that can certainly be applied to the theatre production model that is so common in theatre programs for older students” (15).

Perhaps no report has been more influential than the 1983 College Board’s Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able To Do. This document (known as the Green Book) makes the definitive statement that students will profit from intensive preparation in at least one of the four arts. According to the College Board, the arts are one of the six core curriculum areas that high school students should master if they want to be successful in college:

The arts -- visual arts, theatre, music, and dance -- challenge and extend human experience. They provide means of expression that go beyond ordinary speaking and writing. They can express intimate thoughts and feelings. They are a unique record of diverse cultures and how these cultures have developed over time. They provide distinctive ways of understanding human beings and nature. The arts are creative modes by which all people can enrich their lives both by self-expression and response to others. (16)

The College Board (qtd. in Corathers) also stated that students would profit from intensive preparation in a theatre program that teaches the following:

- The ability to identify and describe different kinds of plays from different historical periods, using the appropriate vocabulary.

- The ability to analyze the structure, plot, characterization, and language of a play, both as a literary document and as a theatre production.
- The ability to evaluate a theatre production.
- The ability to express oneself by acting in a play or improvising, by writing a play, or by directing or working behind the scenes of a theatre production. (8)

Since 1983, as a result of the College Board's recommendations, many state departments of education and school districts have acknowledged the importance of the arts in education and have developed theatre art curricula (Corathers 1), increased certification requirements for theatre educators (Corathers 2), and increased funding for theatre programs and improved theatre performance spaces (Seidel "Theatre Education" 17). Administrators across the country recognize the potential theatre programs have for educating students.

Drama Teaches Us about Our Past, Present, and Future

Drama is a powerful art form and some of its power lies in drama's didactic nature. Tanner (Basic Drama Projects) supports the importance of study in the theatre arts as an important step in understanding ourselves and our history.

To know the history of theatre is to know the development of mankind. As the theatre grows, man grows; when it flourishes, man flourishes; and when it is suppressed, man walks in darkness. . . . Theatre and man are as related as mirror and reflection, as self and shadow. Study theatre of a particular era and you learn the religious, social, political, and economic influences of that time. You learn the people's desires, ideals, and needs. And perhaps more important, you gain insight into the present from what has gone before. A comparison of past eras not only emphasizes the evolution of drama, but it elucidates the theatre of today and prognosticates that of tomorrow. (x)

According to former Secretary of Education William Bennett, students "cannot understand the present if they have no understanding of the past" (qtd. in Rooney 6).

Bennett reasoned that by not understanding the past, young people will not be equipped to handle their lives; consequently they will not be able to succeed. Students need to have knowledge of past civilizations and “an excellent way to learn about and from the past is through the study of theatre history and the great plays of the theatre in a theatre arts curriculum”(Cook 8).

The influence of drama on our lives in the twentieth century is profound. As theatre historian and critic Martin Esslin pointed out, drama so infuses our understanding that it is now a new way of thinking about life:

Never before has drama been so pervasive in the lives of people. Drama has become one of the principal means of communication of ideas and, even more importantly, modes of human behaviour in our civilization: drama provides some of the principal role models by which individuals form their identity and ideals, sets patterns of communal behaviour, forms values and aspirations. More than ever, therefore, there is a need for us to understand what drama can and cannot express, how it formulates and transmits messages, what techniques it employs to convey them to its audience and how that audience can and does grasp, ingest, and understand the meaning of these messages -- explicit or implicit, consciously understood or subliminally absorbed. (13-14)

Neil Postman, author, theorist and chair of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at New York University, believed children need a drama-centered curriculum:

Children need a curriculum that would have at its core the drama of knowledge; a curriculum that would allow children to create meaning from the disparate and disconnected facts that fill the world; a curriculum that would demonstrate how language can be used to give motive and structure to behavior; a curriculum that would convey the idea that all your life is a drama -- an improvisation, if you will -- in which the point is not to make things happen but to make meaningful things happen. (6)

Postman believed that it is possible through the use of drama in the curriculum to “provide the young with a sense of the enchantment of learning” and show them that the “quest for knowledge is part of a great human drama in which they are entitled to participate” (6). By utilizing drama in the classroom as a teaching tool to teach concepts in science, math, and the language arts, and allowing students to “play” to learn, they are more likely to develop a love of and enjoyment for learning. James Moffett, another educational theorist, has also argued for a student-centered language arts curriculum with drama as the matrix of all language activities. He believes teachers can use drama elements and processes to “expand a child’s verbal and cognitive capacities across the whole spectrum of discourse”(A Student Centered 4).

Drama Helps Build Character

Many educators believe that study in theatre also provides both social and individual achievements. Work in drama helps both onstage and backstage participants to become resourceful, imaginative, dependable, cooperative, mature, self-confident, and proud of their achievements (Faust 24). Researchers Beales and Zemel found in their study of forty high school students that the twenty enrolled in a high school drama program showed significant improvement in areas of “social presence, tolerance and achievement” (46). David Hornbrook, a leader in theatre curriculum design in England, wrote that drama is one of the key ways in which youth can gain “an understanding of themselves and of others, confidence in themselves as decision-makers and problem-solvers, can learn to function collaboratively, and can explore a range of human feeling, social situations and moral dilemmas” (9). Many other educators support this assertion (Clements 272; Prokes 35; Stewig 189; Siks 27). Seidel found in his 1996 study that students develop significant leadership skills by participating in a theatre arts program:

1. Students learn to work with a heterogeneous group on complex tasks. The combination of collaborative artistic work and the day-to-day operations of the program results in the students learning to build community, a key skill for leaders to possess.
2. Students learn to assess themselves and others, and to continuously improve from their mistakes. Failures become learning experiences as

they focus on the complete process and encourage each worker to contribute his or her own individual creativity to improving the work of the group.

3. Students learn that vision is an effective way to guide a group of workers. Their management efforts in small and large groups and their artistic endeavors work to teach them basic skills involved in creating a guiding vision and in effectively communicating such a vision to others. ("Leaders' Theatre" 930)

Drama Develops Creativity and Communication Skills

Recent studies support the belief that taking part in drama activities helps develop creativity. In 1975 Ridel investigated the effects of creative dramatics on ninth grade students and concluded that the drama activities that were integrated into the arts program aided in the development of imagination and communication. The author documented positive behavior changes in verbal and nonverbal communication skills, creative thinking and attitudes during the course (5). Ridel also found that in belonging to a group that works toward a creative goal in activities involving "dramatics," students can develop qualities that promote maturity: teamwork, co-operation and dependability (6). In a 1982 study, Clements evaluated thirty-seven thirteen to seventeen year old students using the "Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking" after they had participated in a year long teen drama program. The author found that the thirteen to seventeen year olds who participated in the study were more likely to think more abstractly and creatively and have more self-confidence after participating in the teen drama program on creativity (272-276). The researcher found a significant level of improvement with the more experienced theatre students involved in the teen drama program.

According to Geraldine Siks, a leader in the "creative dramatics" movement of the 1950's, drama is by its very nature a group art:

It calls for teamwork . . . requires cooperation in planning, playing, and evaluating . . . provides a play situation where children experience basic rules in living with others. They learn to take turns, respect one another, avoid interruptions. Each child is given

the opportunities to be both a leader and a member of a group working together in some form of concerted effort for the success of a scene. . . . A child constantly yields to discipline as he joined with others to create and express. (27-28)

Through dramatic activities like improvisation, process drama, and creative dramatics, students learn how to relate to one another as they communicate their thoughts and feelings in individual and group experiences (Siks 7; Spolin Improvisation for the Theatre 4). They develop more confidence and better interpersonal communication skills and gradually the student learns to enjoy rather than fear the opportunity to stand up and share his ideas, opinion, and views (Siks 23).

Students can gain confidence and poise from frequent participation in theatre arts performance activities (Belt & Stockley 2; Rosen 15). In a study conducted by Robert Rosen, the author found statistically significant increases in oral communication and in student attitude toward self and theatre. Posttests found that students made fewer extraneous movements, such as fidgeting and shifting postures, and they demonstrated more focused eye contact and control of their facial features. They were on the whole much more audible and demonstrated less of a tendency to speak fast or too slowly. Their voices were clearer and they spoke with more animation and feeling. They seemed to be much more comfortable in speaking expressively to the group (17). Improved body coordination and vocal flexibility that young people need for everyday communication also result from active participation in the theatre arts class (Stewig 191; Rosen 15-18).

Through Drama Students Develop Aesthetic Judgment

Furthermore, as students obtain a wide theatre background, they not only gain appreciation of the great arts, they also develop standards of judgment whereby they can recognize, respect, and demand quality theatre while rejecting that which is inferior (Seidel Theatre Education 4). Several state theatre arts curriculums have as a major goal the ability of the students to form aesthetic judgments (Iowa 16; Washington 38; Maryland 3).

The Inter-Disciplinary Nature of the Drama Classroom and Rehearsal Period

Drama is not a frill, it is a vital, integrating study. It is one that brings together philosophy, politics, economics, and sociology. It is a unifier of a sense of values and responsibilities. It has a legitimate place in the education of all our citizenry. It is fundamental education. (Girault 10)

The theatre arts curriculum is an ideal place for integrating the curriculum. Pam Ware, past president of the Theatre Education Association, believes that “a broad, integrated curriculum is the ideal, and ought to be our long term goal” (Corathers 3). More than any other subject, theatre arts allows for and encourages curriculum integration. It is a “complex and synthetic field which embraces or involves just about every other area of study which may be found in the curriculum: literature, history, philosophy, psychology, technology, and the arts” (Combs 2). A well-designed theatre curriculum can help students develop an understanding of the arts, humanities, history, and literature and develop writing skills, build communication skills, and even develop a respect for physical fitness.

Many educational theorists and educators have condemned the “stranglehold of disciplinary knowledge on the curriculum” that seems prevalent in the American educational system (Tchudi 53). Stephen Tchudi, a proponent of interdisciplinary education, argues that traditional disciplinary learning is fine for organizing principles and procedures for scholars, but is “a poor way of structuring learning for the novice. To organize teaching in the elementary and secondary schools along disciplinary lines is to impose a “product” pattern on a “process” of inquiry, and mastery”(54). He presents the recent (late 20th century) success of English as a holistic study rather than the old style “particle or bits-and-pieces approach” of “spelling by lists, writing by patterns, editing by grammar, literature by history or literary structure” (54). He argues that a holistic study is also valid in the sciences, history, mathematics and the extras:

The pedagogy that has pushed us toward integrated, process models is not limited to language learning and applies to the

mastery of other fields as well. If whole English is better than particle English, then it stands to reason that interdisciplinary whole education is probably better than language arts instruction that still limits its goals to reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
(55)

A. Graham Downs, executive director of the Council for Basic Education, understands the value of an interdisciplinary theatre curriculum. He even proposes that the best drama teaching is interdisciplinary:

All great drama teaching must be interdisciplinary . . . must connect drama with the arts, the arts with the humanities, the humanities with the total culture of the period. . . . Can you imagine teaching Macbeth without permitting and encouraging a student to steep him or herself in the manners and mores of Elizabethan England? In the history and culture and music? And then surely Shakespeare's genius can be understood for what it is.
(6)

Downs believes the theatre classroom and the production rehearsal period are ideal places to teach subjects like history and develop skills like writing and the capacity for independent thought.

John Kerr, a drama instructor at Pierce College in Washington State and former high school drama teacher, illustrates the potential of the drama classroom to teach other disciplines. In July of 1996 at Central Washington University's Summer Theatre Teachers Program, he presented a week long seminar in theatre curriculum and program development. During this course he explained how he integrates various content areas into his theatre curriculum. Because he begins his classes with ten to fifteen minutes of drama warm ups and physical activities every day, his students receive physical fitness training. The students spend this time stretching, taking part in physical activities such as mime and other types of strenuous activity, interacting with one another to create imaginary environments, objects, etc.

Kerr also teaches writing skills and the writing process and incorporates a variety of writing assignments into his curriculum. Students complete character, plot, and scene analyses on a regular basis, read a variety of plays outside and inside the classroom, write concept statements for these plays from the viewpoint of a designer and director, practice playwriting skills, attend productions in the community and write critiques, and complete many other writing activities. When his stagecraft students draft plans for building the sets for the school production, construct the sets, and choose lighting instruments to light the sets they must learn and demonstrate math (geometry and arithmetic) and science (physics) skills.

Eva Roupas' "Drama Exposed" curriculum is an excellent example of an integrated theatre arts curriculum. A theatre teacher at Salem High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Roupas built an advanced theatre class around integrated learning that benefited not only her students but the entire student body. She founded "Drama Exposed" in 1991 -- a high school repertory company that creates and performs any and all orders received from Salem teachers regardless of the subject area. A subject teacher fills out an order form explaining their subject area need and gives a date and time, what level the class, and other pertinent information. The repertory company then works to prepare and present a dramatic visual of the material. The company has done performances for social studies, English, history, foreign languages, math, marketing, science, and home economics classes (15).

Many schools and communities offer "Social Issues" performance possibilities. Students develop scenes, monologues, improvisations, movement pieces, and dances around a particular theme like date rape, teen pregnancy, AIDS, child abuse, environmental destruction, recycling, eating disorders, etc. They develop a program and present it to elementary, middle and high school students, community organizations, hospitals and similar institutions. They must research the issue, seek out professional guidance and advisement, and develop a presentation appropriate for their target audience. "Issue drama" is an excellent tool for integrating other subjects into the drama curriculum and is becoming a more common element of theatre programs in U.S. secondary schools (McCullough 1; Rogal 10).

Additional Benefits of Drama

Researchers have found the following additional benefits of studying and/or participating in the theatre arts.

1. The arts augment students' creativity and their ability to solve problems (Clements 272).
2. The arts are a vital component in human cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 25; Dwinell and Hogrebe 1; Wilkinson 10).
3. The arts increase communication skills so integral to success in today's complex society (Bernstein 219).
4. The arts augment literacy skills to include cultural literacy and literacy of non-verbal symbols and stimuli (Gourgey 2; Knudson 60; Ridel 1).
5. The arts develop the participant's self-esteem helping students gain a more positive self-concept (Kraft 20).
6. The arts provide students with training in diversity and tolerance through the exploration of civilizations and cultures of yesterday and today (Gimmestad and De Chiara 49).
7. The arts provide numerous career opportunities both in the entertainment industry and in the non-profit sector (Pitman 14).
8. The arts are a valuable teaching tool in working with special populations such as students with physical or mental handicaps, those with limited English proficiency, or the economically disadvantaged (Bilski-Cohen and Melnik 1; Alexander and Hayes 9; Bernstein 220; Gourgey 1; Smith 22; Snyder-Greco 13).

In his 1996 study "The Relationship of a Theatre Production to Students' Attitudes Toward School and School Climate In An Inner City High School," researcher Gabriel Gribetz at New York University found that a theatrical production that is sponsored and supported by the faculty and administration can have a significant impact on school climate. The researcher witnessed increased intimacy between faculty

members and students, an increase in mutual respect between staff and students, and a high level of camaraderie among student participants (929).

John McLaughlin, in his book Building a Case for Arts Education: An Annotated Bibliography of Major Research, 1990, found after analyzing the research that had been done between 1970 and 1990 that “high quality arts education programs, based on a curriculum, taught by qualified teachers, and supported by arts resources from cultural institutions and artists, have been proven to support other quality goals of schools.” Clearly much research supports the argument that participating in and studying the theatre arts can have a significant effect on the academic, social, and personal growth of students.

Benefits of Participating in a Co-Curricular Theatre Arts Program

Most of the research conducted over the last several decades concerning the benefits of participating in co-curricular activities has focused on sports. Although there are similarities between participating on a sports team and being a member of an acting company, the author chose to focus primarily on the research available on non-sports co-curricular participation. There are few studies available which focus on just drama activities. More common are studies that examine the effects of participating in co-curricular activities as a whole.

John Dewey’s maxim “an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory” (Democracy and Education 169) guides much of the thinking of supporters of co-curricular theatre programs. Recent research in non-sport co-curricular activity programs shows that adolescents can benefit significantly from their participation in co-curricular programs. By offering co-curricular programs, schools provide opportunities for student participation in activities that influence personality development and socialization (Simeroth 5). Several studies have investigated the relationship between co-curricular participation and self esteem. Murtaugh suggests that participation in activities that peers value is associated with greater peer approval that leads to higher self-esteem (24-28). In another study, researchers Williams and McCollester (11) examined the direct relationship between participation in a co-curricular drama program and student self-

esteem. Results showed that participation in the drama club had a positive influence on students' self esteem and reduced their at-risk behaviors. Those who participated in other co-curricular activities (172 of the 244 students) did not show the same growth as those involved in the drama club (72 of the 244 students). Previous research conducted by Andre and Holland also supported these findings and discovered that students who participate in co-curricular programs are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviors (437-466).

Participating in a co-curricular program also has many academic benefits. Results from a study by Young, Helton, and Whitley found that family, school-sponsored co-curricular activities, and community activities all had a significant impact on the academic engagement, performance, and social-emotional growth of the adolescents in the study (6). In a 1986 study by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), researchers found that eighty percent of high school seniors participated in co-curricular activities. "Students who ranked high on four related performance measures (course credits, hours of homework, test scores, and grade average) tended to be more involved in extracurricular activities" (2). In fact, the more activities students were involved in, the higher they ranked.

Certainly, participation does not guarantee improved performance as a student. What is clear from the OERI study is that co-curricular activities are attracting many bright, high-performing students. However, in light of the studies cited previously, an argument can be made that participating in co-curricular activities improves self-concept and an improved self-concept can lead to more academic success. Herbert Marsh conducted research as part of the High School and Beyond study between 1980 and 1984. Out of 10,613 students, a sample size of 4,000 was assumed for the purposes of statistical testing. Marsh found that of these students "participation in extracurricular activities has typically been found to facilitate academic outcomes rather than to detract from them . . . participation in extracurricular activities enhances self-concept and the improved self-concept has positive effects on other outcome" (27).

Researchers interested in exploring the effects of participating in theatre arts productions need to conduct further quantitative, qualitative, and case study research to

explore the direct connection between extracurricular participation and personal, social, and academic growth.

Summary

Theatre arts education is a vital part of an effective education. Literature exists which attests to the potential of theatre arts curriculum to help students develop personally, socially, and academically. The benefits of theatre arts to help students with non-traditional (verbal and mathematical) learning styles are also clear. The theatre arts offer a way of thinking, of organizing information and ideas, of contemplating concepts, ethics, and values. Theatre arts are not for a privileged few, but for the many and are central to general education. The theatre arts are not just a form of recreation, but are vital to our education, well-being and happiness.

You Must Act As An Advocate For The Arts!

Obviously there is much research to support the need and value of a curricular and co-curricular drama program in the high school. Unfortunately those in power are not always aware of these benefits and will place the drama program and other “frills” programs on the chopping block when they are trying to balance the budget. Even when administrators claim to be aware of all the reasons to keep funding the drama program, unless the theatre arts teacher/director acts as a vocal advocate of her program, her position and program are in jeopardy of being trimmed or cut entirely. Being able to adequately defend your program is essential to maintaining and developing a strong theatre arts program. You, as the theatre arts teacher, must act as an advocate for your program. Whenever you have the opportunity to talk with someone about your program, do so. You teach not only the theatre art, but also the VALUE of the arts in all students learning and lives. Help educate parents, staff, administrators, and community leaders by taking advantage of back-to-school nights, freshman orientations, play productions, school board meetings, levy meetings, and the like to share the benefits of studying and participating in the theatre arts. No one is going to fight for your program unless you do.

CHAPTER THREE

BEGINNING YOUR CAREER AS A HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA TEACHER

Overview

If you are reading this handbook, chances are that you fit into one of the following categories.

- #1. You are an English teacher (or perhaps another discipline, but usually the English teacher is the one approached) and have been approached by the administration or department head to teach a drama class and direct a co-curricular production. You have been in a couple of plays over the last ten years at the local community theatre and you thought you would give it a shot!
- #2. You are a drama major or minor and have recently been hired out of a college theatre program to teach a drama class and/or direct the co-curricular productions, but you have little to no experience directing high school actors.
- #3. You have been directing high school theatre for a few (or many) years and want to see how another teacher “does it.”

If you are lucky, you also have at least one drama class to teach. In rare situations you may be lucky enough to teach two or even three drama classes. Even rarer is the full time drama teacher. As I mentioned before, the average drama teacher only teaches drama about thirty-four percent of the school day and directs one full length play, one full length musical and either directs or supervises the direction of one or two one-act productions each year. So, where do you begin? My first recommendation is simple:

STOP TEACHING ENGLISH CLASSES!!

If you really enjoy teaching drama classes and want to build a strong and successful program, **STOP TEACHING ENGLISH CLASSES!** Trying to be an effective English teacher **and** a successful drama director will burn you out faster than a

light bulb sprayed with water! Directing a co-curricular drama program is incredibly time consuming and requires a never-ending amount of energy! I will try to explain.

Most school years are thirty-six weeks long. Since the average drama program consists of two and sometimes three major productions a year and each drama production requires a minimum of eight to ten weeks to produce (cast and rehearse), the average drama teacher will spend at least twenty of the thirty-six weeks of the school year "in production." Most directors spend more time than this working on productions. Each rehearsal is about two and a half to three hours long, which means that you will actually be working a fifty-five to sixty hour week. In addition, you will need to spend approximately five to ten hours a week on production related tasks (writing publicity releases, pre-blocking, finding props, etc.) If you are like *most* drama directors, you will also need to build and/or supervise the construction of the sets, props, costumes, etc.... Since you have to rehearse after school or in the evenings, this only leaves Saturdays and Sundays to build the sets. I have found that the average set for a large-scale play or musical requires five to seven, 8 hour work sessions with students, parents, and friends or about sixty to eighty hours during the last four weeks of the rehearsal process. (Obviously you can complete some of this work in a "stagecraft" class if your administration allows you to offer one and you can entice students to enroll in it. More on this later.)

This is a total of about sixty-five hours a week, so far. This does not include the many hours you will spend in the evening and on the weekends lesson planning and grading the assignments and tests from the classes you teach! Since teaching English requires assigning and grading writing on a regular basis, it is really quite impossible to put in the hours required by your theatre productions, teach a full schedule of classes, and manage the paper load generated by more than one or two English classes. This is probably why the turnover rate of drama teacher is so high. According to the ETA's 1991 study, the average theatre teacher only teaches drama for about ten years. It's a wonder that English/drama teachers survive that long with the amount of time required for most of the school year. English classes require far too much "post-production." The paper

load alone is impossible to keep up with when you are busy teaching and directing from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

So, if you are beginning a college program and have chosen to get endorsements in English or Language Arts and Theatre, you might want to rethink your decision! If you only choose to pursue an endorsement in “drama” or “theatre arts,” you will have trouble finding a full time position. Consider choosing speech, ESL, history, or math or even becoming a counselor in addition to drama. There is no academic subject that requires the teacher to put in more outside-of-class time than the language arts. I simply do not believe that we have the time it requires to be an effective English teacher and develop and maintain a strong drama program. Although the two subjects (English and drama) obviously are related, there is no reason why a P.E. teacher with an interest in, training, and talent as an actor, can’t teach drama and direct productions! The reality, however, is that few administrators looking for a drama teacher are going to even look for a teacher who is certified in anything else but English or perhaps social studies. So, your task must be to GET OUT OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT from the first day you walk into this job.

You need to move your class OUT of the “English department” and into the “performing arts department” or “fine arts department” or establish a “speech/drama department” (if your school still offers speech courses.) If you remain in the English department, you will continue to be seen as an extension of this department and will have no real identity separate from this department. You will have no status, little administrative support, and the only budget you will receive for curricular supplies, materials, scripts, etc. will be doled out from the already over-requested funds in the English department’s limited coffer. Let me provide you with a little personal background into this problem.

Case Study: One Teacher’s Struggle to Build a Theatre Arts Program

I returned to my current high school after taking a two-year sabbatical to complete a Master’s program in Education with an emphasis in theatre. Before I agreed to return to this high school of 1,800 students and resume my teaching duties and begin to rebuild

the drama program, I told the administration that I would only return if I would be allowed to truly build the program. I would not return if I would not be allowed to increase the number of curricular drama classes offered if the student interest was there. I was told that if I returned and could generate interest in the theatre program, I would be allowed to offer and teach more than the one class that was offered in the schedule. So, I returned to this high school, confident that I had the energy, passion, and knowledge to generate interest in the drama program.

At the end of my first year back, I convinced the administration to release me from an additional English class so that I could offer two beginning drama courses. I believed that I easily had enough students from the co-curricular productions to fill a second drama class so I sent a petition around and found more than sixty students who stated that they would sign up for drama if it were offered at two different times in the school day. The administration grudgingly allowed me to do this but hemmed and hawed about the difficulties they would have in making this work at a time of “financial crisis for the district.” So, the next year I was allowed to teach two drama classes.

After the second year and two filled-to-capacity and successful classes of beginning drama, I knew that I now needed to expand the program to offer a second year drama class (advanced drama) for those students with an interest in continuing their study of the theatre arts. I wanted to add this new class to the existing schedule and knew I had at least twenty students who would want to take the course. This time, the administration was not willing to allow me to add this third class to my schedule. Doing so would mean that they would need to find a part time person to teach the two classes of English that I would no longer be teaching. Despite the obvious student interest and justifiable need to offer a second year course (after all, there were only ten people enrolled in the third year advanced foreign language classes,) I was told that I could either offer two beginning classes or one beginning and one advance class. There was no way around this... “the budget crisis...yadda yadda yadda.” So, I gave in. I filled the beginning drama class with as many students as I could safely squeeze onto the auditorium stage and offered an advanced class for about twenty of my most interested and capable students. However, I knew that this simply wasn't acceptable. I reminded the administration that when I

returned I was promised that I would be allowed to develop the drama program. There was no way I could do this with one beginning and one advanced class. I knew I needed at least two first year classes for the numbers of students to be high enough to successfully feed into a second year class. I was also still teaching two English classes and the amount of time these classes required, in addition to the time that I was trying to devote to the co-curricular drama program, was truly far too overwhelming. I began a series of discussions with the school and district administrators to try to solve this problem.

As this third school year came to an end, a marvelous opportunity was made available to me. The current high school auditorium manager (and choir teacher) was retiring and since I was the most qualified person to take over the auditorium job, I applied for the position and knew that I was the top candidate on a very short list. This position, though primarily co-curricular, came with a much needed prep period during the day to use for setting up and taking down equipment for assemblies, sweeping the stage, vacuuming the house, scheduling events, etc. I knew this meant that I would be released from one more English class if I was hired, so although I knew that there would be significant time required outside of the school day, I also knew that I would have control over the scheduling of the facility. I would have an extra prep period in the day to not only work on auditorium tasks, but also to use as a time to work on building the sets, hanging lights for productions, etc. My plan was to use this “free period” to establish a technical theatre class that I could use as a time for set building and painting and for lighting hanging and focusing. (As I discuss later, this is one the steps you will want to take as you establish your drama program.)

Unfortunately, I was told by the assistant principal in charge of scheduling that if I were to be hired for the auditorium coordinator position, I would have to give up one of my two drama classes to do this. There was no way the district would be able to free me from teaching the three Sophomore English classes they were planning on scheduling me for for the following school year. At this point, I knew I had to take action. I had been as cooperative and generous as I was going to be up until that point. The idea that I would have to “give up” one of the drama classes (despite enormous student interest in the

program) if I were to take over the auditorium job was ludicrous! I arranged a meeting with the school administrators and expressed my disappointment with this decision and asked what solutions might be possible. Initially they didn't believe there were any solutions. My next step was to talk with the school district administration. I arranged a meeting with BOTH the district and high school administrations and discussed the situation. Both administrations "sympathized" with my plight but offered NO viable solutions. They felt the money simply wasn't available to hire someone part time to teach the Sophomore English classes that I would not be teaching if I were to have three drama classes AND the auditorium prep period. At this point, I knew I needed to make my situation public knowledge. I knew I had the student numbers and enough parent and community support to go to battle over this issue.

I met with a parent who had been extremely active with my drama program over the years and we discussed the problem and possible solutions. With her help, we began organizing students (both current and former) who had been involved in the curricular and co-curricular drama program and met with them to discuss the situation. The retiring auditorium coordinator/choir teacher also joined the advocacy group, which had grown to over 100 students and community members. At this point, I removed myself from this process and allowed this advocacy group to plan its strategy. Before doing so, I made sure that this group understood that I wanted to minimize an "us vs. them" attitude and approach the district administration in a calm manner. The last thing I wanted was to ruin the existing support that I had enjoyed from the administration prior to this situation. Before the end of the school year, this group met with the district and high school administrators.

When the administration saw the significant number of students, parents, and community members who passionately supported the theatre arts program at the high school, they decided to "revisit the issue." The administrations contacted me soon after and we met to discuss other possibilities. At this final meeting we discussed ways to allow me to teach the three drama classes AND be the auditorium manager.

First, we decided to move the curricular drama program out of the English department and into the fine arts department. Apparently this move would result in a

“realignment of budget numbers” or something. This move would allow the district to hire a part time English teacher to teach the English classes I would no longer be teaching. Coincidentally, this move out of the English department was something I had been planning since returning to the high school. So, I was allowed to teach three drama classes and become the auditorium manager which further limited my English teaching to one course of Sophomore English.

I never would have been able to convince either administration on my own and I most certainly would never have been able to “recruit” help from parents, students, and staff members if I had not already proven myself as a competent and dedicated theatre arts educator and director. Most importantly, because of the quality of the productions I had directed over the years and the success of the program in the lives of the students who were involved, parents and community members were willing to speak up -- quite passionately, I have been told -- in support of the theatre arts program. (I didn't attend the meetings involving the parents, students, and community members. I felt it would be best not to be a part of this process.)

Beginning to Build Your Program

What do you do if you are currently teaching three or four English classes and one or two drama classes and have been selected or volunteered to direct the co-curricular drama program? My suggestion is to begin building your drama program and establishing the curricular drama program so you can stop teaching English classes. You will need to recruit already over-committed, perhaps even apathetic or indifferent students, to work long hours, on their own time, and on an activity that doesn't get the fame or glory of the sports arena. Clearly the task of establishing and running a theatre program can be a frightening prospect. Here are a few suggestions to get your started. Incidentally, these suggestions are mine, but they are also supported by such noted veteran high school drama directors as David Grote in his book Play Directing in the School and Jeff Bennett in his book Secondary Stages: revitalizing high school theatre:

1. The best way to build your curricular program is to produce quality co-curricular productions.

Do good shows. If students attend quality theatrical productions at your high school, they are more likely to become interested in and decide they want to be a part of this process. If you produce quality productions, you are also more likely to attract quality students to your program. This, my friends, is absolutely essential to your longevity as a theatre arts teacher! (However, begin small first. You need to get your feet wet in the shallow end of the pool before you dive off the diving board! QUALITY does not necessarily mean COMPLEXITY, QUANTITY or SIZE. Don't misunderstand me. I discuss this more in chapter 4 and provide you with a few scripts to consider for your first productions.)

The kind of students you attract to your program will have a significant impact on your success and stamina as a drama teacher. Finding good students whom you can train to be reliable, professional, and responsible cast and crew members is vital to your success and longevity as a drama director. Don't expect this to happen immediately. You may have to work on this for your first few years. Good shows will bring good students just like good sports teams attract more participants the poor teams. To paraphrase a line from the film Field of Dreams, "If you build it, (they) will come!"

2. Begin to coordinate with the middle school teachers in your district to arrange to perform for these students.

You want to begin recruiting students into your drama program and building it from the bottom with the incoming freshmen. You can either invite middle school students to attend a special performance or tour the production to the middle schools. I prefer inviting the middle school teachers to bring interested students to the final dress rehearsal of our productions. I have also arranged school day performances and invited the middle school and high school teachers to bring their students to these performances. If possible, hold question and answer sessions after these student performances so you can have the opportunity to talk with the students about your drama program.

Touring productions to middle schools is a worthwhile activity for your drama students and may be easier to arrange than convincing the middle school principals to

bring their students to the high school. If you decide to tour, I suggest you do the following:

- **Choose comedy over drama.** Middle school students respond much better to comic material when you bring the entertainment to them. Save the more dramatic material for inviting them to your performance space. Touring drama just doesn't work very well.
- **Be sure your students are prepared to be VERY LOUD in terrible locations.** Most middle schools have gymnasium/lunchroom/auditoriums with horrid acoustics. Visit the performance location first and then prep your students for this.

3. Recruit students from your co-curricular productions into the drama classes.

Often your best actors may find it difficult to fit your drama class into their schedules. Work to find the best periods in the school day to offer the drama classes so you don't conflict with large music classes (choir especially,) advance placement English classes, etc. and then aggressively recruit students that you want to work with into your drama classes. If you have an advanced drama class you may want to invite them into this class rather than placing them in your beginning class.

4. Talk with the middle school drama and English teachers about their most promising students and then send these students "invitations" to take the drama classes. You can also do this at your high school.

You can do the same with high school students that you or other teachers believe would be good drama students. Play the role of the college athletic recruiter and contact these students with telephone calls, letters to parents, etc. Obviously you don't want to be too high pressure! Most of the students I have contacted in this manner have been flattered by this attention. I entice about twenty to thirty students in this manner every year.

5. Be a good teacher.

Always be well prepared and organized and have interesting, educational, and fun lessons and activities in all of the classes you teach. If students think you are a good teacher and find the activities of your classes worthwhile, they are more likely to venture

into the drama classroom. One of the best ways to recruit future students into the drama program is to have your current drama students spread the word about the drama classes and the kinds of exciting activities that take place in these classes.

6. Advertise your drama classes.

“Shameless Self Promotion” is my motto! Simply doing plays well is not sufficient. Use the morning announcements, posters, lunchtime improvisational performances, production playbills, etc... to advertise the drama classes and encourage students to sign up for these classes. Find ways to get the word out and utilize current drama students and advocates of your program (teachers, parents, administrators, counselors, etc...) to help you. Work with the TV Broadcasting teacher (if you have one) or a public access filmmaker to make a recruitment video for your program and then search out locations to display this video. Work with current drama students or drama club members to plan an ad campaign for the drama classes. You will attract those students who go to your productions, but you also want to touch those students who may not know they will fall in love with the theatre and being on stage. Establish daytime performances of your curricular and co-curricular productions. Invite teachers to bring their students and hold a post show discussion with the actors about the drama program and the activities of the class. Showcase some of the improvisational activities and exercises you do as part of your curriculum and invite the English classes to come watch and hold a discussion with them about what they see. The possibilities are endless, but whatever you do, you need to try to get your program noticed and pull it down off its pedestal. The theatre is for EVERYONE, not the select few who KNOW they have an interest in and a talent for “acting.” I have included a sample letter I send to those who audition but are not cast in co-curricular productions encouraging them to consider signing up for a drama class to improve their chances of being selected for future productions. (See appendix G)

7. Work with the school and district administrations to allow you to offer more than one drama class.

Prepare presentations advocating the importance of curricular drama courses to the individuals who make the decisions about course offerings and scheduling. Utilize the information in chapter two of this handbook or contact the Educational Theatre Association and other agencies that advocate the arts. If possible, present these administrators with a list of interested drama students who would choose to take drama classes if they were offered. Get the parents involved in this process as well. Parents and community members have significantly more power in these kinds of matters than teachers do. Find several parents who are willing to speak as advocates of your program. Getting administrators to understand the value and importance of a theatre arts program to the students, school, and community is not an easy task. You can't possibly build a strong drama program if you only have one curricular drama class. Two sections of a beginning (1st year) class and one section of an advanced (2nd, 3rd, 4th year) class are needed to establish a good training ground for your co-curricular productions and to allow more students to enroll in this exciting class!

8. HOWEVER, the only way to convince the administration and the school board to allow you to teach more drama classes is to demonstrate a STUDENT INTEREST in these classes.

If you only have 20 to 25 signed up for your only period of drama, you obviously can't expect the administration to buy into your theory that students are demanding and in need of more theatre arts classes. In the beginning, try to convince the administration to offer theatre arts classes during the morning and afternoon to allow as many students who want to take drama to fit it into their schedule and then RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT! You will need to fill these classes to convince the administration that your time and their money is well spent. After all, someone is going to have to be hired to replace the English classes you won't be teaching! You may also want to get interested parents on your side and encourage them to organize and submit their concerns to the administration and the school board. Be sure to follow the proper procedures and chain of command, however. Don't start with complaining to the school board unless you have already spoken with the school and district administrations.

9. Gain control of your performing space.

Every theatre teacher should have access to a large performance space on a regular (daily) basis. Most of the activities you are going to work on with your students, whether improvisational activities, acting exercises, or scene assignments, require a large space. Add to this the time and space needs for the co-curricular productions and it becomes clear that the primary occupant of the performance space should be the theatre arts teacher/director. You need to be able to control the scheduling and use of this facility, whether it is a large auditorium or a small, intimate space. Hopefully you aren't limited by the auditorium/common eating area/multi-purpose space mandated by state legislatures in the 1960's and 1970's. These spaces are horrible, but unfortunately many high school and middle schools built during this time period are stuck with these wretched spaces. If you plan to be at your school for many years and are stuck with this kind of "performance space," consider putting a committee together to discuss plans for including an auditorium in a future capital improvements bond. (Yeah, sure...in all your free time!)

If you can possibly convince the administration to transfer the duties and responsibilities of managing the auditorium to your department, do so, even if this means you will need to be in charge of auditorium use outside of the school day. If this is the case, be sure there is some kind of stipend attached to this job. If there is frequent use of the auditorium during the school day by student body groups, classes (special lectures, presentations, etc.,) and other schools within the district, you will want to discuss the feasibility of an extra prep period during the day to help with set up, take down, clean up, general maintenance, and scheduling of this space. Obviously justifying this cost to the district will depend on the frequency of the use of the auditorium.

Your drama classes should have first priority in using this space during the scheduled periods; however, you will need to be somewhat flexible in allowing other groups to request to use the space in advance. I try to limit as much "non essential" use by other groups as possible during the drama periods. You will also want to shut down the use of the auditorium stage to other groups at least **THREE WEEKS** before opening a new play production. In an ideal world, you would have complete and total access to this space for the entire play production process. This is almost unheard of. Most high schools

simply can't afford to build and devote one space solely to the theatre department. However, if you are going to have the time you will need to build the sets and hang and focus the lights and be able to rehearse with these technical elements of the production, you are going to need at least three weeks with NO ONE ELSE using the stage. You can be as flexible as you want during the weeks of regular rehearsal, but once you have all of the props and set pieces and have begun run-throughs and technical rehearsals, the space should be SOLELY the drama department's. This may require some negotiation with the music department, but you will want to emphasize your needs when talking with the other departments who use the space. Most of these teachers, like most of the non-theatre people in the country, have no idea just how much time a production takes and how much time is needed for coordinating the building and use of the sets for a production, especially a musical. This is especially true of most administrators. They think that a play production is slightly more complicated than an assembly or talent show. They may not be able to understand why you can't set up on the morning before the show, just like the pep assembly! So what do you do?

If the music department refuses to negotiate and move their concert schedule to work around the technical needs of your productions, the first thing you should do is stop doing musicals. Unless you plan to do The Fantasticks, Godspell, or You're a Good Man Charlie Brown every year, you are going to need to do musical productions that require set pieces that must be constructed and shifted on and off stage. This takes time and space. Even a unit set for a production of The Curious Savage or Arsenic and Old Lace requires time to build and work with on stage. The bottom line? Try to work with the other departments that need to use the facility, but be firm about this. Unless you put your foot down and are adamant about the needs of your program and refuse to give up control and regular use of your performance facility, you are going to create more headaches and problems than you want to address.

Many administrators are former coaches and will gladly support anything athletic. They are less likely to support things artistic. This is the unfortunate reality of American education. We can fight this, but we really need to pick our battles carefully. The last situation you want to create is an "Us" (arts) versus "Them" (the "jockocracy.") We

simply need to find a way to deal with it. Regardless, you will want to find ways to work with those in positions of power to convince them of the need and value of more drama classes in the school schedule. The drama classroom is the best place to train your actors and to generate interest in and enthusiasm for the theatre arts. Although some of the best teaching takes place in our co-curricular productions, there is no substitute for concentrated study in the classroom during the school day.

10. Do productions OUTSIDE OF CLASS.

It is tempting, especially if you are not paid very much (or at all!) for the time you spend outside of the school day directing production, to use curriculum time to direct your play productions. My advice? Don't. No matter how much you are tempted to do so. I have a few colleagues who swear that this is the "only way to go" and wouldn't return to the co-curricular method of play production. The most common result of this kind of system is that it closes down the program and limits the number and quality of students who want to be involved in the productions. The only people who can be involved in the production are those who can fit your class into their schedules. My experience has been that many of the best student actors are also your brightest and most involved students in the school community. Not always, obviously, but almost every production I have directed has involved several National Merit Scholars and advanced placements students who have a talent for acting and/or stage management and simply can't fit a drama class into their already packed academic classes. Think about it. Many colleges, especially those colleges that these kinds of students apply to, require four years of science, math, English, and credits in foreign languages, government, and more. Many of these students are also involved in the music department and the last thing you want to do is create animosity between the music and drama departments by pressuring these students to drop out of choir or band to take the drama class. As a director, you are limited to casting only those students in the class.

There is also a completely different atmosphere during the school day than after school. I have directed several small one act plays in my advanced drama classes over the years and have been pleased with these productions, but I would never rehearse a big production in class for the public. The commitment and professionalism of the students in

the co-curricular productions is always higher than that of the students in the drama classes, even the “advanced class.” There is something about being involved in a production after school that is “special.” I can’t really define what it is, but it exists. Finally, how can you justify to yourself that spending an entire semester on a production is a worthwhile activity for the students who inevitably have one line in the play or are just observers in a crowd scene. Yes, we know there is value in this kind of contribution to a production, but how do you justify this to the student, the student’s parents, or to the administration? Good luck. I strongly urge you to avoid this kind of production. Do small one act and scene performances in these classes and perform for the public if you want, but don’t do large productions. The bottom line? You want to include as many talented students as you can in the production program, not limit it to only those who can make room in their schedules for the drama class. Remember, when you rehearse during the school day you inevitably run into surprise assemblies, school-wide assessment tests, and many more distractions that can cut into rehearsal time. After school day rehearsals don’t have these kinds of conflicts.

11. Establish a technical theatre class.

Finding time to build and paint the sets for productions while at the same time directing the production for two to three hours a day is almost impossible. The weekends become the only time available to accomplish these tasks. If you can find a way to teach a technical theatre class, you can move at least some of your technical work to class time rather than on the weekends or in the evenings. You may also be able to teach one fewer English class. Finally, you will have a reliable work source and at least some time to complete the technical requirements of the production. In a time of budget cuts and fewer electives, getting the administration to agree to offer this kind of a course may not be easy. I have tried to convince my administration to offer it for several years and have had to resort to using the “auditorium prep/cleaning period” as my technical theatre class. I only take a few students into the class and we use the time to clean the auditorium and work on the sets for upcoming productions. However, there are instructors that have managed to get a technical theatre class offered in the curriculum and have to turn away students because of its popularity.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEY! LET'S PUT ON A PLAY!

So, now we come to one of your most important decisions: WHAT TO PRODUCE! First, before you begin to even consider what production you want to direct, you absolutely must find out whom you have as potential cast members. You absolutely must...

Know Thyself and Thy Students!

Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the actors with whom you will be working is essential to producing a successful production.

In the article "Start With Casting" in the Winter 1997 issue of Teaching Theatre, longtime directors Barbara Carlisle and Don Drapeau discuss the importance of getting to know your actors before you cast them in a production:

To be sure, there is no substitute for knowing performers, for having worked with them or seen their work, or both. All actors have their quirks and their ways of being on stage. It is part of what they bring to the art.

The better each actor is known, the more likely that the production can be strengthened rather than weakened by their idiosyncrasies. (10)

Therefore, it is vital that the drama teacher/director learn as much as she can about the group of people who have gathered together and shown an interest in participating in this activity. Only when the director has evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of his students should he select the material he wants to produce and the cast he wants to work with to produce it.

Here are several suggestions to help you ascertain the abilities of your students BEFORE you select your production and hold auditions. Even if this means pushing your production dates later than you or the administration would prefer, or postponing the production until the winter, assessing the strengths of your potential cast members should occur before you select a production. Even if you select a small cast musical like The Fantasticks, you need to make sure you have a young man capable of singing and acting the role of "El Gallo" and a young woman with the right naiveté who is capable of

singing the demanding vocal part of "Luisa." Sure, you can gamble and wait until auditions to see if you have the actors for the show, but why!?

If you teach drama classes I suggest you avoid just using your classes as the method of assessing the strengths of your students. Unfortunately you will find that relatively few of your classroom drama students will actually end up auditioning for your co-curricular productions. Because of work schedules, sports conflicts, and a host of other problems, some of your most promising classroom students will not be able to audition for your productions. Unless you are willing to accommodate your students' schedules and/or use them in a limited capacity, you are better off not casting a student who cannot make a regular commitment to attend your rehearsals. So, I urge you to advertise your workshops in your classes and encourage your students to attend, but don't rely on these students to audition. Some will, most won't. But that's ok. You will find that many of your best potential actors aren't in your drama classes anyway.

These workshops will also enable you to see which of the students are serious about auditioning for your production. Make a note of who attends these workshops and their ability not only to grasp the concepts taught in these workshops but their ability and willingness to work with others (especially those who aren't their friends). You also want to pass around a sign up sheet to keep track of those students who attend, note who arrives late (especially more than once!), and make notes about the strengths and weaknesses of the students' acting techniques, spontaneity, knowledge of acting, improvisation skills, willingness to take risks, ability to take direction, etc....

These workshops (over the course of two weeks) can tell you a great deal about your students, particularly those you don't know. You can recruit students into your drama classes and begin to build a successful program by offering these workshops. Be sure to advertise these workshops well in advance (memos to club members, school announcements, announcements in drama and choir classes, etc....) and schedule them on specific days (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday over two weeks). Although it is preferable that the same students attend all of the workshops since the activities are sequential and build upon one another, this is not necessary.

How to Get to Know the Actors

Schedule and over-advertise a series of sixty to ninety minute after school workshops over the course of two or three weeks. Advertise these in the drama classroom, over the school's public address system, with fliers and poster in teachers' boxes, in the vocal music classroom, and anywhere else you can think of.

1. A Minimum of two or three theatre game/ improvisation workshops
2. At least two or three acting workshops on the following topics:
 - Analyzing and playing the given circumstances
 - Playing intentions
 - Exploring the subtext
3. At least one audition workshop that addresses methods of preparing for an audition. Be sure to involve the music director and choreographer if possible.

Improvisation Workshops #1-#3

The activities for these workshops come from a variety of resources. Many excellent resources exist (see annotated list of suggested books.) Perhaps one of the best is Lynda Belt's Improvisation Through TheatreSports. Many of her ideas are based on Keith Johnstone's work with theatresports in Canada in the 1970's which in turn is based on Viola Spolin's work with improvisation to teach acting skills at Northwestern University in the 1960's. The internet is another excellent source for theatre games and improv ideas. I have used all of these activities in either my drama classes or my productions and am confident you will find them helpful in assessing your students strengths and weaknesses. Obviously the activities included in these workshops are also activities to use in your curricular classes as well. Use them as you wish. I have included MORE activities for each day than you will probably have time for, but it is always better to over-plan than under-plan!

GOALS of the improvisation workshops:

1. Develop **student trust** in one another in order to work together and be willing to take risks. *This is essential to establishing a future ensemble.*

2. Identify students who are not willing to trust others, whom others don't trust, and who have difficulty participating willingly or effectively in these activities.
3. Identify actors who are uninhibited in their movements on stage and identify those who do and do not move freely in response to a variety of stimuli.
4. Identify actors who lack spontaneity and have trouble thinking quickly, concentrating, and accepting their partners' ideas.
5. Teach these skills and assess which actors show natural talent for and/or display growth in these basic acting skills.

Although you may not be able to progress through *each* of these activities (the more students who attend, the less likely you are to progress quickly through some of the exercises) I have included several to pick and choose from over the course of three workshops. The activities listed for each day assume that you will be holding a ninety minute workshop with twenty-five students, although you are likely to have many more students attend. The ideal number is twenty students. Day two and Day three activities are sequential and build upon skills taught previously in earlier workshops. Although you really can't teach a great deal of improvisational skill building in these workshops, you can evaluate your students' willingness to take risks, ability to support their peers, and much more that you will want to know about potential cast members.

Day One: Introduction to Improvisation

This workshop should be an introduction to some of the basics of improvisation (quick thinking, risk taking, spontaneity, ensemble building, trust, etc....) Story building and scene structure can wait until workshops two and three.

Ice Breakers and Warm Ups:

These are *absolutely crucial* to helping form a cohesive, supportive ensemble. Although you cannot force someone to trust someone else, you can and must set up an environment where the students will feel safe to take risks and be supported in their risk-taking. Performing is frightening. All acting is taking risks and in improvisation this is a built-in requirement. For some students, clucking like a chicken around the stage or

entering a scene in Freeze Tag is easy and requires a low level of risk. For others, this act is extremely risky. They must feel safe to take a risk. You need to insist on this from the beginning of the workshop and forbid put downs of ANY KIND, subtle or not. All it takes is one tolerated attack, even in jest, to stifle creativity and inhibit the students. So, here are some suggestions for beginning to build group cohesion. I suggest you begin with a few low risk level activities.

#1. Name game (name and action): 5 - 10 minutes

- Standing in a circle, each student, one at a time, takes one step into the circle and says his/her name and then does some kind of motion (hand wave, flapping arms like a bird, doing a dance step, etc...)
- Then the entire group repeats the person's name (with energy!!) and does the exact same motion (with commitment!!). You then go to the next person in the circle and repeat until all have said their names and done their motions. Try to encourage the students not to preplan their movements but to select their movement just as they are entering the circle.
- I often repeat this one more time around the circle. Be sure you can hear their introductions. If they are struggling to be heard in this exercise, you know you are going to have trouble working with them on projecting past the third row of the audience.
- During the exercise, sidecoach to encourage students to commit to their actions and vocalizations. They should be participating with energy and enthusiasm. If they aren't, be patient with them but make a mental note. If their attitude doesn't change during the course of the workshop, you should speak to them privately at the end of the workshop or during a break about their participation. If they are feeling ill, you can take this into consideration. If they tell you they don't like these kinds of "silly activities," I would suggest you accept their response and tell them that they probably don't want to attend the next improv workshop. Negative energy is infectious. No one likes to be paired up with someone who doesn't want to be there! I wouldn't tell them that they shouldn't audition for the upcoming production, but I would make a note of anyone's inability to participate

effectively in these activities. You probably don't want to cast and work with these actors for the eight to ten weeks of the production process.

#2. Name game: names plus contact (10-15 minutes)

- Students stand in a circle. In this game, each actor goes to anyone in the circle and says "Hello, my name is" And greets them with an original movement greeting. (Such as touching elbows, rubbing noses, rubbing tops of heads, knees, etc...) The second student replies with "Hello, I'm" The person greeted then goes to a new person, greets them with the first greeting movement and adds a new movement and so on, until each member in the circle has greeted and done the movement before him and added a new one.
- A high degree of concentration is required to remember the movements and students discover afterwards that they also remember each other's names very well. Caution students not to do movements that no one else can do. The idea is to work together, not try to end the game. A student or two will inevitably do a move that not everyone can or should do (forward head roll, difficult break dancing move, etc...) Be patient, but firm, and ask the student to try something less "superhuman."
- This activity will take some time if you have a large group. You may want to wait and do it when your group size is under thirty.

#3. Freeze / Explosion Tag (The children's game, not the improve scene structure)

Time: 5-10 minutes

- Students play a normal game of tag, EXCEPT, when they are tagged, they must explode in some manner and then freeze. The explosion can be small, large, or fantastic. Encourage students to have fun with the exploding. The student who is it stays it until ALL other players have been exploded and frozen. The students then justify their positions by starting and activity (pantomimed) that their position suggests. In this way, they are freeing their movements and then justifying through movement.
- You may have to break the group in half to play this safely in your theatre space. Play a few times with different people being "it."

- Alternate versions of “tag” include the standard game of tag, where the person who is tagged becomes it (after exploding, saying a predetermined phrase, etc....)
- The purpose is to encourage the actors to “play” with one another, to give themselves permission to play and look foolish in front of others.

#4. Ball Game: #1 (5 minutes)

- Students stand in a large circle
- Discuss and model briefly how to create the illusion of an objects shape, weight, mass, texture, etc...
- Gently toss a tennis ball in the air and catch it.
- Begin to toss the tennis ball around the group.
- Sidecoach to maintain the size, shape, weight of the ball and to toss it gently, but quickly from one person to the next around the circle
- Begin to change the weight and shape of the ball to the following: basketball, fragile glass ball, football, soccer ball, beach ball, small medicine ball (heavy exercise ball,) balloon, marble, 4 foot wide balloon, three hundred pound round medicine ball (teamwork is needed as they throw this around the circle), hot potato, etc....
- Insist that students maintain the illusion of these balls. They should say yes to the sidecoached changes and work together to keep the ball moving. Don't allow them to be cute, funny, or to “act” and “drop” the glass ball. They need to work as a team and keep the object moving. The ability to work as a team is absolutely vital to a successful production. Be firm, but fair as you guide those who seem to want to make others laugh by being crushed by the ball. Emphasize the purpose of this exercise...teamwork. Keep the ball moving.

#5. Ball Game #2: (5 minutes)

- Same as above, but add a second and third ball. See how long you can keep this going. It is very challenging and requires a great deal of concentration. It can be done!
- Create your own versions of this game.

#6. Sound Ball: (5-10 minutes)

- A terrific, spontaneous, quick moving game that combines throwing an imaginary tennis ball around the circle with making a sound as you throw the ball. B. Players catch the sound that is thrown to them and then make a new sound that they throw to someone else.
- Sidecoach to encourage quick thinking and speed. Encourage actors not to preplan a sound, but to throw the first sound that occurs to them as they catch someone else's sound. The ball needs to keep going around the circle as quickly as possible.
- Encourage the players to make eye contact and to throw the ball and sound clearly to another player. If the thrower is unclear, two people (or more) will try to catch the sound. If this happens, encourage someone to take the initiative to catch the sound, make a new sound, and toss it to the person who tried to catch the ball with them. This ensures that you can continue to keep the sound moving around the circle.
- Variations include two part sound ball where each actor must elongate the
- sounds thrown or throw two different sounds (i.e. "grrrrrrrrrahhhhh," or "whoopwhoopwhoopshhhhhhhh")
- Be prepared for lots of laughing during this exercise. I allow the laughter to occur when we begin to play this for the first time, but you will want to encourage the actors to get past their self-consciousness and to work on speed and energy as they move the sounds around the group.
- Tell your students to SAY YES to the sound that comes their way and to repeat it or at least TRY to repeat it. This should be a challenge for the group to see how many sounds they can continue to quickly throw around the circle, not a test to see who can make what sounds. Keep the atmosphere supportive and encourage the actors to work together.

#7. Sound and Movement: (Time: 5-10 minutes)

- The group stands in a LARGE circle on the stage.
- One actor begins doing a movement and making a sound or pattern of sounds

- as she moves across the stage. For example, one actor begins by hopping across the stage and making frog sounds (“ribbit”) or doing a hip shake across the stage and making some kind of sound...these do not have to be mimicked animal sounds or sounds and movements that make any sense at all!
- The first actor to begin the exercise makes this sound and movement all the way across the stage from one side to another. She then “tags” another actor who will continue the previous actor’s movement and sound into the circle, however, this new actor will only continue the previously established movement and sound until she gets to the **center** of the circle. Once she reaches the center of the circle, she will make a new sound and movement and continue this new sound and movement to another part of the circle to tag another actor. And so on.....
- I usually let one actor begin this exercise, but I will call out other actor’s names or tap additional actors to enter the circle and perform their own sound and movements so that we soon have a circle full of people doing sounds and movements. It is not uncommon to have ten people moving around in the circle doing different sounds and movements. This challenges the actors to concentrate and to observe everyone carefully.
- This is an excellent ice breaker, although it is a little riskier than sound ball or the previous exercises. My students love this one and I learn a great deal about them as risk takers, quick thinkers, etc....

Ensemble Building Activities

#1. Animals (5 minutes)

- Form the group into a large circle. Pull the stage curtain if possible so you can create a safe area where the actors won’t fall off the stage. Have the group close their eyes and raise one hand.
- Walk around the group and identify all of the **sheep** by tapping them on the head or putting their hands down. Identify five to six people to be sheep.
- Continue this process by walking around the group and randomly identifying 5-6 people to be five to six different animals that have distinct sounds (“rabbits” don’t make good animals for this game!).

- When you have identified all of the animals by tapping them, instruct them to mill about the space with their eyes closed trying to find all of the other sheep, chickens, etc....When they find their barnyard friends they need to link up somehow(grabbing hands, arms linked, etc...)
- When each group has found their barnyard friends, have them open their eyes.
- A simple exercise that helps build trust and develop ensemble.

#2. Machines (10-15 minutes)

- This is a common improv activity with many varieties
- Have the class form a large circle.
- The first actor enters the circle and creates a “machine-like” movement and a sound.
- Once the sound and movement has been established, a second actor enters and ADDS TO the established sound and movement with his own sound and movement.
- The second actor should connect with, touch, and somehow interact with the first actor to create a machine like movement.
- And so on until you involve as few or as many actors as you want.
- You can also sidecoach after a machine has been established and have the actors respond to your sidecoaching by changing the machine. This should be done immediately by the actors. Once the machine has been established, I yell “freeze” and the actors must freeze their machines. I then give them commands like... “machine of gas,” “machine of ice,” “well oiled machine,” “sand is poured in the oil,” “half that speed,” “twice that fast,” etc... to see how well the actors are able to work together to change their machines. They don’t re-form their machines. They need to alter their movements and sounds to fit the sidecoached changes.
- Repeat and play with all participants.
- Keep the groups to six to ten and then end by doing one final HUGE machine that involves the whole group.

#3. Portraits (10 minutes)

- Break the group into new groups of five to six.

- Spread the groups out around the stage and have them form a “firing line” facing away from the center of the stage.
- Each group plays at the same time.
- Group members may not communicate verbally or “direct” one another physically.
- One at a time, an actor turns around and takes a pose in each group. Any pose or position is fine.
- The next person turns and assumes any position or pose with one rule. He must be touching the other person somehow. The third adds to the portrait, the fourth, and so on...
- After all actors have formed a “portrait,” the leader sidecoaches to change the portrait. The coach can clap his or her hands and the portrait moves until the coach says freeze. Each member **MUST TOUCH** another person in the group. This contact can be with feet, hands, heads, elbows, etc....
- Sidecoaching hints:
 - Don’t give them a lot of time to assume new positions. I usually allow about 5 seconds of time and I count down from 5. By “1” they are frozen again in a new portrait.
 - Encourage them to play with levels, planes, contrasts, filling negative spaces, making big changes sometimes and small changes others
 - You can direct their portraits by instructing them which body parts to connect with before you count down (“touch only hands,” “only feet,” “touch backs,” “touch knees,” “only faces,” “something else besides a foot needs to touch the floor,” etc....

#4. Portraits #2 (10-15 minutes)

- Same process as Portraits #1, except after the first group pose and “hooking up,” the coach provides a portrait of something for the group to spontaneously create (without talking!!).

- You might also want to play this with individual groups of 5 with the rest of the group as an audience. You can have each group create 5 or 6 different portraits before you go on to the next group.
- Coach calls out occupations, objects, emotions, environments, situations, etc.... and the group spontaneously creates a portrait of the coaches command.
- The coach should have a list of portraits to call out prior to the workshop. You can also improvise and come up with new portrait ideas on the spot, but it always wise to be prepared! Here are some suggested possibilities to start with...
 - Christmas morning
 - Finishing line
 - Rock concert
 - Classical concert
 - Cafeteria food fight
 - Tug of war
 - Game show
 - The winning football team's locker room
 - The losing football team's locker room
 - Hell
 - Heaven
 - Dark, spooky forest
 - The gorilla cage at the zoo
 - Circus
 - Jungle
 - Dentist
 - Car mechanic
 - Kindergarten class
 - Kindergarten class after too much sugar
 - Hate
 - Love
 - Longing

- Lust
 - Pity
 - Anger
 - Envy
 - The deliver room in the hospital
 - New baby through the hospital window
 - ETC.....
- This exercise is a great way to get your actors to react immediately and spontaneously. They also must get comfortable with one another as they are forced to “touch” their fellow actors. The energy in this exercise is dynamic and wonderful portraits are created through this improvisation. Students love this exercise.
 - You get a real feel for actors who are willing and able to risk touching another person, who can think quickly, who are leaders, who are not...

After this first day you should have a good idea of who some of your potential actors are. Make notes of the students’ abilities to think quickly, move naturally, react spontaneously, work together efficiently, and interact uninhibitedly with one another and to your sidecoaching. The work you do in this workshop will lay the groundwork for the workshops to follow.

Day Two: Pantomime and Improvisation

Ice Breakers and Warm Ups:

#1. Name Game in large circle (5-10 minutes -- see Day One)

#2. Physical stretches (5-10 minutes)

- Of all the “warm up” activities you will do with the students, physical and vocal warm ups will illicit the most negative responses. Students don’t seem to understand the need and importance of stretching, limbering, and strengthening the body and voice. They refuse to see a link between stretching and acting. Moreover, they seem to feel self-conscious doing these simple activities and therefore feel the need to talk, mug and be funny, etc... to cover for their discomfort. Be firm. Begin by briefly comparing this work to the work an athlete

must do (like a gymnast, baseball player, etc... to prepare to “perform” at their highest level. Stretching is the first step to feeling energized, alert, relaxed and ready for action! I tell the students that this is quiet time for them to concentrate on what they are doing, how they are feeling, etc... Therefore, they may not talk or visit with their neighbors. They must concentrate and can’t do this if they are “visiting.”

- Take the actors through a variety of stretches, working the muscles of the neck, shoulders, arms, chest, the spine, hips, and legs. If you are unsure of proper stretching techniques and exercises be sure to refer to a text to review these. You want to make sure you help, not hinder your actors!
- General reminders about stretching
 - Remind the actors to breathe as they are stretching. They need to get oxygen to their muscles.
 - You need to have them hold each stretch for at least 15 seconds.
 - Don’t “bounce” as you stretch. The objective is to stretch out the muscles and warm them up. If the actors bounce, they will expand and contract the muscles over the course of 15 seconds and this is damaging and counter productive.
 - The actors must concentrate on themselves and stretch silently. This is not a “social” exercise. Let them know that the purpose is not only to warm the body up, but to begin to focus the mind and spirit and to get in touch with their bodies and how they are feeling....where they have tensions that need to be relaxed, what is causing them pain, where they need to work on stretching, etc....
 - This is not a competition to see who can stretch the farthest. Each actor will have differing abilities. The challenge is for the actor to begin to develop increased flexibility through a continual stretching program.

#3. Bunny, Bunny, Bunny (5 minutes)

- Actors stand in a circle
- Coach stands in the center and points at individuals in the circle

- When an actor is pointed at, he puts his hands up and makes little bunny paws and says quickly “bunny, bunny, bunny.”
- The actors on the left and right of the actor pointed at make bunny ears by moving their hands up and down to make big, floppy bunny ears on the actor in the center. They say “bunny, bunny, bunny” quickly.
- The leader moves quickly from one person to another challenging the group to think quickly. If the leader points at an actor and he does the wrong movement, doesn’t do a movement, or takes too long to do a movement, he is out and must move out of the circle. The actors must also avoid laughing. The only vocal response when pointed at should be to say “bunny bunny bunny” with ENERGY! If you cannot hear the actors or they are not very energetic, they would be “out.”
- You may choose not to play as an elimination game, but it helps to challenge the actors so they are pushed to respond quickly and spontaneously and to take a risk.
- When the students get good at this game, you can also make it more difficult by trying to make them laugh and if they do, they are “out.”

#4. Zip-Zap-Zup (5-10 minutes)

- Actors stand in a circle. You may want to break the group down into two circle if you have more than 20 actors. The larger the group, the harder it is to tell who is pointing at whom. Be sure to illustrate the game in a large circle first, however!
- One actor begins by saying “ZIP” and quickly clapping his hands and then pointing at someone else in the circle. This clapping and pointing should be one quick motion. The ending position of the arms resembles the position of the arms as you pull back an arrow to fire it, except the fingers of the hand pointing are extended.
- The person pointed at claps his hands and then quickly points at someone else in the circle and says “ZAP.”
- The person who is “zapped” claps his hand and points at someone else in the circle and says “ZUP.”
- The person who is “zupped” claps his hand and points at someone else in the circle and says “ZIP” and the whole process starts again.

- An actor is out if they say the wrong thing (zip when they should zap), don't say anything, pause too long, are too quiet to be heard, are inarticulate or sloppy with articulation, etc.... They step out of the circle and watch the rest of the actors "play."
- This is a fun game that is a low risk, quick thinking, quick responding exercise that demands that the actor stay in the moment since you can't plan ahead and determine what you are going to say next.

Ensemble Building Activities

#5. Milling and Seething exercise (10-15 minutes)

- Actors spread out around the space
- Instruct them that they are about to be walking around the stage. They must negotiate the stage space and respect the space of everyone else as they are moving around. They also **MUST** listen carefully to your instructions since you will be side coaching and changing the speed and kind of movement they will be doing.
- This is a **SILENT** activity. The only sound you should hear is the sound of their bodies moving through the space. Remind students of this if you need to as you progress through the activity. If a student or students refuse to follow this basic requirement, tell them they may sit out of the activity. If one student thinks it is acceptable to talk or giggle, more are bound to follow.
- Begin by having the students simply walk around the space at a normal speed. Encourage them to vary their movement patterns and to walk away from their friends. Once the movement is established, begin to coach them through the following patterns and movements.
 - Walk twice this speed
 - Walk twice this speed (remind them that they are **WALKING** and that they must learn to negotiate the space so they do not walk into someone else.)
 - Walk twice this speed
 - Half this speed

- Half this speed
- Half this speed (continue the command until they are moving in slow motion.)
- Freeze! (encourage them to freeze EVERYTHING but their breathing...even freeze their eyes!) Walk amongst them and see if they are doing this!
- Return to normal pace
- Walk only in vertical lines across the stage (30 seconds)
- Walk only in horizontal lines
- Walk only in diagonal lines
- Walk only in curved lines
- Twice this speed
- Twice this speed
- Twice this speed. Encourage them to keep up this pace but to negotiate the space to keep everyone safe.
- Half this speed (Etc...) to return them to a normal pace.
- They are now going to walk by leading with various body parts.
Encourage the students to explore how it feels to walk with different parts of their bodies leading and controlling their movements. As they walk you can ask them (rhetorically) what kind of character might walk like this. Have them explore the way this feels. You can also vary the speed at which they walk with these body parts to explore how the tempo effects the characterization.
 - Walk leading with their chins
 - Leading with chest
 - FREEZE!
 - Leading with stomach
 - Leading with hips
 - Leading with forehead
 - FREEZE!

- Leading with nose
 - Leading with feet
 - Leading with knees
 - FREEZE!
 - Leading with their butts
 - Leading with their hands
 - FREEZE!
- Return to normal pace and “normal” walk
 - Have them make eye contact with everyone they walk near to
 - Have them avoid eye contact with everyone, but they may not look at the floor or the ceiling
 - Have them walk up to, look at, and shake hands with as many people as they can in 15 seconds. They may not speak however!
 - Have them walk up to, look at, and exchange new ways of greeting others with as many people as they can in 45 seconds (patting heads, rubbing elbows, touching forehead to forehead, etc...)
 - Return to normal walk.....
 - Without talking, immediately form groups of no more than 6, no less than 5!
 - In these groups, form the letter Y....P....the number 7, etc....
 - Form different groups of 6 to 7
 - Form the letter R....S....T.....
 - Form 6 groups of 5!
 - Across the stage, from stage right to stage left, spell out DRAMA (without talking)
 - End the exercise by having them form themselves into a LARGE circle. This way you can easily have a discussion with them.
 - Discuss the exercise. What was the purpose? What were some of the skills we were working on? How do these skills relate to acting? Etc....

- This can last as long as you wish. You can also have them begin to greet one another vocally (in English by introducing themselves to one another or in “gibberish” in which they must make up a way of greeting someone in a made up language). You can also have them walk moving in different ways in response to your coaching (“like a monkey (no noise!!!)”, “like an elephant,” “like a baby just learning to walk,” “like a 90 year old person,” “walk against a “winter wind.” The possibilities are almost limitless!
- This is an excellent lesson in learning to listen to and follow the director’s side-coaching, to concentrate, to explore physical characterization, to take a risk, to explore the stage space and to respect the space of others, to warm up the body and the mind, and much more!

Pantomime Activities

#6. Full-Empty and Awkward Objects (10 minutes)

- Break students into pairs and tell them that, working together, they must fill a container, move it to a new location, empty it, and return to their original location to fill it again. This must be done without talking. You may want to give them specific containers to fill (a wheelbarrow, milk vat, lawn bags, etc....) and walk them through an environment (such as a farm) to complete a set of chores together. Example might include milking a cow into a bucket and pouring into a large milk vat, raking up a pile of leaves and putting them in a wheelbarrow, filling a large, round container with stones and moving them from one location to another, etc....
- Side coach for the actors to make the materials real to themselves. Items don’t suddenly appear in their hands; they must be found somewhere and brought into the scene. They will need your encouragement to concentrate on working together to complete the task, giving and taking focus, working without talking, and maintaining the size, shape, and weight of the objects and containers.
- Encourage them to establish and maintain the size, shape, weight, and texture of the objects they are moving.

- Change partners and have them play again....giving them a specific type of container to fill or allowing them to select and establish this without talking to one another.
- Change partners again. This time you will have the actors carry objects you name off. They need to work together as they did previously to move the following awkward objects. Encourage them to avoid the other groups and to keep from walking through other groups objects!
- Objects to have them move include a heavy, large pumpkin; a box of fragile glass; a box of balloons; a trough of water; a limp dead body; a vat of acid; a large, heavy box of books; a large bucket of cow manure; a cage full of vicious chickens; a two by twelve plank, eight feet long; a large bomb that could explode at the slightest jarring movement, etc....
- In both of these games, require the students to maintain the believability of the exercise and not to “play the joke” and allow the bomb to explode or the vat of acid to fall over and spill onto the actors. Some students (especially your class clowns) will be tempted to do this. Gently, but firmly, guide them towards achieving success with this exercise without allowing them to play to and for their peers. If you allow them to be pecked to death by the chickens without instructing all of the class to experience this, you will have some students “performing” for the others and you don’t want to create this kind of atmosphere. I often build in some kind of instruction or a set of “given circumstances” as I instruct them to move each item that requires them to move the vat of acid without spilling it. For example, I may tell them that they are spies trying to steal this vat of acid and remove it from a top secret lab without anyone hearing them. This usually works!
- Another variation of this exercise is to have new partners try to move a variety of objects without using their hands. You can instruct them to communicate the size, shape, and weight of objects such as rocks of various sizes, a car, a dead body, a table, a pumpkin, an elephant, etc... without using their hands. This is a challenge for the actors because they have to work together and to move the items without using their hands and without talking! Encourage them to keep the size, shape,

and weight consistent and to really COMMITT to moving the objects. They really have to believe in what they are doing and not merely “indicate” that they are moving something by doing it “half-heartedly.”

#7. Entangling Objects (10 minutes)

- Have the students change partners again. One partner will pantomime getting “stuck” or entangled with a large object (fishing line, barbed wire, etc...) or substance (bubble gum is a popular choice, super glue, etc...) This actor needs to clearly communicate what it is he/she is getting entangled in without talking. The other actor must find a way to help get the entangled actor out. I never allow them to find the solution right away.
- I sidecoach them during this process and tell them (as they are working) that the first attempt never works to set the actor free and that they must find another solution. So they try a second attempt. It doesn’t work either. I usually allow them to succeed on their third attempt although sometimes I don’t allow this solution to work, especially if I think the students have begun to predict this. I want them to struggle with and commit to each of their actions. If they believe that the third solution is the solution that **always** works, some of the students might begin to only half-heartedly attempt their first two rescue efforts.
- The actor who becomes entangled must be clear and break the entanglement down into small steps. The rescue must also be broken down into small steps and communicated clearly.
- Switch so that the rescuer becomes the entangled and vice-versa. All the players should be playing at once. However, you can also ask particularly effective partners (or anyone!) to reenact their scenes for the class at the end.
- This is a very good exercise in the importance of team work, the need for strong pantomime skills, committing to their actions, “listening” to and concentrating on your scene partner, and much more.
- Switch partners and play again.

#8. Join in an Environment or “The Essence of WHERE” (15 minutes or longer)

- An actor goes onto the stage and attempts to establish a place or “where” through an activity that clearly establishes a location. Once another actor has determined the environment, he steps on stage and establishes another activity that would take place in this environment as a related character and with a related activity. At this point, I don’t allow any of the actors to interact with one another. This step comes later. At the start of this exercise it is important to have the students focusing on themselves and their activities rather than trying to play a scene and to be aware of what the other actors are doing. NO DIALOGUE is permitted.
- For example, one actor takes an imaginary piece of paper out of an imaginary desk, rolls it into a pantomimed typewriter, and begins striking the keys. If the second actor interprets this business as taking place in an office, she will enter with another physical activity that would take place in this environment. She might begin pantomiming interoffice mail delivery to imaginary desks and employees, or making coffee within an office lunchroom, or reviewing file folders and employee records, etc.... Whatever is chosen should clearly fit into the environment established by the first actor.
- It is helpful to have a list of possible environments to whisper into an actors/volunteers ear if you want to begin this exercise successfully with beginners. Some of the better environments are as follows: church, post office, fire station, grocery store, clothing store, shoe store, circus, greasy spoon diner, fast food restaurant, wood shop, a city park, camp site, airport, etc.... You can also have an actor begin a simple and easily recognizable activity and let the environment build from there with other actors joining in one at a time. Ideas for beginnings:

Flipping pancakes	Playing in an orchestra
Playing in a rock band	Playing in a marching band
Sweeping the floor	Lifting weights
Painting a wall	Fishing
Typing	Looking at scenery and taking pictures

Sawing wood	Mixing a drink
Building a fire	Shoveling snow
Watering plants	Juggling

- Encourage the actors to pantomime the location by using objects and performing actions in that environment. You can also introduce the concepts of “give and take” and “establishing focus” to help them share the stage and to be sure to allow the audience to see each new activity as it is offered in the scene. Also coach the actors to make their movements specific and to commit to the character and the activity. To do this they will need to CONCENTRATE on their activities, to pay attention to detail, and be complete and specific in their movements. Play this several times with new actors/volunteers.
- As students begin to explore this concept, allow them to begin interacting with one another, however, don’t allow them to talk. For example, if a greasy spoon diner has been established as the environment, one of the actors can begin to take food orders from customers, deliver these to the head cook who passes them on to his assistant, who begins to pantomime making the item.
- Caution the actors to refrain from letting the action in any of the scenes devolve into some form of combat. Encourage them to ask themselves, before they enter the scene, “What can I do to help further the scene and contribute to the activities already established.” This is why I don’t allow the actors to interact the first few times they explore this exercise.

By the end of this second workshop, you should have a good idea of some of the strengths and weaknesses of most of the students who have attended these workshops. You will be able to clearly identify those students who easily work with others as well as those who seem to struggle with this idea. You will be able to watch the actors work through a variety of exercises that demonstrate their ability to work well with others, think quickly, listen and take direction, move across the stage, play, be creative, and

much more. Be sure to make notes to yourself of the students and their strengths and weaknesses.

Day Three: Scene Improvisation

Although you really can't teach much about scene improvisation in one 60 to 90 minute workshop, you can learn some preliminary and helpful information about your actors during this time period. In particular, you can begin to evaluate the following skills and talents:

1. The ability to work well with others.
2. The ability to listen to other actors, accept their ideas/offers, and advance the scene with their own ideas/offers.
3. The ability to think quickly and spontaneously, take risks, and trust others.
4. Strong stage presence: confidence, the ability to be heard on stage, vocal energy, etc.
5. Energy, attitude, and sense of fun: students should enjoy being on the stage and exploring the scene possibilities.
6. Understanding how to look for objectives/intentions within a scene.
7. Knowing how to identify and play the given circumstances in a scene.
8. Playing truthfully and honestly.
9. Playing off the actions and reactions of other characters.

This third workshop is just an introduction to scene improvisation. Hopefully you have the same students attending each of these workshops so you can further evaluate the skills of the actors who attended the first two workshops.

I always tell my students that if they struggle with an exercise today, it isn't their fault, but mine. They can blame me when they struggle or feel like they have "failed" with an exercise. This helps to lessen the actors' anxiety and the need to try to be an expert at every exercise the first time they try it! The actors need to be encouraged and supported that mistakes and "failures" are acceptable and expected. I compare acting in improvisational exercises and scenarios to hitting in baseball. The best hitters only get on base thirty percent of the time and it takes them years of practice to get this good! Tell

them to relax! Success is measured in the effort they put forth in the early stages of learning improv, not in how clever, witty, and creative they are. Actually, the more they try to be clever, witty, and creative, the less effective they are as improvisational actors.

Encouraging the students' spontaneity is your goal for the first part of this workshop. You want to encourage uncensored, unplanned, honest reactions and responses for the actors. This doesn't mean that you want to encourage them to be crude and "inappropriate" on purpose; however, if you tell students they can't talk about certain subjects or use certain words then immediately they will begin to censor themselves and their ideas. Give your students as much leeway as you feel comfortable with. I tell my students that although they don't want to censor themselves, they also should avoid trying to shock their peers with how vulgar they can be. Rarely do I have a problem. When I do, I say the phrase "RED FLAG" which I have told my students previously means they have ventured too far beyond the boundaries of good taste and need to "reign in" their impulses.

We as individuals in this society have learned not to be spontaneous. The whole focus of the work we will be doing today is on relearning to say and do the first thing that comes to our minds. The students' imagination and creativity will unfold without their trying if they can learn to be spontaneous. This certainly won't happen in one 90 minute workshop, but you need to lay this groundwork before you can expect students to be effective improvisers and actors. Their ability to react honestly and from the moment will improve in scene work and acting from these exercises. However, you will need to make sure the students feel supported and trust the other actors or they will not feel comfortable in being spontaneous. This is why it is so important for the actors to attend the previous workshops if possible. You absolutely must insist that players not judge other players or say anything derogatory (even if "joking.") It is each player's job to do whatever is necessary to build trust among the group. You should instruct the group that there are no wrong answers and that put downs of any kind are forbidden and unacceptable. If you find this is occurring, do not ignore it! All it takes is one unkind comment to destroy a beginning improviser's confidence and willingness to take risks.

Ice Breakers and Warm Ups:

#1. Warm Up (5 minutes)

- Do some kind of physical and vocal warm up with the actors to begin to get them focused. You may also want to do a quick NAME GAME activity like name and action and a quick thinking, make-a-fool-of-yourself activity like BUNNY BUNNY BUNNY or EXPLOSION TAG. This workshop will be more challenging and involve greater risk taking than the previous workshops so it will be important to try to loosen the actors up and to create a friendly and supportive environment.

#2. Sound Ball (5 minutes or longer)

- (See Day Two)The students stand in a circle and begin by tossing sounds around the circle. They also toss the imaginary “tennis ball” around at the same time. Encourage students to stay focused, stay in the moment, and think quickly. Play “sound ball” for five minutes or so and then begin playing WORD BALL.

#3. Word Ball (5-10 minutes)

- In a circle, one student throws a word to anyone else in the circle by establishing eye contact and tossing the imaginary tennis ball. The person who catches the ball doesn't repeat the word (as in “sound ball”) but responds by throwing a new word to someone else. This word should be the first word that comes into the actors mind through free association. Encourage the actors to stay in the moment and to try to respond to the word that has just been thrown to them, not to the two or three words thrown previously.
- The challenge is to try to freely associate off of the last word thrown that has been thrown to you as quickly as possible. For some students, this task is quite challenging. You will need to encourage the actors to stay focused and to reassure them that they will get better as they gain experience with this exercise. This is true of all of the improvisational activities they will participate in during this workshop. Play this for at least 10 minutes and both you and the students will see the group will get better as they continue to practice this skill!

Improvisation Skills

#3. Firing Line (5-10 minutes)

- This is similar to WORD BALL and is a good follow up or as a warm up.
- Divide the group into groups of 4-5. One person stands in front of the group with the others facing them in a line. The actors in the line take turns throwing words out to the actor in front. This actor responds by saying the first word that comes to her mind. Those in the “firing squad” must continually have a word ready to throw to the actor in front. The firing squad members should not associate off of any of the words being thrown by the other members but should try to throw out as many different words as possible.
- This exercise and the speed at which the firing squad throws the words out at the single player forces the player to think very quickly and to say the first word that comes to mind. Firing line frees the actor’s brain.
- Give each actor 60 to 90 seconds in front of the firing line and then have the actors rotate. Wander around to each group and listen to them play.
- Occasionally a player will only “comment” on the words being thrown at him. For example, a firing squad member will say “Math” and the player will say “sucks.” If the player only occasionally comments, this isn’t a problem. However, if you hear an actor continually comment on the words being fired at him or her, you will want to sidecoach and encourage the player to “associate” rather than “comment on” the word being fired. You might even have to address this problem to the whole group.
- Again, this game should be played very rapidly with the students encouraged to trust themselves and “just respond,” even if the associations don’t seem to make any sense. However, they should not just say any word without trying to associate off of the words being fired at them. Those students that struggle need to be encouraged that they will get better. Tell them they are doing fine. They need to hear praise and encouragement from you and the members of their group. All of these games are a group effort to succeed!

- You may need to remind the group of this and tell them that the goal is to help the players get better at thinking quickly. The goal is NOT to see if you as a firing squad member can trick, confuse, or embarrass the player in front of you. Occasionally you will find an actor who uses this activity to show the other members of the group the size of his vocabulary or his knowledge of vulgarities. Try to catch this and stop it with sidecoaching. You may also want to make this announcement to the whole group before playing.

#4. Two Word Stories (5-10 minutes)

- Divide the group into partners.
- The partners are going to work together to tell a story by alternating two words at a time. For example, one player says “Last night.” The other says “I saw.” The first player says “a monster.” The partner says “eating cookies.” This continues for as long as you wish. I find that 60 to 90 seconds is as much as you want to spend initially. Encourage the actors to think and speak as quickly as possible. The idea isn’t to think about the story, pre-plan it, or develop it beforehand, but to just let it happen.
- Listen for partners directing each other or stopping and revising what they say, etc.... The actors have to learn to support one another by listening to what their partner gives them, accepting this information, and adding to it. The actors should be working energetically, positively, and enthusiastically together.
- Switch partners and play again. You may want to introduce the concept of GAGGING at some point in the playing of this game. Gagging is when a player says something that breaks the reality of the story (or the scene) in order to get a laugh. For example, if the story is talking about a criminal stealing a loaf of bread and the next thing that is suggested is that “he runs into a _____,” an obvious word would be “policeman” or “building.” A person who “gags” would say “wooly mammoth” or “space alien” to be cute, clever, or funny. This offer would break the reality of a potentially effective story and end it making it very difficult for the other player to add to the narrative. Encourage actors to avoid gagging and to simply tell a story as quickly as possible with their partner.

#5. Yes, And (10-15 minutes)

- Saying “yes” and accepting a partner’s offers is absolutely crucial to success in improvisation. A very common problem that beginning actors face is the almost instinctual need to “argue” with their scene partner. They seem to think that conflict between two characters is what is needed in an improv scene, so they enter the scene and begin to block the other partners offers. The following dialogue is not uncommon:

A: Hand me the map

B: I don’t have it

A: Well, find it. We need to find the buried treasure.

B: What buried treasure.

A: The treasure we buried before we were taken away by the pirates.

B: We weren’t taken by pirates! You need to go see a shrink.

A: uhhh..... (unsure of what to say next)

Although much scripted material is based on conflict and conflict is certainly an important element to most scripts, in improvisation this kind of conflict and arguing stops the action. The scene doesn’t go anywhere. When two improvisers are on stage arguing they are preventing the scene from advancing and stopping anything interesting from happening. A possible result of saying yes might develop the following beginning of a story:

A: Hand me the map. The treasure is buried somewhere on this island.

B: (Hands the map) I spilled some mayonnaise on it, but you can still see the “X.” What do you think we’ll find? Gold and silver?

A: Ok....here it is. Three paces from this rock. Here’s the shovel. Dig.

B: I have a better idea. Dynamite. I brought some just in case.

A: What are you going to blow up? We need to dig into the earth to find the treasure chest. Then we can use the dynamite to blow open the lock.

Now dig!

B: OK, OK....So...gold or silver?

A: Plutonium.

B: Cool!

- It is too easy to find ways to disagree with our scene partners. This is why the “YES, AND” game is so important and helpful. The simple rule is to “say yes” and add additional information with “and.” By doing this, two players begin to build a scene without even knowing it. Here is an example:

A: Are you ready to hike up this mountain?

B: No....

(obviously not a good choice, so....)

A: Are you ready to hike up this mountain?

B: Yes....

(better, but insufficient because it makes “A” do all the work.)

A: Are you ready to hike up this mountain?

B: Yes, and I have all of the food. We’ll have a picnic on the top of Mt. Hood!

OR

B: Yes, we can finally shoot some film of the Abominable Snowman and prove that you weren’t crazy after all!

OR

B: Yes, and let’s make sure that this time we use the metal spelunking gear instead of that foam stuff. We don’t want a repeat of last year’s disaster.

A: Yes, a good idea! I have it all right here!

- By saying “yes” the scene has potential and limitless possibilities with each player supplying information. Agreement is the rule that should never be broken. Knowing that your partner will say yes to whatever offer you proffer is freeing, comforting, and can be exhilarating. When you know that whatever offer you make is going to be accepted as though it were the most interesting idea ever offered, you feel safe and are more willing to take risks. Even if the offer is clichéd and not terribly interesting, it should be accepted and advanced. Accepting offers brings the actors together and creates a sense of ensemble.

- So, playing “YES, AND” is quite simple. Working with partners, the actors play “yes, and” by alternating offers, accepting and furthering the scene with all statements beginning with “YES” or “YES, AND...” I sometimes give actors structure the first few times through this exercise. For example, I might say “Prepare for a trip the Hawaii” or “With your brother/sister make breakfast for your parents” or “make plans to overthrow the principal.”
- Play several times with new partners. You can also do this as a “performance activity” with actors playing “yes, and” in front of the rest of the group. You can give them a topic or let them produce one within the scene.
- Another variation is to do this exercise in pairs or as a group of 4-5 in front of the class. However, this time they are a committee or advertising agency and they are working on planning an event (a birthday party, a store’s grand opening, a holiday, a sporting event, a school assembly) or marketing a product (inflatable underwear, edible shoes, levitating popcorn, etc....) They have an idea generation session saying yes to every idea offered by their partners. The actors speak randomly and take the floor by accepting the previous offer with the most enthusiastic “yes, and...” Provide them with a topic or product using audience suggestions or have a list of ideas prepared. It is often helpful to ask the audience for an ordinary product (eyeglasses) with an unusual quality (they can read peoples minds).
- If you want to place more structure on the exercise you can give the group the ordinary product and its unusual quality and then they must come up with the following within 5 minutes:
 - Name for the product
 - Target audience
 - Spokesperson (should be some one famous)
 - Slogan
 - Jingle
 - What does the commercial look like?

- Every idea must be accepted with enthusiasm. You, as the leader, may need to sidecoach to force them to over-accept by shouting to them “YES!” or “ACCEPT!” or “A GREAT IDEA!” after each idea is stated. The more over acceptance, the better! Everything must be accepted and used by the actors! The actors must work together to build the campaign and the scene.
- Monitor the actors to make sure they are really saying yes with energy and enthusiasm. It is possible for actors to accept offers very weakly or sarcastically. This must not be allowed to occur. The goal of this exercise is to give the actors the opportunity to experience having their ideas accepted. Occasionally you will have one student who seems to be driving the scene and providing all of the information. Encourage the group as a whole to create the campaign.

#6. Freeze Tag (15-20 minutes)

- Freeze tag (or “switch” as it is sometimes called) is one of the most common improvisation exercises. Two actors begin a scene by getting a suggestion from the audience of a relationship, outdoor activity, object, occupation, etc.... These actors begin the scene, working to advance it and playing it as physically as possible. After about 30 seconds (no more!) an actor from the group says “FREEZE.”
- The two actors freeze in whatever positions they are in. The actor who said “FREEZE” enters the scene, taps one of the two actors and replaces him taking the exact position, including facial expression, of the actor tagged. The new actor then makes an offer that establishes a completely different activity, environment, and relationship. This new actor should try to establish all of this new information in one sentence. He must also justify why he is in the position he finds himself in at the start of this new scene. His partner must also justify his position as well. For example, if two actors initially were kindergartners playing a game of marbles and were seated on the ground, when the new actor enters, he must offer a different situation. Perhaps the marble game becomes an operating room with the new actor becoming a surgeon and his partner becoming a patient. Most of the

time, the ideas come from the positions the actors are in when an actors yells “freeze.”

- The important concept to remember is that the actors must justify their positions. For instance, if in one scene an actor has his arms over his head and is swinging an ax cutting wood for the fire and the new player changed the environment to a beauty salon, then the player must justify why his arms are over his head and not just drop them. Perhaps the ax becomes a shampoo bottle or hair dryer or big pair of scissors.
- You will need to encourage the players to listen to one another, say yes to their partner’s offers, and keep the scene physical. The scenes do not have to be creative, clever, or inspired. At this point, you want the actors to learn to make clear offers, to accept their partner’s ideas, to deal with these offers, and to keep the scenes active (don’t let them become “talking heads!”) With some students the tendency will be to degenerate into arguments and violence. Don’t allow this to happen. I don’t allow the actors to select physical violence as a way to develop the scenes. Whenever a scene begins to lean in this direction I say “FREEZE” and instruct someone to go in to the scene to change it. If we need to we will have another discussion about the problems and dangers of unrehearsed, un-choreographed stage violence. When violence is started, there is nowhere for the scene to go. Encourage the players to make other choices.
- The scenes should not run very long before they are frozen. Sometimes as little as 5 to 10 seconds is enough. If the group isn’t freezing the actors quickly enough, you will need to encourage them to do so and perhaps freeze the actors yourself until they begin to do this themselves. The players need to be encouraged to try to establish the given circumstances of the scene (WHO, WHAT, WHERE, and WHY) as quickly as possible. It is not uncommon for beginning improvisers to offer weak, wimpy, noncommittal offers that don’t advance the scene. Be patient and encourage the actors to get to the point and to get to the meat of the scene as quickly as possible. After playing for a while, I put a limit on the students. They must establish the given circumstances of the scene within the first 5 to 10

seconds. If they are unable to do this, I freeze them and provide them with clarifying details that help make the scenes more effective.

- This is a difficult exercise, but it is really one of the best exercises to learn the basics of scenic improvisation and acting. The actors really have to listen to one another to advance the scenes. Some students will really struggle with FREEZE TAG claiming that they can't come up with any ideas to start a new scene. You can help them by brainstorming and writing on a whiteboard or newsprint or whatever is handy a list of occupations, environments, relationships, etc.... Then when they are stuck you can refer them to this list. You can also help the actors by quickly providing them with information as they are about to enter the scene, if they don't already have an idea. Oftentimes if an actor will just get into the scene, he will think of an idea on his own. You can also have the group give ideas to the entering actor. The suggestions should be based on the positions the actors are in when they are frozen.
- Once you have begun playing for a while, you can also introduce and discuss the concepts of INTENTION or OBJECTIVE. The scenes are most interesting when the given circumstances are clear AND the actors are actively pursuing something they want to have or are trying to achieve some victory. You will also want to remind the actors to SAY YES and to avoid blocking their partners offers. Whatever is offered must be accepted and dealt with. Remind them to keep the scenes as physically active as they can. Without activity, the incoming actors will have little to work with to get ideas for new scenes.
- MANDATORY FREEZE TAG: A variation of FREEZE TAG that makes sure that all players have an opportunity to participate is to have about 7 to 10 actors line up at the right or left or back of the playing area. 2 players step out and begin a scene with leader or audience suggestions. After about 20 seconds, the leader says FREEZE and the next student in line has to come into the scene, even if they don't have an idea from the positions of the actors in the scene. If you put the players on the stage left and stage right of the playing space, you can have the sides alternate entrances. For an added challenge, you can have the players turn

away from the playing space so they can't watch the scene progress and have to enter the scene when it is their turn without the advantage of knowing what positions the actors in the middle are likely to be in.

#7. Growing and Shrinking Freeze Tag (20 minutes)

- The next step in FREEZE TAG is GROWING AND SHRINKING FREEZE TAG in which you begin with 1 or 2 actors and grow up to 5 to 6. Instead of tagging and replacing an actor, a new player says FREEZE and enters the scene creating a brand new 3 person scene. Once the given circumstances have been established, a 4th person enters says FREEZE and enters the scene creating a brand new scene. Continue this process until 5 or 6 actors have entered the scene. Then the last person onto the stage must play his scene briefly and then motivate a reason for leaving. The players left on the stage freeze momentarily and then they must return to the scene that was established with 5 players. The person who initiated the 5 person scene must then motivate an exit and leave the acting space. Once she has left, the players that are remaining must freeze momentarily and then return to the scene that was established by the 4th actor. This process continues until the original actor or actors are left on stage. They must find a way to quickly end the scene or the leader can simply end the scene for them.
- This variation of FREEZE TAG is challenging because the actors must learn to justify and exit, remember what the scenes are as they go back to them, and learn to give and take the focus of the scene. Once you have 4,5, and 6 actors in the scene, chaos can soon reign! The actors must learn that they can't all talk at once and must learn to share the focus. Learning to share focus is challenging, but can be done effectively with practice.
- The leader will want to encourage the actors to move the scene along quickly. You may need to sidecoach and freeze the actors yourself if the players aren't taking the responsibility of doing this. Only allow each scene about 30 seconds to play before freezing the actors. This makes the actors work harder to advance the scene and to establish the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, and WHY of each scene quickly. A round of GROWING AND SHRINKING with 6 actors shouldn't take

more than 6 minutes or so. When first learning this exercise, the actors may be tentative and hesitant about advancing the scene or freezing the actors. This reluctance will make the completion time longer. Continue to work with and encourage the actors to take the responsibility to freeze their partners and to advance the scenes. The quicker these scenes move and advance, the more fun they are to watch and to participate in.

Obviously this is only a brief introduction to scenic improvisation. You can substitute many other exercises for those that I have included in days 1-3 depending on your goals and interests. You can learn a great deal about your students as potential actors from these exercises. However, you will next want to begin assessing the students' ability to act with a script before you begin selecting a play to produce and certainly before you begin casting this production. Therefore, the next two days of workshops are meant to teach and evaluate your actors' ability to analyze the given circumstances of a script, play their character's intentions, and identify the subtext of their character's lines.

Days Four through Six: Acting with a Script

Given Circumstances and Intentions

Trying to teach your students how to "act" in one or two days may seem ludicrous. At best, you will be able to introduce some of the most important concepts and watch the actors experiment with these concepts. Remember, however, that your primary purpose in conducting these workshops is to find out what kind of actors you will have to work with and to ascertain the skill level of these young people. You will want to give them some direct instruction and "directing" as they work on some of the activities that follow. However, depending on the number of students who attend the workshop, you may only be able to instruct the group as a whole and then determine who your stronger actors are from the students' abilities to apply your suggestions to their scenes as a whole. Try to do these two workshops over two consecutive days.

In these workshops, you will want to cover the following with your actors:

1. What GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES are and why are they so important for an actor to explore and understand.

2. What INTENTIONS are, how to identify them within a scene, and how to play them.
3. What BEATS and TACTICS (or ACTIONS) are, and how to play them.

Before I explain the activities involved in this workshop, an explanation of several key concepts is necessary. What follows is a material for a full hour lecture on “acting.” I suggest you pull at least some of this material for a mini lecture before or mixed in with the activities that follow.

An Acting Primer: Preface to the Activities

Here are some of the concepts I use as the basis of the training I do with my young actors. These are the fundamentals of the Stanislavski method:

1. A play’s (or scene’s) GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES (the who, what, where, when and the history and relationship between the characters) give rise to a character’s NEEDS or what the character WANTS to accomplish in a scene. The actor focuses on the character’s needs and strives to satisfy them through interacting with the other characters within the scene.
2. These NEEDS induce a character to pursue ACTIONS (or TACTICS which are moment to moment active verbs like “to threaten, to plead with, etc...”) to satisfy those NEEDS.
3. The active pursuance of these NEEDS is what produces a character’s EMOTION or FEELINGS. (Getting actors to understand this concept is important. Many young actors believe that acting is “emoting.” This simply isn’t true. You will need to spend time explaining and modeling the difference with them.)
4. Understanding a character’s NEEDS (what a character WANTS), identifying what the other character is doing that prevents your character from satisfying his NEEDS (OBSTACLES) and deciding what TACTICS or ACTIONS your character is going to pursue to meet your objective is absolutely fundamental to an actor successfully performing a role.

There are many ways to approach teaching and learning about “given circumstances.” In a classroom setting over the course of one or two weeks you can teach a one act or full length play and isolate a character to use as an example. However, in this 60-90 minute

workshop, your focus is on trying to impart the information about given circumstances quickly and move on to introducing intention. You want to evaluate the strengths of these actors in as little time as possible.

Intention: The Golden Key To Acting

There are other concepts that are important as well, the “magic if,” “emotional recall,” “sense memory,” and others. But as the director William Ball wrote in A Sense of Direction, there is one “golden key” and “open sesame” to creative acting:

This technique is the systematic and thorough pursuit of the WANTS of the character... Wants. Wants. Wants. Wants are what create drama. Wants are what give like to the character. Wants are what the waking individual is never without... Wants are the very energy of human life and the *System of Wants* is the aspect of character to which the actor gives his relentless and obsessive attention. The actor tracks down the wants...when I succeed in making (the character's) wants my wants, I succeed in the process of acting. The *want* is the golden key. (76)

However, to identify a character's wants, an actor must determine the given circumstances of a play (or scene.) Young actors often don't understand how important it is to understand and play a character's given circumstances. As professor, actor, and director Jon Jory says in his article “What's Going On Here,”

We live in context so it makes sense that we act in context. Let us say you are having a wild argument with your boyfriend, but you are keeping your voice down because you don't want your mother butting in, and you're restraining an impulse to kick him because you're barefoot and your ankle is sprained. Your mother's proximity, your desire to keep her out of the argument, your lack of shoes, and your ankle injury all provide context for the argument. Context not only creates, but modifies behavior. We define context by asking logical questions of the given circumstances...acting is behavior created by our pursuing goals in a way that suits the context in which we find ourselves. (par. 11)

Acting is behavior created by our pursuing goals in a way that suits the context in which we find ourselves. In order to understand how to “play a character,” a young actor must understand what the play requires of her. Like a detective, an actor has to start with the facts of the play before she can determine the character’s super-intention in the play or decide upon the character’s intentions within each scene. Acting is always better (more believable, more interesting, more engaging) when it is *specific*.

Here is a simpler example. Play a love scene on a park bench when it's raining, snowing, sunny, during allergy season. Obviously, the behavior (that is, the “acting”) will be very different depending on the weather and other outdoor factors. Act the same scene in a crowded restaurant or in a motel room or at your parent’s house. It's obvious, but a lot of acting seems never to have considered the circumstances. Jon Jory discusses this problem in his article “What’s Going On Here:”

Acting always seems better when it's specific. Not just an ‘argument,’ but a specific argument between two three-dimensional people in a specific place at a specific time who have a specific background together and are pursuing specific goals as they argue. These specifics are usually drawn from some creative thinking to help you flesh out the given circumstances of the scene. For example: What is the argument about? Have Jennifer and her father had this argument before? What is Jennifer's current relationship with her father? What has each person been doing in the half-hour before the argument started? What room is the argument taking place in? What does Jennifer think is the worst thing that could happen because of the argument? The best thing? (par. 15)

The given circumstances build a world for the characters that the actors can believe in. Once the actors know enough about the circumstances of the scene and find them personally believable, they will find their own knowledge of life allows them to begin to act in a less self-conscious way.

Obviously, many realistic texts are rich with given circumstances that are spelled out in the scripts. Any realistic scene is going to have numerous given circumstances, but

usually one or two will be dominate. However, no play, not matter how realistic is going to provide every possible given circumstance. Actors must learn how to imagine and test out the circumstances that fill in where the script leaves off. To do this, the actor must do his homework.

This work isn't easy and young actors are notoriously lazy! They seem to think that acting should be "natural" and that they shouldn't have to "work at it." Don't accept this from your actors. The finest actors working today know this myth is ludicrous. Just listen to and share with your students interviews with Meryl Streep, James Woods, Kevin Kline, Gene Hackman and other outstanding actors on Bravo channel's Inside the Actor's Studio. Acting (like music, dance, and the visual arts) is a complex craft that must be studied and practiced no matter how innately "talented" the practitioner!

Playing Intention Rather Than Emotion: Doing, not Being

One of the most common mistakes made by young actors is to attempt to act by being rather than doing. Than actor who concentrates upon being drunk, being angry, being happy, being sad, or being afraid is thus certain to fail. Concern yourself just as you do in actual life, with what you would do in each situation, not with what you would be.

When you are angry, your mind is not consumed with being angry. Rather, you are concerned with the cause -- the person or thing that has made you angry -- and you may deal with the cause in any one of a number of ways. You may overlook it. You may seek release from your anger in some act of physical violence. You may forgive. You may plan some revenge. However, you are not saying to yourself, "I must be angry." Your attention is on doing something about the tricycle you have fallen over or about the person who has placed you in an embarrassing situation.

When you are frightened, you do not WANT to be afraid. Your want lies in getting rid of your fear in some way. You may want to escape or to seek comfort from someone. You may want to investigate the source of danger. You may want to turn your attention to something else to calm yourself down.

A state of being is not actable because it provides nothing specific to do. It leaves the actor stuck with a general emotion, leading to stereotyped movements and gestures --

clenching his fists to show he is angry, putting his hand to his forehead to show he is thoughtful, or contorting the muscles of his face to show he is in pain. Ask a student to get up in front of the class and “be sexy” or “be jealous” or “look like you are in love with the other person” or “be angry.” How long can they sustain this emotion or state of being? Not long. They are also likely to feel awkward, self-conscious, and unsure of what to do other than to indicate that they are sexy, jealous, in love or angry.

Burning your hand may be “painful,” but you want to relieve the pain by applying salve, cold water, or some other remedy. When a celebrity is pointed out in a crowd, you may be “curious,” but you want to get in a position from which you can see him better. You may even want to get an autograph. To be in pain or to be curious is not actable. But to relieve pain or to satisfy curiosity is. You can easily carry out the actions of applying a remedy to your burned hand or working your way into a favorable position. Train your actors to think in terms of what they want to or must DO, not in terms of what you want to BE or how they want to FEEL.

A Closer Look at Intention

As an actor, learning to play your intentions is important to acting as breathing and singing in tune are to singing. If a singer doesn’t breathe and sing “in tune” then the music is flat, lifeless, and painful to listen to, even if the singer has a beautiful voice. The same is true in acting. If an actor doesn’t understand what he wants and is fighting for in a scene, the acting becomes mere line recitation, void of meaning, and the actor indicates what is supposed to be happening instead of creating it. This leads to flat, lifeless, uninteresting, and unbelievable acting so common in high school and community theatre. This is also the result of what we consider “over-acting,” “mugging,” and “indicating.”

So, if the golden key to acting is learning to play a character’s intention, how do we go about teaching this skill and assessing how well our students and potential actors/cast members can understand and apply this concept?

First of all, you need to spend some time talking with the actors about the concept of intention. This is why I have included the information above and will further clarify this concept in subsequent paragraphs. Take the time to making sure your actors understand how important this concept is. Reinforce it throughout the production process.

The first question an actor should ask as he/she approaches a role is "What does my character want to do, achieve or accomplish in this play?" The answer to this question is the character's INTENTION for the play. When an actor approaches a role, she should first read the play several times and list all of the possibilities for your character's intentions. She will eventually pick just one, but it helps to brainstorm all the possibilities before settling on the perfect INTENTION to play.

There is a hierarchy of intentions, including large intentions (super-intentions) and small, moment-to-moment intentions (often called "actions" as determined by the beats of the scene). Everything the character does, all her choices and each of her actions is connected to the super-intention of each scene. The actor's knowledge about what the intention is drives all his/her subsequent choices and decisions about the life and action of his/her character. Every time an actor speaks or moves on stage, she must know what she wants to accomplish and how she wants to make the other character or characters feel and do.

To find the character's primary INTENTION for the play, the actor must become a detective, reading and analyzing the play carefully...several times. Obviously, the play is your evidence. In it you will find dialogue, stage directions, setting notes, character's relationship to other characters, what the character says and does, what others say about the character, etc. What does the character want to do throughout the play? What constant force or goal keeps him on the track that leads through all of these steps to the final action of the play? What is his primary INTENTION? But even within the given facts of the text there is still much that is unanswered and that must be determined and interpreted by the actor. This is what makes the performances of two actors playing the same part so different from one another.

Intention is what you are really DOING on the stage at any given moment, regardless of what you are saying (or not saying). When I say doing...I mean doing INSIDE, not whether you are having a glass of champagne or walking to the door. It is your REASON FOR BEING ON THE STAGE. A line reading is not determined by the simple significance of the words alone, but by that plus what you are experiencing and

doing at the moment. Your intention can be quite different from the obvious significance of the dialogue. It can be the same, though often it can be in direct opposition to the line.

For example, we can communicate the same phrase (I love you) a multitude of ways depending on what we want to accomplish with those words -- what our ACTION or INTENTION is. Intentions aren't always right there in the lines. You must consider the situation and your relationships with the other characters. The character moves from one objective to another throughout the course of the script. It is customary for each of the different objectives in a scene to be called BEATS; any given scene is composed of one beat after another. Each character maintains his own independent series of beats, and each beat changes at the moment when the objective, or want, of the character changes.

You always have to express your intention in terms of a verb. You want "to find out something from someone," "to demand something from someone," to "bawl someone out for something." These are all actions that could be played.

As William Ball suggests in his text Sense of Direction, the director/teacher must continually challenge the actor and draw from him the most meaningful and appropriate choice of objectives. The director then needs to persuade the actor to fully and consistently commit to those objectives and what is required to play them. He helps the actor choose an objective and then encourages him to play it with his heart and soul. Much of your work in the blocking and working stages of the rehearsal process is on the relentless and continuous asking of the actor "What is your objective...what are you playing...why are you saying this to him...how do you want to effect him..." This is the only way to draw the actor towards making purposeful movements on stage and motivating everything that is done by the actor.

The better you can determine your students' abilities to take this kind of direction before or during the audition process, the more successful your production can be. Nothing is more frustrating than casting an actor who reads well in auditions and then doesn't grow beyond this reading during rehearsals. Find out how well your actors understand the concept of intention and what your actors can do with it before you cast them! A few more thoughts from William Ball:

The director's job is to persuade the actor away from giving the 'representation' of the experience. The director persuaded the actor to participate in the experience. To put it another way, the director coaxes the actor away from giving a demonstration of the passion and persuades the actor to go into the inner life of the character and actually experience the passion. (82)

Don't let actors play adjectives or have a lengthy discussion with you about the character's feelings. This is their natural tendency and they feel safer working this way. Make them accountable for their actions. They must learn to think **ACTIVELY** not **PASSIVELY**. From unplayable adjectives, the actor must be required to give and play an actable verb -- a playable objective.

Actable Verbs

When determining a character's intention and deciding how to phrase this intention, there are a variety of **VERBS** that you can choose depending on what you want within the scene and how you want to effect the other character. You will want to encourage your actors towards the most **ACTABLE VERBS**. Encourage your actors to avoid behavioral verbs and state of being verbs like *sleep, laugh, sneeze, cry, eat, wait*, etc... Avoid existential verbs and vague verbs like *to be, to exist, to die, to become, to live, to use, to try, to think*, etc. Choose the most **ACTABLE VERBS**. These verbs are energetic, fun activities that an ordinary person can pursue for a period of time. An actor can certainly work hard for a long time to **ENCOURAGE, TEASE, SEDUCE, FRIGHTEN, THREATEN, INTIMIDATE, CHARM**, etc... Encourage your actors to choose active verbs like "to give him hell...to curse him out..." rather than weaker, more intellectualized verbs (to lecture, to inform.)

Often, an actor's choice in verbs may be weak. His choice may be a verb, but one that is not strong enough to throw one's shoulder behind. A very common choice by beginning actors is to choose to "inform," which is always a boring choice. Especially early in the play during the exposition an actor may find that he/she is merely "telling another character about the procedures around here." Not a very interesting objective. For example, I once played the role of Professor Von Helsing in a college production of

Dracula and had to deliver several monologues at the start of the second act. These were filled with information in which Von Helsing explains to the other characters (and to the audience) what evil force is behind the murder and abduction of several of the other characters. During early rehearsals I was playing the intention “to inform” which was not a very strong choice. The director of this production encouraged me to choose a more interesting, playable, and more enjoyable action which eventually became “to frighten the others with this information so they will see a need to act to destroy Dracula.” I upgraded the verb to find a more effective choice to play within the scene.

For example, upgrading INFORM may occur as follows:

INFORM
 EXPLAIN
 OVERWHELM
 CONVINCING
 BOMBARD
 ANNIHILATE
 OBLITERATE

The actor goes from telling another character of the procedures of the house to overwhelming him with the procedures or even bombarding him with the procedures. A definite difference! To help your students formulate ACTIONS it is sometimes helpful to use the verbs GET and MAKE...

“What are you trying to GET from her?”

“What are you trying to MAKE him do/give you/etc.”

“What do you want the other person to do?”

These phrases may be asked beat by beat, scene after scene. They will never wear out. They apply to the beginning, middle and end of a play; to lead characters and extras; to verse and prose; to old and young; etc.

Phrasing the Intention

Finally, as you work with your actors you want them to think about an intention as having three parts:

1. Contains a verb: "I am trying to CONVINCING"

2. Contains a receiver: "I am trying to convince HIM."
3. Contains a desired response: "I am trying to convince him TO GO `WITH ME."

Getting actors to understand that their intentions must be focused on the other characters is important to getting them to focus on interacting with their scene partners and to focus on making active choices to attempt to affect the other characters.

Obstacles

What you want to achieve is called your INTENTION. What stands in the way of achieving your intention is called your OBSTACLE. How a character attempts to overcome this obstacle or adapt to it is called a TACTIC. How often do you get what you want in "real life?" Did you ever run into a problem that prevents you from achieving an important goal? It is important to identify what hurdles you (character) have to climb over to achieve your goal. Identifying them can help you to know what to do, moment to moment to achieve each INTENTION.

Internal and External Obstacles:

Internal obstacles come from inside yourself. There are two major types: PSYCHOLOGICAL and EMOTIONAL obstacles. Often another character can be both a physical obstacle and a psychological one. Stanley in A Streetcar Named Desire is certainly a psychological obstacle for Blanche. She wants to get away with her lies and illusions and he will not let her. A good example of an emotional obstacle is Hamlet's inaction that becomes an obstacle to himself. He lacerates himself with self-loathing and despair, which weaken him into further inaction. Strong emotions can also create obstacles: fear of dying, fear of taking a risk, fear of loss, etc. Internal obstacles are within you and are a part of your own nature. They may be from some part of your habitual nature, patterns of thinking, or some personal limitations. With internal obstacles, the adjustments must be made inside of ourselves, not with outside circumstances or someone else.

External obstacles lie outside ourselves -- they are beyond our immediate control. These can involve other characters, nature, circumstances beyond our control, etc. Laura's (Glass Menagerie) crippled leg is an external/physical obstacle that also creates

an emotional obstacle for her. A feud between two families that prevents you from pursuing love, different religions, opposing social positions, etc. are all examples of external obstacles.

How do you pick the OBSTACLES that your character has to face? First, reread the play, reviewing the INTENTION you had in mind. Next, make a list of people, events, circumstances, and personal handicaps that the character has to overcome in order to achieve her INTENTION. think about all of the outside forces which prevail against the character -- these are the EXTERNAL OBSTACLES. Then locate all of the ways which the personal makeup of the character interferes with what she is trying to accomplish -- these are the INTERNAL OBSTACLES.

For example, analyze a familiar play/character such as ROMEO AND JULIET/Romeo and decide upon his INTENTION (perhaps "to love a girl who will love him unconditionally?") What gets in the way of this INTENTION?

Here are a few possible obstacles:

- an old girlfriend he can't get over
- friends who think he is a lovesick idiot
- parents who disapprove of his new girlfriend
- potential in-laws who hate his guts
- a local civil war partially created by his family
- an incredibly impulsive and passionate nature

You will notice that just about everything that happens in this play either furthers Romeo's INTENTION or presents OBSTACLES to it -- that is Shakespeare's genius and good dramatic structure. A good play makes this whole analytical process much easier!

Day Four: Intentional Acting

Intention Exercises

Below are many different exercises to help teach students several fundamental acting concepts. You will need to select the activities you will want to use depending on the time you have available. You do not need to do each of these. If you prefer to do 3 or 4 and then move on to the "contentless scenes" schedule for day two, that is acceptable.

This really depends on the experience of your students, the time you have available, etc. Not every student needs to participate in every activity.

One of the first exercises to begin with in this workshop will model the difference between “doing” and “being” on stage. One of the biggest problems young actors face when you work with them on stage is *self-consciousness*. Most of us naturally fear standing up and being observed.

EXERCISE #1: (This is an exercise from Acting One by Robert Cohen. There is also a similar exercise described by Viola Spolin in her Improvisation for the Theatre text.)

Bring several students up in front of the group. Instruct them to do the following actions in order. Allow about thirty seconds for each “command.”

1. Stand up in front of the group. (30 seconds)
2. Be dignified
3. Look sexy
4. Relax
5. Count the number of men you see
6. Count the number of women faster than you counted the men. If you succeed, you’ll win a prize!

The first two minutes of this exercise are very difficult and often embarrassing. Being told to “be sexy” or “be dignified” is very disconcerting. Being told to relax (on cue) is almost equally difficult. However, “counting” is something we can do. Add a goal (#6) and the activity becomes even easier and more fun to do.

We (as actors) can’t “be something or somebody” or “look ...” without being self-conscious. The only way to stop feeling self-conscious and to relax on stage is to actively pursue our goals as the character. The more an actor feels his goals (or objectives or intentions) are worth doing, the more they can stop thinking about themselves and concentrate on the task.

EXERCISE #2: Playing an intention without words

- A. Instruct a student to open the classroom door. Give him/her no other instruction.

- B. Instruct the same student to open the door again with the following instructions: "Open the door to surprise someone on the other side."
- C. Discuss the difference between the two events. Which was more interesting?
- D. Have students open the door, playing a number of different actions...
 - "To catch someone "in the act" on the other side.
 - "To stop someone from listening on the other side"
 - "To see if anyone is outside the door"
 - "To make sure no one is listening"
 - "To prove that there is no one on the other side"
 - "To welcome home your husband/wife"
 - "To greet a blind date on the other side"
 - "To humor a young child on the other side"
 - "To scare away a solicitor"
 - "To stop someone from knocking"
 - "To frighten someone on the other side"
 - "To invite someone in"
 - "To lure someone in"
 - "To expose the person on the other side"
- E. Discuss how the different actions affect the way in which the door is opened and the actions preceding and following the opening of the door.

EXERCISE #3: Playing intentions with a task and obstacles

Return to the "Full-Empty and Awkward Objects" exercise from day two of the Improv workshop.

- A. Have students spread out around the room and give them a simple task to pantomime like "making a sandwich" or "carving a pumpkin."
- B. Have them perform this activity with no further instruction.
- C. After they perform it the first time, give them a simple set of given circumstances and have them do the activity again. For example:
 1. You are running late for school and can't afford to be late to class again.

2. If you are late again, you will lose credit for the class.
 3. You need to pass this class to graduate.
 4. You don't have any money so you need to make your lunch.
 5. You will be at school until 5:30 tonight at play practice so you can't just skip lunch.
 6. Your friend is coming to pick you up any second. If you aren't ready, they may refuse to pick you up again and that means you will have to ride the school bus from now on.
 7. Tell the student that his objective or goal is to make his lunch and to finish their preparations for school as quickly as possible.
- A. Have the students work through this activity again. Discuss what was different this time. What were they thinking about as they did the activity? How was the activity different this time?
 - B. Have them return to the activity one more time. Tell them to continue to play the given circumstances that have been established. However, tell them you will be sidecoaching them as they do the activity this time. Instruct them to stay focused on the activity, but to listen and respond to your commands without breaking character.
 - C. As they perform the activity this time, add several obstacles that the actors must deal with. For example, inform them that they have dropped the jar of mayonnaise or jelly. (or tell them that the butter is too hard and tares the bread, or their isn't any jelly left, etc.) Continue to add three or four more obstacles as they do the task. You might also make the sound of a car horn blaring outside (their friend) early in the task to further complicate the situation. Remind them to deal with the given circumstances you established earlier. Encourage them not to just "give up," but to play towards their objective. (As you watch them, make note of those students that really seem to be able to internalize and play the given circumstances. Watch how they deal with the obstacles and the choices they make.)

After the last activity, discuss with them the differences between the second and third time. What were they thinking about? How did this time differ from the last? Which was more fun to play? How does the inclusion of the given circumstances, objective, and obstacles improve the task? This simple activity can begin a discussion of several of the key concepts you will want your students and actors to be aware of.

EXERCISE #4: Playing intentions with words (from Secondary Stages by Jeff Bennett)

Write the following sentences on the board or on several slips of paper:

- #1. "Oh, I didn't realize you were coming too!"
- #2. "Did you say what I think you said?"
- #3. "I'll take care of it."

Assign five actors to speak each sentence to you, delivering it with a different intention. Whisper or write the intention on a slip of paper. Encourage the actors to deliver the lines naturally and believably, without mugging or "performing" for the group. The lines should be spoken naturally and with conviction.

Intentions for #1:

- Student #1: ... to belittle him
- Student #2: ... to build him up
- Student #3: ... to charm him
- Student #4: ... to scare him
- Student #5: ... to snub him

Intentions for #2:

- Student #1: ... to threaten him
- Student #2: ... to discredit him
- Student #3: ... to delight him
- Student #4: ... to overwhelm him
- Student #5: ... to shock him

Intentions for #3:

- Student #1: ... to dismiss him
- Student #2: ... to reassure him

Student #3: ... to unsettle him

Student #4: ... to terrify him

Student #5: ... to take him down a few pegs

The lack of a context in the setup of this assignment (who, what, where, etc....) makes this exercise a challenge. The actors need to use their imagination to fill in the missing information so the line will seem truthful. Also, sometimes an actor will really struggle with playing a particular intention given a specific line. For example, trying to “shock” someone with the line “Did you say what I think you said” or trying to “scare” someone with the line “Oh, I didn’t realize your were coming too” can prove to be difficult. Encourage the actors to do their best. You can also whisper to the actors potential circumstances to help them make clearer choices to achieve their intention.

EXERCISE #5: It’s Good To See You Again

With a partner, say the following line playing a variety of intentions/actions:

"Paul, it's good to see you again"

What does the character intend to achieve by that line, in that scene. What does the character really want? Create several given circumstances to create a context in which to place this scene. Play a variety of actions ...

to avoid talking to him...

to antagonize him

to terrorize him

to flatter him

to frighten him

to surprise him

to put him down

to seduce him, etc.

EXERCISE #6: Art Gallery

The “Art Gallery” exercise is for Intention/Obstacle/Given Circumstances. Set up classroom as follows:

Given circumstances: The Art Gallery is opening and everyone is to come and go as they please. The walls are full of interesting paintings and there are benches for patrons to rest on. There is a guard on duty.

A. Each person comes in with a particular intention (to find a place to rest my feet for a while.) The actors need to explore the possible obstacles to achieving their intentions. Do not interact with others yet.

B. Same as above, but you must strengthen both the intention and the obstacle. (You may change if the ones you chose didn't work so well.)

C. Same as above, but you may interact with the others in the scene to achieve your intention. Be aware of all of the new obstacles provided by the other people in the improvisation.

Director's note: Keep side-coaching during the improv and debrief to determine the intentions and experiences of the students. It's helpful if there are no more than ten on stage for each round; the others will learn a lot by trying to identify intentions, obstacles, etc. Other locations work very well (see Join In An Environment exercise from day two.)

Improvisational Scenes: Pursuing Intentions

For exercises #7 and #8, your students will want to focus on playing the given circumstances and their characters' intentions. Above all, require them to play the scene honestly and believably. Keep your actors from trying to "be funny" or to make the audience laugh. I encourage my actors (especially the newer actors to my program who are less experienced with this kind of work) to forget about the audience. If humor comes from the playing of the situation, that is fine.

However, if they try to "be funny" or to entertain the audience, their performances will be shallow, unnatural, and phony, and they will miss the point of the exercise. They will be focused on trying to look good and do something funny rather than playing the situation truthfully. If you find the actors are "winking" figuratively at the audience and saying "check this out!" with their actions, stop them and address this issue. Work ALWAYS to get natural, honest, and believable interactions from your actors. This doesn't mean that the scenes can't or won't be humorous and funny. However, trying to

be cute, clever, and funny rather than dealing honestly with the characters and the situation is the death knell of effective acting when working on improvisation with actors.

EXERCISE #7: The Babysitter

Given circumstances: A is the teenage babysitter. B is the child of 9 or 10. The parents have left for a party and have given the babysitter strict instructions that the child was to be in bed by 10:00. It is 9:55.

A's intention is to get B into bed.

B's intention is to get A to let him stay up as late as he can.

Tell "A" privately that you want him to use every tactic he can to achieve his intention. She can sweet-talk, flatter, threaten, punish, bargain, plead, etc... to achieve his intention. Tell "B" to just pursue his intention, responding to A's lead.

Let the scene run for a few minutes. Review the situation discussing the scene's believability and whether or not "A" remained focused on his intention. Discuss ways that "A" tried to achieve her intention. You can also use this exercise to introduce and discuss the concept of "beats" and beat changes within a scene. Instruct the students that any time a character plays a different action (or tactic) to achieve her superintention (or main objective of the scene) this is called a "beat." Encourage your actors to identify and play a variety of actions within a scene. Watching someone plead (or verbally attack) another character for three minutes of a five minute scene is tiresome. Encourage your actors to play a variety of actions to try to achieve their objectives.

EXERCISE #8: The Interview

Given Circumstances:

A: Candidate for a position as an administrative assistant to "B"

B: A successful, well-respected executive who has been interviewing applicants all morning.

A's intention is to charm B into accepting her for the job.

B's intention is to test A's composure by throwing her curveball questions.

After a few minutes discuss the intention played by each character and tactics used to achieve the intentions. You can begin to discuss the obstacles within the scene for each character. You can also create your own scenarios. For example: Given circumstances:

#2 borrowed a sweater from #1. They are roommates and friends. This scene takes place in the late afternoon in their apartment. The sweater is new and flattering to both.

Intention #1: To get your sweater back so you can wear it for a photo shoot.

Intention #2: To wear the sweater on a date with a new love this evening.

Obstacles: Friendship for other person, other person's desire for the sweater, conflict of date and photo shoot happening at the same time, selfishness of other person, etc. Keep the characters and experiences familiar to the actors. Avoid stereotypical characters that would be played unbelievably by young actors.

EXERCISE #9: Contrapunctal Argument:

A) Set up simple circumstances (i.e. roommates or spouses in their home). Pick opposing INTENTIONS which directly involve the other person (i.e., make the other person admit it was his fault that the burglar was able to get in and steal everything.)

B) You have one minute. On "GO!" you must accomplish your INTENTION with everything you have. Listen carefully to every bit of information that comes to you from your partner. But DO NOT STOP TALKING. (You will discover that you can listen and talk and think at the same time!) Two things you may not use: Physical attack and foul language or insults. On "STOP!" you must stop.

C) Debrief and talk about partners and relationships, about emotion and intention.

Other Situations:

#1. A teenage brother and sister are arguing over the use of the family car tonight. Brother wants the car for a date later that night. Sister promised to take her friends to the mall later that night.

#2. Two people (who don't know each other) are standing in line for a movie. They have just been told there is only one ticket left. Convince the other person that you should be able to see this movie.

#3. Two people (teens) are at a party. One of you wants to drink beer and one of you doesn't. #1 convince the other person to leave with you.

#2 convince the other person to stay and drink.

Day Five: The Contentless Scene

On the second day of the two day workshop on acting with a script, the students will be working with partners to prepare, rehearse, and perform a “contentless scene” (also known as “open scene” or “Chekhovian scene.”) By the end of this workshop you will have an excellent idea of the abilities of your actors to do the following:

- analyze a scene,
- determine a character’s needs and intentions,
- make tactic choices to pursue their intentions,
- commit to playing their intention and beat actions,
- play a scene moment to moment,
- listen to the other actor,
- react to and play off of their partner,
- project their voices,
- take their time on stage.

This activity can be spread out over two days. You can spend one to two sixty to ninety minute workshops using one contentless scene. If you want to find out what your students can do with these scenes with limited instruction, you can limit this activity to one workshop. You can have them work on the scene for fifteen minutes, perform them for twenty to thirty minutes, discuss the scenes as a group for ten to fifteen minutes, rehearse them again for another five to ten minutes, and then perform them one final time for about twenty to thirty minutes).

Obviously this format would take a minimum of ninety minutes to two hours to complete. This time can be extremely valuable for the director. You can learn a great deal about your potential actors with this workshop, so I suggest you plan to use a two hour block of time for this workshop. If you tell your students in advance of the need to attend this workshop for the full two hours, they should be able to make arrangements to attend it.

When you look at another actor's performances, you examine lots of things, beginning with the choices she has made about intentions, obstacles, and tactics. You look at how that actor physicalizes her character, and how well she listens and connects

to other people on the stage. When it comes time for you to perform a scene, you do all the analysis you've already learned and put everything together in your performance.

Actors in plays are working on texts of plays or "scripts" written by playwrights. They find the basis for their analyses in what the playwright has written. Most published playscripts are dense with possibilities and meanings and many beginning actors find them a little intimidating at first.

However, in contentless scenes, students act as their own playwrights -- creating their own scene, analyzing it, and performing it. They don't have to write a play. Students use the words provided to them in short contentless scenes.

Student Directions:

A contentless scene is one in which the words, by themselves, do not clearly reveal any specific characters or story; it is a scene that has no specified dramatic content. It is up to you and your scene partner to decide who the characters are, what their relationship is, and what happens in the scene.

You have the evidence (script/text/words); your assignment is to figure out what is happening to the people in the scene that makes them say these words. It's like an iceberg: the words are only the tip; most of the interesting stuff is below the waterline, or in the scene, unspoken. Think of the scene as a meaningful moment in these people's lives, a moment when some serious decisions have to be made. What happens between the lines -- a pause to think, a decision to leave and then to stay -- gives the scene its power, its believability, its realism.

The words from these scenes could have been said at a gravesite, a hospital bed, or a counselor's office. They could have been said between two friends who had a terrible argument and now want to patch things up. They could have been said because a wife is tired of her husband's alcoholism and is ready to leave for good. They could reflect the classical lovers triangle.

These are just a few ways the scenes could work. Now think of some possibilities of your own for each of the scenes. Before you meet with your scene partner, do some preliminary work so that you have something to do at your first rehearsal.

- **FIRST:** Using the dialogue your teacher has assigned you, decide upon a scenario. Base the characters and relationship of the scene on an event that you have experience with, or that you can project yourself into. If you go too far out in left field, you'll have trouble connecting to the characters and situation you create. Avoid stereotypes, fantasy, comedy, and characters who are much older, much younger, or of a different sex.
- **SECOND:** Figure out who the characters are, and what is happening to make them say these words. Let your mind speculate about what could be going on. Think up more than three ideas, and discard the most obvious ones.
- **THIRD:** When you create your scenarios, make sure that, for each one, you establish the following things:
 1. Who each of the characters is
 2. What their present and past relationship to each other is
 3. Where they are
 4. What happens throughout the scene moment by moment
 5. What your character wants from the other character
- **FOURTH:** Be careful that you establish a linked sequence of actions here, so that each thing that happens causes the next thing to happen. The main problem that you'll run into in these scenes is that you will have a dynamite beginning and a solid ending, but the causal sequence of actions in the middle may be fuzzy and undifferentiated. A good way to tackle this problem is to decide where the scene starts (A and B are married) and where it ends (A and B decide to get divorced). Then, for each pair of lines in the scene, figure out a step in the sequence from married to divorced.
- **FIFTH:** Memorize your lines as you work through the scene or if possible, before your first rehearsal. Make sure you are word-perfect. Memorize your partner's lines, too. (Obviously if you are doing this activity as part of a workshop you can assign the lines at the beginning of the workshop and within the rehearsal period, they can memorize the lines)

As you rehearse, remember to do the following:

1. Keep the intention clear.
2. Make the conflict important to both people.
3. Create characters whom you could conceivably play.
4. Make it LIVE for the audience on a moment-to-moment basis.

Contentless Scene -- two person version

(This is from Secondary Stages by Jeff Bennett)

One: Well?

Two: Well?

One: Well, here we are.

Two: That's right.

One: Shall we get started?

Two: All right.

One: Are you sure you know how to do this?

Two: Of course I'm sure.

One: I don't think that's right.

Two: Okay, how do you do it?

One: Like this.

Two: That's definitely not right.

One: Yes, it is.

Two: If we're going to do it like that, I'm leaving.

One: All right.

Two: I'm going.

One: Good-bye.

DIRECTOR'S PROCEDURE:

Give the actors about fifteen minutes to meet with their partners to analyze the text, determine the given circumstances, and rehearse their scenes. If there is an uneven number of students, have one of the actors participate in one of the scenes as a silent character, reacting without words to the other characters. Tell the students that you will not be giving them assistance during their rehearsal process. They will be responsible for making decisions about the scene and for rehearsing it.

Just before beginning the performances do the following:

- #1. Seat all the ONES on one side of the stage and all the TWOS on another side.
- #2. Do a choric reading of the scene a few times to help everyone feel comfortable with the lines.
- #3. Remind the students that once their scene begins, they need to stay in character and not break from the scene. If they have line problems (and they most likely won't), instruct them to find their way to the end of the scene without stopping.

Perform all the scenes without pausing for commentary or feedback. Take your own notes for discussion at the end of this first round of performances.

EVALUATION:

Your goal with the evaluation process is to explore and broaden the choices that the students may have missed the first time through. Use examples of their work as a point of reference for the discussions.

Questions to examine:

- #1. Did each actor pursue a definite super-intention? This is a very important decision since how you phrase an intention will affect every movement, cross, gesture, vocal inflection, etc.
- #2. Did each actor break down the scene into tactic units or beat intentions? If they did, their choices will be clear and each movement and verbal action (from a sigh to a nervous laugh to the way a line is delivered) will give the scene richness and texture. Their choices will effect their playing of the scene from moment to moment.

Note: The tactic choices should really be the result of rehearsal and experimentation or, better yet, "improvisation." Actors should NOT necessarily preplan how to say a particular line, nor should they write into their scripts "stare intently" or "say mockingly." These choices should grow naturally out of their super-intentions.

Here are some of the common problems the first time through these scenes:

- #1. In general, students do not select very strong or specific intentions in this exercise. This is very common. For example, they will phrase their intentions as

“I want to show him how to diaper a baby” rather than a more stronger “I want to show him how to diaper a baby with great love and affection.” Or I want to impress him by showing him a creative way to paint this room instead of “I want to paint this room.” Encourage the actors to select specific, strong, enjoyable to pursue intentions.

#2. In order to make strong intention choices, they need to make specific choices about the given circumstances (who am I, how do I feel about the other person, why do I feel about this way about him?, how long have I known this other person, etc....) Encourage the actors to create a relationship between the two characters and to decide what happened the moment before this scene occurs.

#3. They also tend to play “emotion” (for example, saying a line “angrily” instead of really trying to “intimidate” the other character by advancing on him and raising his voice when saying “You’re wrong; that’s not right.”

#4. They will tend to rush through the scene and won’t take their time to listen to the other actor. Encourage them to take their time and explore the moments between the two characters. Encourage them also to be sure to motivate everything they do and say.

#5. They will not divide their super-intentions into beat intentions and won’t make clear choices about their beat intentions. They won’t explore the manner in which they can play an intention physically AND vocally. EVERYTHING they do on stage during their scene is a “choice.” Entering is a choice, choosing to speak is a choice, leaving is a choice, pausing is a choice, speaking quickly or overlapping another character’s dialogue is a choice. Within the context of these scenes even scratching your head is a choice, etc.... Everything they do should be in line with their super-intention.

After the first round of performances and group feedback, select one of the groups to work with in front of the class. Select a scene that can clearly be improved by clarifying the actors’ characters, relationship, and super-intentions. Give the actors more specific characters, a clearer relationship, and specific and stronger super-intentions. Let them play the scene again. Discuss the improvements with the group.

If little improvement has been made, work with the actors (and the audience) to make more specific choices in playing their intentions. Give them ways to play their intention more strongly both physically and vocally. Encourage them to make clearer tactic choices and to “raise the stakes” making it more important for the character to achieve his intention.

For example, with one group I worked with during this exercise, two actors had determined that #1 was a sixth grader who was being picked on by #2 who was a school bully. During the course of the scene, #2 swings at #1 who ducks and then is able to knock the bully down with a punch. The scene ended with #2 leaving and #1 standing surprised at her good fortune. We briefly discussed who each character was, where they were, what had led up to this moment, etc. I then directed four young men in the workshop to come up on stage and to stand behind the scene acting as silent observers of the scene. #2 was told that these people were his friends and they had come to the playground with him to see #1 get beat up.

The stakes were raised immediately. It became much more important for #2 (the bully) to try to protect his reputation and when he failed, this failure impacted him more with his awareness of his friends standing and watching. His moment to moment choices were more honest, more believable, more motivated, and more interesting to watch. He and his partner played the moment to moment transactions more effectively. The scene was much improved.

This isn't meant to be a directing exercise, but you want the students to understand that it is the actor's responsibility to determine the given circumstances of a scene and train them to understand how much of the burden for making things happen onstage is their responsibility. This kind of exercise is also extremely helpful in identifying those actors who are clearly “directable” and those who aren't. You can learn a good deal about the actors' intelligence and creativity. You can also evaluate their ability to apply the concepts taught in the workshop which are essential to effective acting. The benefit of this kind of work is in separating the wheat from the chaff before you enter cold reading or monologue auditions, both of which can be misleading in

gauging the potential of adolescent actors, many of whom may be poor readers or unaware of how to effectively prepare a monologue for audition.

Day Six: Contentless Scenes Revisited

After this first round of performances, feedback, and scene work with one or two groups, assign the actors a new partner and instruct them to select new characters, new relationships, and new activities. Give them 5-10 minutes to rehearse. Perform these scenes once again, encouraging the actors to make specific intentions, to take their time as they work through each moment of the scene, to listen to and play off of one another, and to be sure to break down the scene into beats. Have them perform again and discuss the scenes.

The more students have the opportunity to do this kind of exercise, the more they are able to grow in their comfort with one another and with being on stage. You will see actors begin to make more sophisticated choices, listen to and play off of one another, and much more.

Try Version #2 next, with new partners. Encourage the actors to continue to select characters and relationships common to their own experiences. Students sometimes begin to select situations that are takeoffs of action movies, adventure stories, crime dramas, etc... This is understandable since so many students watch this kind of entertainment. Try to encourage them to stick to situations and characters that are more honest, more believable, and closer to their own lives. This doesn't mean that they can't play office workers, cooks, etc.

Contentless Scene -- two person version

(This is from Secondary Stages by Jeff Bennett)

One: Well?

Two: Well?

One: Look, could we hurry it up a bit please. I'm trying to be patient, but...

Two: Almost through.

One: Hey, this is ridiculous.

Two: I'm sorry ... these things take time.

One: I know that, but...

Two: Just be patient a few more seconds, okay?

One: A few more seconds?

Two: That's right...a few more seconds. So ... what do you think?

One: What do I think? It's tough for me to say what I think.

Two: I know but try.

One: Can't you see it in my eyes?

You may also try the above dialogue and assign the students to create and rehearse two different scenarios using the same lines. They then perform these two scenes. Encourage them to select characters and relationships that are different from one scene to the next. If one scene is dramatic and serious with #1 (client) verbally attacking #2 (hairdresser) for destroying her hair, then the second scene should have a different feeling. For example, #1 would be a wife or husband trying to encourage #2 to take his/her first steps out of a wheelchair during physical therapy. On the following pages are several other good contentless scenes to use in this or other workshops. I have also included several good resources for contentless scene at the end of this section.

Contentless Scene #3

A: Oh! I wasn't expecting you.

B: Why not?

A: Never mind.

B: Let's talk.

A: Okay.

B: You first.

A: It's difficult.

B: Tell me.

A: How long has it been?

B: Too long.

A: I know.

B: I don't think you do.

A: Don't be silly.

B: I'm not.

Contentless Scene #4

A: Want to go out?

B: Why?

A: No reason.

B: I thought so.

A: Did you?

B: Yes.

A: Let's talk

B: Do we really need to?

A: Yes.

B: You first.

A: No.

B: You're being silly.

A: Never mind.

B: Tell me.

A: I know.

B: Do you?

A: Yes.

B: Suppose I agree.

A: Yes.

B: No, you tell me.

A: Why?

B: Because I asked.

A: How long has it been?

B: I don't know.

A: Ask me.

B: What?

A: Ask me.

B: You know I can't.

A: Do I?

B: Let's go out.

Contentless Scene #5 (The shorter version)

A. Hi.

B. Hello.

A. What'd you do last night?

B. Oh, not much. How about you?

A. Oh, watched a little T.V.

B. Anything good?

A. Well, no. Not really.

B. See you later.

A. O.K.

Play the scenes above as if the dialogue is occurring in the following relationship circumstances:

1. A casual pick up.
2. Husband and wife meeting the night after a trial separation.
3. Father and daughter at breakfast after she's been out late.
4. High school girls meeting after each suspects the other of dating a mutual boyfriend.
5. A rejection of friendship.
6. Lovers unable to meet except for a few moments.
7. Any of the above as a telephone call.
8. Any others suggested by the group...

When the exercise is performed, it becomes clear that the content mode of the dialogue becomes relatively insignificant, and that the relacom (relationship/communication) or subtext becomes virtually the "whole" scene, without changing a word of the text. It can also show how riveting a contentless scene may be when strong relacom is established by the performers.

Contentless Scene -- 3 person Version

A: Oh! I wasn't expecting you.

B: Why not?

A: Never mind.

C: Let's talk.

A: Okay.

B: You first.

C: It's difficult.

B: Tell me.

C: How long has it been?

B: Too long.

A: I know.

B: I don't think you do.

C: Don't be silly.

B: How long has it been?

C: You know.

B: Do I?

A: Suppose I do.

B: Yes.

A: No, you tell me.

C: Why?

A: Because I asked.

C: You can't be serious

A: Why not?

B: I thought so.

C: Did you?

A: Did you?

B: Yes.

A: Let's go.

C: Didn't they tell you?

B: No

C: Ask me.

A: What?

C: Ask me.

B: I can't.

A: How long has it been?

C: Too long.

Contentless scene sidecoaching suggestions --

Here are some comments to make to the actors as you work with them on the scenes.

- Why did you stop talking?
- Why did you say that?
- Where are you going?
- What do you want?
- Take all the time you need. Let the moment play through the silence.
- This is hard work. We are working on acting between the spaces of the lines...something many beginning actors simply do not do.

Follow-up dialogue after the scenes --

- When were you most convinced that people were really interacting?
- Could you tell what was going on between them?
- If you had to write dialogue for the silent sections, what would you say?
- Do you need dialogue to convey meaning? As an actor, notice how what the other person said had an effect on you.
- As an actor and audience, notice how easy it is for us to tell if there was no real reason for the cutoff.

Suggested relationships for the contentless scenes --

- High school girls meeting after each suspects the other of dating a mutual boyfriend
- A rejection of friendship
- Parent and teenager having a private talk about
- A salesperson and a customer – salesperson suspects customer of stealing
- A salesperson and a customer – salesperson has to tell the customer his credit card has been rejected
- Two teens at a party -- one is drinking and offers the other a drink who doesn't want to take it
- Two teens in the hallway of school, one is angry with the other because he/she heard the other person was spreading rumors
- A teenager meets his friend at his house. The friend just got a new haircut
- Two teens taking a math test -- one is trying to cheat off of the other's paper.
- A teenage boy stops another teenage boy in the hall of their high school. One of you has heard rumors that the other was out with your girlfriend the other night. The other one was and wants to avoid the issue
- Employer/employee at a convenience store. Employer is unhappy with employee's performance and needs to fire him/her
- A girl and her boyfriend are sitting in her bedroom discussing one of her ex-boyfriends
- A girl and her boyfriend are home from a date – she wants to kiss him goodnight; he wants to kiss her, but she has bad breath
- A party: A teenage boy wants to ask a teenage girl to dance...boy is shy...girl isn't or vice versa
- Young man/woman having a serious talk with his/her boyfriend/girlfriend -- one is sure the other is having an affair and the other is trying to convince him/her that he/she has been faithful
- A doctor is discussing the results of a physical examination with a patient. He/she must break the bad news to his/her patient
- A teenage girl notices that her brother is wearing one of her earrings

- A girl is watching the only TV in the house when the brother walks in and changes the channel or turns the TV off
- A girl is driving her brother home from college when she suddenly realizes she is lost
- Two people run into each other on the street. One person thinks the other person is a long lost friend. The other person has no idea what he's talking about
- A ticket scalper in the parking lot of a concert hall approaches a prospective customer and tries to sell him a ticket to a sold out show
- A man on the street stops a passerby and asks if he/she wants to buy a watch
- Two people simultaneously reach for a twenty dollar bill lying on the sidewalk
- A palm reader is examining a man's palm
- A man/woman is talking to an insurance salesperson about a life insurance policy
- A patient who has been waiting for an hour and a half to see his doctor is questioning the doctor's receptionist
- A prisoner in a jail cell is talking to his jailer
- A customer is talking to a cashier about money he was short changed
- A homeless person approaches someone for money

Resources for Contentless Scenes

Scenebook for Actors by Mack Owen.

This is an excellent resource of longer contentless scenes, generally five minutes in length with excellent material to tackle after working on short contentless scenes in a classroom. This book is out of print, however and may be hard to find. I recently purchased a copy on the internet at www.powells.com.

Changing Circumstances: An Acting Manual with 24 Scenes by Lorinne Vozoff.

A collection of contentless scenes with specific assigned characters, relationships, objectives, etc. A very helpful resource for directors and teachers of acting. The scenes and suggested given circumstances are appropriate for high school actors, although some of them are quite challenging. The introductory material before the scenes is also helpful.

Great Scenes for Young Actors V2. ed. Craig Slight.

This book is actually a collection of scenes for young actors from a variety of classic and contemporary plays, however there are several excellent contentless scenes called “etudes” at the beginning of the book.

Subtext: Additional Thoughts and Exercises

As you work with the actors on their contentless scenes, you can also begin to discuss the concept of subtext in a scene. The subtext is the “meaning beneath the lines” or what the character is really thinking. One of the best ways to figure out what is going on in a scene is to figure out what the characters are really saying. This isn't always simple, either. Like people, characters often say one thing and mean something entirely different. For instance, a character may say, “Gee, I'm really glad to see you.” This sounds innocuous enough, but the character might mean any one of the following things:

“Oh, brother, I was hoping I'd never see you again.”

“I really missed you.”

“You look wonderful.”

“Gee, I'm really glad to see you.”

What the characters say out loud is their dialogue or text. What they are saying underneath the lines is called their subtext. The subtext is what you have to figure out before you can fully interpret the scene.

It can be difficult to discover the subtext within a character's dialogue, but it is essential to do so. For one thing, subtext in plays is similar to subtext in real life. People with simple straightforward personalities who are being simple, direct, honest, tend not to use a lot of subtext. That is, what they say is pretty much what they mean. However, complex people, or people in complex situations -- often these are social situations -- consciously say things that differ from what they really mean. This applies to most characters in most modern, realistic drama.

In investigating your character's text/subtext dialogue consider how direct and blunt she is trying to be at this moment. Is there an intention to withhold, to conceal, to be sneaky, to manipulate? Is there any sign the character might be trying to be subtle, to use tact and diplomacy, to avoid hurting someone's feelings? In most cases there is almost certain to be a subtext to the actual dialogue the character is saying.

In addition, dialogue needs to be performed in a way that lets the audience know there is subtext; that the character is doing more, or less, or something different from what he is saying. This almost always comes in the form of how you speak: vocal pattern, tone, pitch, rate, etc. are all consciously manipulated when you are using subtext. The way you change your tone is how you tell your listener you are using subtext.

A Few Exercises Exploring Subtext

EXERCISE #1: A helpful exercise in understanding subtext is to find different subtexts for the same line and to speak the subtext immediately after you have said the text.

Below are examples of different possible subtexts.

Don't go. (I command you to stay)

Don't go. (Please stay if you care anything about me.)

Don't go. It's not safe for you to go out now.)

Don't go. (I warn you, you'll be sorry if you leave me.)

I love you. (But not in the way you want me to.)

I love you. (If you force me to say it, I will.)

I love you. (How can you treat me this way?)

I love you. (I don't ever want you to doubt it.)

EXERCISE #2: Rehearse saying several of the following sentences out loud. Practice them until you can say each with at least two different meanings. Consciously alter your vocal pattern to make each subtext meaning clear. Once you have practiced, try them on a partner, asking that person to tell you what you actually meant once you do a version.

That is a really nice car you bought.

Who was that guy I saw you with last night?

Would you like to come to the movies with me?

I've never seen a dog like that before.

Boy, I really enjoyed this evening.

In each case you ought to have made strong dramatic choices for your meanings, and your partner should have been able to get pretty clearly what you were trying to do. Did it work?

EXERCISE #3: Work on the subtext in your assigned scenes. Read the scene and then propose three different actions for the scene. In other words, think about the possibilities for GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES and see how these possibilities might work with the text. In each case, after some brainstorming, write down for three different scenarios:

1. what the character's relationship is...

2. what they want from each other...

Compare these with your partner's interpretations. Try to back up your ideas by going back to the text. Then talk about what the subtext might be for each line.

Remember, one of the great freedoms an actor has is in his/her determination of the subtext, but you do have a responsibility to respect what the author has written. Professional actors read over their scripts daily to find insights, and try MANY approaches to their lines to get the most out of every word.

EXERCISE #4: Do a subtext rehearsal (also know as "speaking the inner monologue/dialogue"). Go through the rehearsal of your scene saying what the character is thinking out loud, not just what they say in the script. Debrief with your partner afterwards and find out what new information or changes in interpretation came from the Subtext rehearsal.

EXERCISE #5: Find at least two possible subtexts for each of the following lines. Speak the lines followed by the subtext, and then speak them without the subtext, making clear their different meanings.

I'm going to do it.(_____)

That's just fine.(_____)

Thank you.(_____)

I'm dying.(_____)

What's the matter?.(_____)

I'm an awful person.(_____)

Time goes so fast.(_____)

Don't cry.(_____)

It's so expensive.(_____)

Baby.(_____)

You've changed your mind.(_____)

I haven't seen him for a long time.(_____)

He's been gone twenty minutes.(_____)

It's easy to understand why.(_____)

A Few More Thoughts About Subtext

People go to the theatre to "hear" the subtext -- they can read the text in greater comfort at home! An actor's interpretation of a role lies in his choice of subtext...He must speak the text that the dramatist has written, but the SUBTEXT is his own contribution and demonstrated his insight in and sensitivity to the play. Subtext is connected to/grounded in the character's motivating desire -- his super-objective and the actions he chooses to pursue from beat to beat.

It is through the subtext that an actor attempts to affect the behavior of the other character(s) in the scene and to add insight and meaning to his performance. The actor must discover what the character wants to result from what he/she is saying -- what relationship he/she wants to invoke -- what she wants the other character to do, think, or feel -- the motivation beneath the speeches.

The actor must consider

1. How a line helps the character accomplish his intention.
2. How a line relates to its context, especially the line preceding it.

An actor must know and think his subtext. The subtext is what the line means to the character who is speaking, which frequently is not what the line says on the surface. The actor's interpretation is in the undermeaning of the line. When he/she speaks a line, he/she thinks simultaneously of the words he/she is saying, their undermeaning, and their inherent action or the purpose behind why they are being said.

The choice of the subtext determines to a considerable degree the overall effect of a line -- whether it will be comic, pathetic, or melodramatic. The simple line "Don't shoot," read with varying subtexts, can produce a variety of effects.

Subtext reveals the character's relationships, his behavior, and the meaning of his words and actions...A word is assimilated when it is influenced by the subtext. Subtext makes the word unique. The same words can have different meanings depending on the individual who speaks them and on the situation in which he speaks them. Different subtexts make the words sound different.

Sonia Moore discusses the importance of understanding and conveying a character's subtext in her excellent book The Stanislavski System:

The subtext can be expressed through a combination of expressive means: verbal formulation of active thoughts and nonverbal expressive means such as a movement of the spine, a body gesture, a glance, rhythm, a pause. Expressed subtext gives the spectators knowledge of details of the character's behavior and reveals the essence of his whole behavior -- that is, his through line of actions.

Spectators must see the movement of the character's thoughts when the actor is silent. A movement of the spine, eyes alive when the actor really thinks, projects these thoughts. . . . Gestures and movements must never merely illustrate the words -- that is, they must not repeat the word's superficial meaning. The director should suggest the subtext to actors, since interesting solutions do not come easily. . . .

Although in life we often do not reveal a subtext, in theatre actors and directors must work to reveal expressiveness of the subtext. The subtext must be incarnated in visual signs. Without it, there is no theatre. (72)

It is very important to also relate the meaning to the motivating desire of the character he is playing. By understanding how each line serves to help the character get what he/she wants, the actor will have a better chance of making the motivating desire/action clear to the audience.

The actor must know how his lines serve the dramatist's basic intention and how they aid in communicating the play's central idea to the audience. This problem has been anticipated in such previous steps as ...

- #1. finding the character's motivating desire (super-objective/ultimate goal) -- a process in which the lines were an important consideration,
- #2. relating this fundamental desire to the meaning of the play as a whole,
- #3. finding the under-meaning and the verbal action, which emerge only after the lines have been related to other elements.

Each beat of the play must be carefully examined in the context of the playwright's basic meaning as interpreted by each particular production. No element of the production is excused from this basic demand. The actor's task is to hold to the agreed upon interpretation and to make everything he says or does flow from some variation on the theme. He must turn the interpretation into action, and subtext is his major tool for doing so.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELECTING PLAYS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL

As I have discussed previously, high school theatre arts programs should strive to provide the finest theatre experience and opportunities for students. Successful theatre programs are educationally beneficial and include theatre classes, co-curriculum theatre activities, and a yearly production schedule of one-act and/or full-length plays and presentations. Outstanding theatre programs advance the culture, taste and art appreciation of the school and the community.

Choosing the Play

There are as many different ways of directing as there are directors, but they all begin with one thing - the play. You must believe in the play or you won't give it your best efforts. If we are really truthful -- expectations of school shows are so low that staff, parents and friends are just delighted to see the kids up there on stage and remembering their lines. Critical faculties do tend to fly out of the window!

As a trained actor/director, I cannot be satisfied with the idea of "the process, not the product," at least in relation to something for which you charge an entrance fee. The idea's fine in the classroom, but the moment you ask people to pay good money to watch what you are doing, you have, I firmly believe, to give them the best value for that money that you can, and you mustn't be satisfied with that so damning comment, "Well, they are just kids, of course". I want the audience to forget that they're watching students!

And that isn't a pipe dream. It can happen. The most satisfying moment of all, as far as I am concerned, was when, at the end of a show many years ago, a relative of a kid in the play just sat in his seat and said, "I only came because the wife said I had to because our X was in it. I still can't believe they're school kids." That's the reaction to aim for, and if you get it just once in your career, you'll feel wonderful!

You might even think that sounds selfish, but it isn't really. If you drive, bully, cajole the students to aim for that kind of level, then even if they don't make it, they'll still achieve a standard well above that of the average school production. When we did Godspell, a reporter from the local paper came to review it, and spoke with me afterwards

about the production. He was truly surprised at the professionalism of the young actors and said he was surprised that he didn't see any of the kinds of behavior sometimes associated with "high school theatre." He didn't see anyone out of character or giving "hidden" winks to mom and dad in the audience or lost lines, etc. He went on to say, with what seemed like genuine surprise, that there were no signs of any of these things in our show! Well, duh! If this was all that we desired or could generate from adolescent actors, we would be in another profession.

Teenagers, if they are really inspired by what they are doing, will work their socks off to achieve what you expect of them. Set your sights low, and you'll get what you ask for; set them high and your students will bust a gut to try to meet your expectations. And it all starts with the play. Even now, after following this philosophy for over fifteen years, I still find myself surprised by what they are capable of achieving.

Take Pippin, for instance. When I mentioned the idea of doing this musical to the music director, he reacted with "well, if you think it's suitable..." which sums up the attitude of everyone, except the students and me. But the production worked. The opening night audience was absolutely amazed! This group of teenagers had taken part in shows for several years, had developed a reasonably sophisticated taste in theatre, and they were willing to work on understanding the situation and the feelings of the characters. It was the right choice of a musical production at that time: four years before it would probably have been a disaster. It's a very difficult play for students to do well.

I am not saying that you shouldn't choose a play that has been specially written for students, but rather that you should approach such plays with care. Many are little more than pot-boilers, written (like the myriads of light comedies and thrillers produced for amateur companies) because the market is insatiable and quite profitable. For goodness' sakes, don't lose your critical faculties: apply the same criteria to a children's play as you would to a play for adults, or, for that matter, to a novel for children. Children's novelists like Alan Garner, Susan Cooper, Joan Aitkin, Diana Wynn-Jones and Peter Dickenson, to name just a few of the best, all make demands on their readers, stretching their imagination, testing their response to language, making them think, whereas others pander and preach. Decent teachers cringe when they hear others putting

on their special talking-to-children voice ("Now children, I want us all to think today about. . ." Ugh!!) Yet, they often seem to have no qualms about choosing the dramatic equivalent for a school play.

Please, please, please avoid those plays that are sold on the basis of their "relevance": they might be good, but they might also be a lot of rubbish. You know the sort I mean: "This exciting new play by Fred Johnson explores the temptation to drugs which all teenagers face and shows how Joe, a new senior at Valley High School, is nearly dragged into crime by a gang of . . ." and so on! What an insult to the students! Pander to the fascination with low-life that all students have, and preach a good old-fashioned moral at the same time! They might even try to give it a patina of literary respectability by calling it a "modern, teenage morality play!"

I'm not saying that all "relevant" plays are badly written, but many are. You will want to judge them on their worth as pieces of drama and not on their "relevance." Look for a play which makes demands on the students as actors (and singers and dancers if that's relevant), and that also challenges their prejudices and makes them think and react in ways that are new to them. Don't be afraid of the audience: if you're doing the right thing, you'll take them with you. In a compilation show I did the following year I included the scene from Richard III in which Queen Margaret triumphs over Elizabeth and the Duchess of York (from "So now prosperity begins to mellow" to "Farewell York's wife, and queen of sad mischance, These English woes will make me smile in France.") I did this because I had three very good actresses whom I wanted to push to their limits. They were unhappy with the idea at first (Shakespeare has such an undeserved bad reputation with some students!) and, even when they were feeling much more confident in their ability to handle it, they were sure it would die with the audience. It didn't! Certainly many of the younger students in the audience didn't understand a word and the older ones weren't sure, but they all admired the acting unreservedly, and for many adults it was the highlight of the show.

You will have your failures here, of course. Students are very wary of making fools of themselves in front of their friends, and sometimes that fear will overcome their trust. I had that problem with Godspell. I explained the story to the students at an

informational meeting long before auditions and played the CD. The older students fell in love with the show right away but some of the younger ones didn't like it. They didn't believe my assurances that it would be a great success, and dropped out. I'm pleased to say that they sat in the audience and kicked themselves -- and had the grace to admit it. It'll happen: you just mustn't allow yourself to be disheartened but keep your belief in what you're doing and fight on. If you are right, and what you want to do is good, you'll win in the end.

So, you will be able to tackle very demanding plays, but you do need to work up to them. You can do it in one school generation, but don't rush it. Choose your play to suit your company.

Choosing Quality Material

To build a well-rounded program, the theatre arts teacher must excel at public relations, promoting the program and gaining the cooperation, confidence and respect of the school administration, students and their parents, and the community. **The best way to accomplish this is through consistent presentation of quality productions.**

- Quality productions attract the administration;
- Quality productions attract quality students who want to be involved on stage as actors and behind the scenes with the technical and business aspects a play;
- Quality productions attract and build quality audiences. Theatre is a discipline and quality productions emphasize the importance of including theatre not only as a co-curricular activity at the school but also as an area worthy of academic study and inclusion within the curriculum.

One of the most important steps in producing quality theatre is selecting plays of literary value and technical merit. This is absolutely essential to gaining support for your program. It is the responsibility of the theatre teacher to choose scripts worthy of the educational experience involved in producing a play. Just as students of English study the best literature, so must theatre students and theatre audiences be exposed to the best dramaturgy. Theatre is a reflection of life. When students experience superior plays written by outstanding authors, they learn, through character exploration, of the physical,

mental and emotional development of the human personality, of people's motives, reactions, standards and ideals, all of which enriches the students' lives and helps them gain poise, social understanding, self-awareness and self-esteem.

Plays worthy of presentation on the secondary school level are often plays that have been accorded a place in dramatic literature and are recognized by the theatre-goer. Such plays are legitimate teaching tools for expanding the literary, theatrical and social horizons of the students, challenging the talents and artistic abilities of the participants, and offering a vital and important message of social and redeeming value to the adolescent and adult community. Such plays help fulfill the objective of aesthetic education as established in the philosophy of the school district. However, there are many excellent scripts written in the last fifty years that the general public may not be aware of that are worthy of presentation. Therefore, the high school theatre arts teacher must also seek out those plays that are worthy of presentation but may not be recognized by the theatre-goer.

The high school drama teacher needs to READ playscripts on a regular basis. I have included a complete list of play publishers in the appendix (appendix B) to assist you. I stress READING the playscripts because, believe it or not, some high school directors select plays for production based on the titles, catalog descriptions, or "word of mouth." Your first task is to begin reading plays that you have never heard of. Most of this material is not going to be suitable to your needs, but you will find "gems among the stones." The only way to unearth these jewels is to DIG! Since most libraries do not purchase many plays or scripts, you will have to buy much of what you read. Thankfully, this is a tax deductible expense! Regardless of where or how you get the money, you simply cannot expect to do your job well if your plays only come from the handful of plays that the general public knows. I have included a list of play publishers and their addresses, phone numbers, etc. in the appendix (B).

The Smith and Kraus Play Index for Young Actors Grades 6-12 published by Smith and Kraus is an outstanding resource to begin looking for plays appropriate for high school students. The authors of this resource provide high school drama directors with a guide to 500 plays that may be appropriate for your drama group. Obviously, you

will still need to purchase or find copies of the plays that look interesting to you and read them.

Choosing Suitable Material

School districts often have their own written and unwritten standards as to what can and cannot appear on the secondary school stage. These standards may vary greatly from district to district, i.e. what may be acceptable in one community may not be acceptable in another. Your task as the high school drama director is to understand these standards. The unsuitability of subjects and language is determined by a number of rules, sometimes explicitly explained in activity guidelines, but more often these “rules” are merely implied. Unfortunately, these rules seem to have nothing to do with either the theatre or with the reality of student life or interests. Almost universally, however, the following subjects will always cause problems for you....

1. SEX (or anything beyond holding hands and the innocent kiss)
2. ALCOHOL (drinking on stage, socially or otherwise)
3. TOBACCO USE (even unlit prop cigarettes)
4. Language that will probably never make it to the high school stage in a school sponsored production

F word

Shit

GODDAMN

(Other language may or may not offend enough people to land you in the principal’s office. This depends on the community.)

The problem for the drama director is that the rules often seem irrational. A character who is upset in a pivotal and emotional moment in a play can’t say “damn,” yet high school girls speak with far more vulgarity and profanity in the school hallways as they walk to class. Even more difficult to understand is how some plays seem to violate the “standards of acceptability” without complaint from administrator or community member. The perfect example of this is the musical Grease, which has become a common production in high schools around the country. No one complains about this production, despite the fact that the plot is focused on the assault of Sandy’s virginity! No one

complains about the sexual consummation scene in South Pacific or the fact that the protagonist of Harvey is an alcoholic. Nor does anyone complain about the sexual references or the “morning after” scene in Romeo and Juliet. There isn’t any rational solution to this problem.

My advice is to work with your principal and administration when you feel you might be challenged on the selection of a play or musical for production. If the administrator(s) tells you that you can’t do the play, state your case logically and then if he/she still doesn’t allow you, find another production! You must develop a positive relationship with the administration because you must live with them day in and day out. If they don’t think they can trust you and your judgment, they will watch you constantly. If they respect and trust you, they will leave you alone.

It has been said that theatre teachers who do consistently fine work and have proven themselves capable instructors and directors are able to select plays of literary value that may be more controversial, while theatre teachers who do consistently poor work are often restricted to choosing plays of little merit. Unfortunately, there are communities in which no matter how valuable the theatre teacher may be, pressure groups or administrators may use their influence to prevent certain plays from being produced at the school, even though such plays may be of educational value. I have taught most of my career in a school district and in a small community that is quite conservative. Yet, during my career in this community, I have been able to direct productions that other drama teachers may not have been able to produce because the administration respects the work I have done with the students. They have learned, over time, to trust my instincts as a director and teacher of high school students.

As a director, I make the high school and district administration aware of the productions I am planning on producing and I discuss with them any controversial material that may be a part of the production. In the last five years, I have been able to produce productions like Pippin, Godspell, Musical Comedy Murders of 1940 (complete with the pants dropping scene,) Ascension Day, A Midsummer Nights Dream and present showcase scenes from Album, The Baby Dance, Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feeling So Sad, and others. The theatre teacher must be

sensitive to the needs and standards of the community. He must also be aware of the philosophy of the school district and administration. At the same time, the theatre teacher must never be satisfied with mediocrity and must educate the public and upgrade community standards through the consistent presentation of quality theatre. Most people don't know anything about any plays (unless they have been turned into movies!) so that if you do something they've never heard of, you may be able to deal with subject matter that would not be possible in better-known material. As a matter of experience, most people who complain about your material are people who have neither seen nor read the material; they just "know" that something is wrong with it. If you were to publicize that you were going to do Hair, you would be stormed with complaints, no matter how innocuous the material is or could be made to be with very little effort. If no one in the community "knows" the play you pick is "dirty," the chances are good that the potential complainers will not even bother to come see the show and won't complain about it. In most cases, you can make changes without damaging the material (offering characters coffee rather than cocktails, cutting the smoking or cigarette props, deleting expletives, etc.)

While the theatre teacher is the school's resident theatre expert, the school administrator has the ultimate responsibility for the public relations image created by the theatre department. This person must answer to all needs, tastes, backgrounds and prejudices of the community. The administrator must have complete trust in the theatre teacher and delegate responsibility for the theatre program to this individual. The theatre teacher must earn this trust by working cooperatively with the administrator and demonstrating teaching skills, theatre expertise, integrity, the secondary school environment. The theatre teacher should establish with the administrator ground rules on school policy and philosophy, budget, censorship, artistic freedom, expectations and standards of the school and community. An administrator should not have to read and approve a play for production, but should have confidence in the judiciousness of the theatre teacher to select a play that will be of value to the theatre program, the school and the community.

The theatre teacher should schedule a time with the administrator to discuss the nature of the play, its theatrical qualities and educational merits, and the benefits of producing the play at the school. During the rehearsal period, the theatre teacher should keep the administrator informed and involved in all aspects of the production, and as the opening nears, invite the administrator to attend a rehearsal. You should also invite the administrator to attend one of the performances. The theatre teacher will win the support, admiration, and confidence of the administrator by keeping all lines of communication open.

There are numerous plays of literary value and theatrical merit that can be performed well at the high school level. However, some plays may be technically beyond the budget resources of the school while other plays may have themes that are unacceptable and unsuitable for secondary school actors and secondary school audiences. Many outstanding plays with acceptable themes may include lines/passages/scenes/characters that are offensive to the administration, student body and/or community. While certain words may be cut or altered without changing the meaning of a script, such editing may be in violation of the copyright laws as many playwrights and play publishers will not permit any alterations of a play.

Under no circumstances should the theatre teacher present a play in such an altered state as to destroy the premise of the play or the intent of the author. For example, in 1999 at Glendale High School in Los Angeles, the school board forced the high school director of a production of Brighton Beach Memoirs to close his production the day before opening because of some of its content and the inability to make changes in the text. Because of the discussion between the two brothers about masturbation and "sex," the administration decided to cancel the production. The director contacted Samuel French, which is the publishing house for the script, and attempted to get permission to edit this scene and remove the sexual discussion from the play. Samuel French refused because playwright Neil Simon gave directions that his plays are to be performed as he wrote them. He also does not allow changes because of quality control. When he does changes, he does them himself. Clearly, this is an example of a change in the script that would not have been in line with the intent of the playwright. High school directors need

to use intelligent discretion when making changes to scripts for school performances. If they believe the play (or significant scenes from the play) might be objectionable to the community, they need to reconsider selecting it for production. Could the teacher in the Glendale case have changed the play without the author's permission? Sure. However, this is not ethical or honorable. If directors edit significant dialogue and/or scenes from plays and musicals, they run the risk of destroying the premise of the play and the intent of the playwright. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers! Be ethical, responsible, and careful.

Strong secondary school theatre programs are developed over a period through the professionalism of the theatre teacher and the school's commitment to excellence. For the first production, a beginning or inexperienced teacher should select an established play of literary value that is well known to the public, is not difficult to produce, involves many students and matches their talents, and appeals to the standards of the school and community. In building the theatre program, the theatre teacher should establish short range (one year) and long range (five years) goals and objectives. She should strive to improve the school's yearly production schedule by incorporating various types of plays and styles of acting (period, contemporary, drama, comedy, musical, etc.) She should also include a variety of theatre experiences (one-acts, full-lengths, children's theatre, mime presentations, student-directed plays, reader's theatre, etc.) for the students. As the program grows, the theatre teacher should become more aggressive in the selection of plays, expanding the subject matter and upgrading the standards of the school and the community.

Choosing Material You Enjoy

Obviously in the course of your research, you need to select plays for potential production that you like and would enjoy spending the three months working on. This is one of the most important reasons I never allow students to be a part of the selection process until I have narrowed the choices down to a few possibilities that I am interested in directing. You will be giving EVERY SPARE MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE for at least three months to this production. You will study, plan, interpret, design, rehearse, explain, defend, and publicize this show. You will memorize the entire book of the show, hear the

songs rattle around in your head, and watch the business and/or choreography of the show for weeks and weeks. While you are doing this, you will not have a personal life. Really. The production will CONSUME your life. No matter how many people want you to do this production (music director, choreographer, administrator, parent, etc...) you are the only one who is going to have to live with the decision you make. There is enough frustration and exhaustion in the work of directing a play. You do not need to spend your life with material you are not absolutely passionate about.

According to the Secondary School Theatre Association (a group that worked with the American Theatre Association and the International Thespian Society in the 1970's and 1980's), there are several criteria that high school theatre arts teachers/directors should consider when selecting plays for production or for use in the curriculum (Finney, 1979.)

Suggested Criteria for Play Selection for Secondary School Theatre Programs

As all the points are important, they are listed in random order rather than in order of preference or priority. Rarely will any play, no matter how worthwhile or suitable it may be, incorporate all points in the criteria.

I. To make the best possible choice of play, each title proposed should be evaluated with the following considerations in mind:

- A. Characters worth doing -- challenging to the performers.
- B. Theme worth expressing -- of lasting value to the audience as well as the cast and production (technical and business) staff.
- C. Lines worth learning -- good literary quality.
- D. Suitable cast size -- suited to the number, experience, and ability of those who may be expected to audition for roles,
- E. Sufficiently different from other recent plays appearing -- adding variety to the long-range program.
- F. Helpful in expanding this secondary school's theatre program -- capable of extending and enriching interest in theatre.

- G. Audience appeal -- capable of inspiring a lively publicity campaign and bring a suitable audience to the theatre.
- H. Capable of production within the budget and with the facilities,
 - 1. time element (rehearsal period);
 - 2. physical plant (size of stage, fly space and wings, lighting and sound facilities);
 - 3. set, costume, makeup, and properties requirements;
 - 4. business aspects (box office, tickets, programs, publicity).
- I. Performable with language and action suited to the educational -- suitable for performance with little revision.

II. In order to strive for a theatre arts program of the highest quality and provide students with a comprehensive and wide-ranging exposure to outstanding dramaturgy, plays for production will be considered which will/may fulfill the following criteria:

- A. Enrich and support the curriculum.
- B. Be appropriate for the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the cast, production (technical and business) staff and audience.
- C. Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary and dramatic appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical standards of the cast, production (technical and business) staff and audience.
- D. Provide opposing viewpoints on important and/or controversial issues in order that the cast, production staff and audience may develop critical standards for making judgments.
- E. Provide information reflective of the many and various religious, ethnic and cultural groups.

III. When selecting a play for production on the secondary school level, principle and reason will be placed over personal opinion and prejudice. Isolated lines or words taken out of context are not adequate reason for rejection of a play. Consideration will be given to:

- A. Truth and art.
- B. Factual accuracy, authoritativeness, balance and integrity.

C. Quality of presentation, imagination, vision, creativeness and style appropriate to the idea.

As helpful as the SSTA's criteria is, as you begin to select a play or musical for your first production with a new group of students, I urge you to consider these two suggestions above all others:

Suggestions for Beginning Directors

#1: Choose a simple production

Once you have conducted the workshops or otherwise have a thorough understanding of your students' abilities, and feel you can begin to select your production, begin by selecting a simple production to direct for your first show and try to keep the cast small (under 20 at least!) Keep the production SMALL AND SIMPLE the first time around. No matter how many one act or full-length productions you may have directed in college, directing at the high school level is a completely different situation! First, you will not only be directing the production, but you will also be the set, lighting, sound, and costume designer. No matter how many volunteers you may recruit, you will inevitably be in charge of the construction and coordination of the technical elements of the show.

You will also function in some capacity as the technical director, set building foreman, head electrician, producer, publicist, box office manager, make-up and hair designer, house manager, and so much more. Even if you are able to find capable volunteer assistants and responsible students, you will have more to do than you can possibly imagine at this moment. The last thing you should do is select a production because of student, parent, or staff pressure. The vocal music teacher may really want to do Grease or The Music Man, but she is not the person who will be responsible for the execution of the show! The principal may really like to see his students do a family production like The Sound of Music for the community, but he does not have to worry about the demanding set needs, recruiting and training children, or making or renting the many costumes for the production.

Please do not misunderstand me, here. "Simple" does not necessarily mean amateurish or without merit. You will want to choose carefully. Do not select an "easy

script” just to make your job easier. Good material will help, not hinder, the actors and director. There is a good deal of garbage being written and published specifically for middle school and high school directors who look for the easy production to do. This is not what I am suggesting. You should challenge yourself, your actors, and eventually your audiences with the material you choose. Just don’t over-extend yourself, especially the first few times out. Instead, fairly assess your strengths and weaknesses as a director and designer as well as those of your students.

Even if you are tempted to select a large cast play because of the exceptional quality of the students, because you have always wanted to direct a particular production, or because the musical director REALLY wants to do a BIG production, DON’T! Beginning with a small cast show with *few technical demands* will spare you much anguish, evenings without sleep, and absolute exhaustion. Whether you select a musical or straight play is up to you and your administration; however, you should select a production that doesn’t overwhelm you or your students. Use this first production as a litmus test to evaluate your and your student’s strengths and weaknesses. Leave Guys and Dolls and A Midsummer Nights Dream for another year. Consider plays that are made up of short vignettes and feature ensemble casts. This will give you flexibility in cast size and give almost every actor an equal status in the play. There are several very strong scripts that are build around this concept. My favorites are Peter Dee’s full length play Voices from the High School (Baker’s Plays), Brad Slaughter’s 90 minute plays “Class Action” (Smith and Kraus) and “Second Class,” (Baker’s Plays.) These plays also work very well on a simple, non-realistic set.

You will also need plenty of time to find staff, parent, and community support for those bigger productions. For those of us pampered by collegiate programs with set, sound, prop, and costume designers, technical directors, and production crews, the reality of the high school situation is a shock. Most of the time, you are the producer, director, designer, publicist, technical director, and much more. Until you can begin to find competent, creative, and willing volunteers to help relieve you of some of your many hats, select a small cast show. Remember, during the ten + weeks of a production process and all the hours of after school rehearsals this entails, you are still teaching a full

load of classes (five to six each day), grading papers, planning lessons, attending meetings, etc. Now is not the time to “prove yourself” to your colleagues by producing Oklahoma no matter how badly the music director wants to do this show!

#2: Choose Age Appropriate Material

At the end of this section is a list of plays that are good choices for high school actors. Although many of the plays could be done with elaborate sets, costumes, and lighting designs, they could also be adapted and produced with an emphasis on the acting. As you select scripts for your actors, try to limit your search to productions that primarily involve characters in their teens or early twenties. The closer in age the actor is to the character and his/her experiences, the better your young actors can focus on creating a believable character. Yes, a young actor can believably play characters older than himself, but this kind of work takes training and time. Start with plays that contain characters that the students can identify with and relate to.

Although I have heard of high school directors directing Death of a Salesman, there are really only three characters (Biff, Happy, and Bernard) that a high school student can truthfully act. To expect a seventeen or eighteen year old to be able to create the inner life of Willy or Linda is a bit ludicrous. There are high school directors who will tell you that it can be done and that they directed a “magnificent production of it.” They will tell you that you just have to have the right actor to play Willy. Well, I have worked with many very talented young men over the last fifteen years and I haven’t met one yet who could truthfully perform this incredibly demanding role. As an actor myself who is entering his “middle age,” I would struggle mightily with this role. How could I expect a teenager to perform it? Sure a high school student could play this role, but why? If you want to challenge a young actor with a character as difficult as Willy or Linda Loman, save it for the supportive workshop atmosphere of the drama classroom.

One of the most often produced plays in the high school canon is Our Town, chosen primarily because directors believe it is easy to direct since it has no props or sets. Yet this production is one of the most difficult plays you could select to direct with young actors. Most of the characters are middle age or older including several of the most pivotal characters. Yes, George and Emily are excellent roles for adolescent actors, but

the Stage Manager, Mr. Webb and Mrs. Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs, and most of the other parts are not. Teenage actors are certainly capable of creating these roles, but they will not be able to create very believable characters without a great deal of help and natural talent. Moreover, the conflict is subtle and “ordinary,” which has much to do with the theme of the play. How do you make all of the stage action and character interaction come alive and be as engaging as it should be? The production is also very challenging because the focus is on the acting, with no set or props to “distract” the audience from the weaknesses of the actors. The play is brilliant, wonderful, and exceedingly difficult to do well, whether at the high school, college, community, or professional level. Therefore, “simpler” does not always mean easier or better.

Obviously if you limit your selection to scripts with entirely adolescent and twenty something characters, you will not have much of a selection to choose from. Certainly there are many excellent classic scripts for high school students that include older characters. Plays like Arsenic and Old Lace, The Curious Savage, and You Can't Take It With You are good choices for high school directors. You will undoubtedly need to select scripts with middle age and older characters. My advice is to choose wisely and carefully. Try to select scripts with characters you believe your actors can truthfully portray. Again, see the appendix for a list of suggested scripts. You will have plenty of work to do to draw truthful, realistic, underplayed, honest, and believable performances from your actors as it is. Don't complicate your already arduous task by asking and expecting your young actors to develop a Willy Loman, no matter how badly the English teachers would like to you to stage this production!

Suggested Plays and Musicals to Read and Consider For Production

Here is a list of plays that you may want to consider if directing a high school production for the first time. Obviously you will want to read these plays yourself before you blindly select a production! Although I have not personally directed each of these productions, I have used many of these as sources for scene work in my beginning acting classes. I have also read each and determined them to be good choices for novice high school directors. Some of these plays and musicals are more challenging than others

depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual directors. The plays are alphabetically arranged, not arranged according to preference. I am sure you will find many others in your reading and experimentations.

<u>FULL LENGTH PLAYS</u>	<u>MUSICALS</u>	<u>ONE ACT PLAYS</u>
<p><u>And Stuff</u> by Peter Dee <u>Choices</u> by Walden Theatre Young Playwrights <u>Class Action</u> by Brad Slaughter <u>Second Class</u> by Brad Slaughter <u>The Curious Savage</u> by John Patrick <u>David and Lisa</u> by Theodore Isaac Reach and adapted by James Rubin <u>Dear Ruth</u> by Norman Krasna <u>Eddie "Mundo" Edmundo</u> by Lynne Alvarez <u>The Effect of Gamma Rays</u> by Paul Zindel (you need an experienced actress to play the mother, though) <u>Every 17 Minutes The Crowd Goes Crazy</u> by Paul Zindel <u>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u> by Celeste Raspanti <u>In Sight</u> by Louisville's Young Playwrights <u>Less Than Human Club</u> by Timothy Mason <u>Love, Death, and the Prom</u> By Jon Jory <u>The Nerd</u> by Larry Shue <u>The Outsiders</u> by S.E. Hinton <u>Real Queen of Hearts Ain't Even Pretty</u> by Brad Bailey <u>Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon</u> by D.D. Brooke <u>Up The Down Staircase</u> by Christopher Sergel from Bel Kaufman's book <u>Voices from the High School</u> by Peter Dee <u>Voices From Washington High</u> by Craig Sodaro <u>You Can't Take It With You</u> by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman <u>The Young and Fair</u> by N. Richard Nash</p>	<p><u>Carnival</u> (Tams Witmark) <u>Dames at Sea</u> (Samuel French) <u>The Fantasticks</u> (Musical Theatre International) <u>Godspell</u> (Musical Theatre International) <u>How to Eat Like a Child</u> (Samuel French) <u>Little Shop Of Horrors</u> (Samuel French) <u>Once Upon a Mattress</u> (Rogers and Hammerstein Music Library) <u>Thurber Carnival</u> (Samuel French) <u>You're a Good Man Charlie Brown</u> (Tams Witmark)</p> <p><u>Truthfully, no musical is easy to produce.</u> No matter what someone might tell you, ALL musicals are difficult to produce effectively. Beginning directors are wise to direct several plays before attempting to direct a musical production, even if they are working with experienced music directors and/or choreographers. However, selecting a small cast production that requires simple sets is always wise when doing a musical for the first time.</p>	<p><u>"Ascension Day"</u> by Timothy Mason <u>"Competition Piece"</u> by John Wells <u>"Courtship"</u> by Horton Foote <u>"The Happy Journey to Camden and Trenton"</u> by Thornton Wilder <u>"Hard Candy"</u> by Jonathan Rand <u>"High Tide"</u> by Brad Slaughter <u>"Final Dress Rehearsal"</u> by John Frakes <u>"Juvie"</u> by Jerome McDonough <u>"The Pot Boiler"</u> by Alice Gerstenberg <u>"This is a Test"</u> by Stephen Gregg</p>

A Few More Suggestions

- Join a professional theatre teacher organization, like the Educational Theatre Association which produces a terrific journal, *Teaching Theatre*, which is unavailable anywhere else. You should also get involved in your local theatre teacher association if one is available. In Washington State we are lucky to have the Washington Alliance for Theatre Education (W.A.T.E) which presents teacher in-services each year, sponsors an annual theatre festival for high school drama groups, and much more.
- Beg your administration for some storage space and start collecting usable clothing, furniture, and other donations so you will have some stock materials to recycle and reuse each year or when needed. Attic storage space, sheds, closets...whatever you can find. Appeal to the administrators' fiscal sense by explaining that you need to make your funds go further by storing and reusing sets, props, and costumes. Lumber and fabric is simply too expensive to throw away at the end of a production.
- Become involved in the local community theatre and/or establish a relationship with the local college theatre departments. These organizations can be terrific resources for assistance with costumes, props, lights, and much more. Network with those in your community that you can contact when you need advice about or help with a production.
- Get parents involved. You can't do this job alone. Parents need to be willing to assist you with ticket selling, set building, costume sewing, etc....You can usually find a handful of very dedicated parents who will become indispensable advocates of your program and will be willing to help you find help from other parents.
- Make sure that if the most important person in your life (lover, husband, wife, "significant other") doesn't LITERALLY share your involvement in the co-curricular activity, working right along with you at technical or acting rehearsals, he or she will at least be understanding enough not to make you feel guilty for the hours you will have to spend on it. I am the luckiest high

school director I know because my wife is willing (thank goodness!) to work as my costume designer so we see each other "at work."

CHAPTER SIX

BUILDING A BUDGET

As you get ready to select your production, you will need to consider production costs. If you do not have a budget, you must be prepared to approach the school and / or district administration about an allocation of funds. Your program is as important to your students and to the school community as the sports and music programs.

Typical Production Costs

You can't possibly produce productions without a budget. Royalty costs for musicals often exceed \$1,000-\$2,000 depending on the number of performances you offer. Scripts for plays average about \$6.00 each and at 10 to 30 cast members you will pay between \$60.00 and \$180.00 for scripts. Royalties for most straight plays average about \$100.00 per performance, so this is an additional \$200.00 to \$300.00.

To give you an idea of some of the expenses you might have for typical productions, I have included the expense sheets for the last two productions that I directed, The Fantasticks and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

<u>The Fantasticks</u>		<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u>	
\$2,000.00	Royalties for five performances and Script Rental/Security Deposit	\$70.00	Scripts
\$1,500.00	Materials for set: plywood and 2x4's to build platforms, pipes for horizontal and vertical supports, pipe clamps, paint for platforms, arches, props, etc....	\$2,000.00	Costumes
\$500.00	Lighting gels, lamps, gobos, cables, etc....	\$1,000.00	Set materials (plywood, 2x4, Styrofoam, glue, scupltcoat, paint, muslin for legs, paint supplies)
\$400.00	Payment to choreographer	\$300.00	T-Shirts for advertising
\$600.00	Payment to accompanist	\$300.00	Sound supplies (tapes for music cues, batteries for headsets, videotapes, replacement tape player, etc...)
\$200.00	Publicity (film for lobby and press kits, Zip Disk, photo paper, copies, color cartridge, paper for posters, paper for programs	\$300.00	Make up and supplies
		\$200.00	Props
		\$400.00	Assorted expenses (pizza for crew work parties, paper products, Shakespearean acting workshop by

\$500.00	Make up supplies (for use in future shows as well)	professional director, etc....
\$100.00	Sound supplies (batteries for headsets and body mics)	\$4570.00 Total Expenses
\$50.00	Slide whistle, block mallet, etc...sound effects for MUTE	
\$350.00	T Shirts for promotion for cast, crew, directors, administration, volunteers, etc....	
\$300.00	Costumes, wig, moustache	
\$200.00	Assorted expenses (postage, shipping for scripts and scores, sewing supplies, sandpaper, bits for tools, etc.	
\$6700.00	Total Expenses	

You certainly could do these productions more cheaply. However, no matter how economically you attempt to produce a production, you will find that unexpected expenses occur quite frequently. You will also find that as you do more and more productions, you will get tired of trying to do quality productions on a shoestring budget. You will become frustrated with the limitations placed on you and your productions without a reliable source of income to support your endeavors. Some productions just can not be done successfully and cheaply (most musicals, for example.)

I originally had hoped to do A Midsummer Nights Dream with a limited budget. However, as I began to design the sets and work with the costume designer, I started to reconsider my initial concept of the show. I researched the possibilities for an interesting makeup design using Ben Nye's "Lumiere" (luminescent) and MagicCake makeup. This specialty make up was not cheap. The costume designer and I came up with the idea of using tie-dye in the fairies costumes and using bodysuits with flowing fabric attached to them. I designed a unit set that resembled a rock outcropping in the forest with a variety of levels using platforms. To create this set I needed to use a good deal of plywood to build new platforms, make borders and legs and paint them with special scenic paint to

look like trees and foliage, face the platforms with Styrofoam and carve it to look like stone, use hardener on the Styrofoam to keep it from falling apart, and much more.

I also decided to use six gobos (shapes or patterns used in light fixtures to simulate textures) to create a forest look on the stage floor. The gobos cost \$100.00, but created an excellent effect. Because fog is called for when Puck disorients the lovers at the end of act three, scene two, I decided to use a fog machine for this effect and needed to rent one from a local theatrical supplier. I also found that I needed to purchase about \$300.00 worth of dry ice for the technical and dress rehearsals and for the run of the show. In short, I realized that what I really wanted to do with the play was going to cost more money than I had originally planned to spend. The technical work on the show and the money spent on the set, costumes, makeup, props, and lights helped to make the production a memorable success. I could have done the show without these added elements, but my audiences (for better and for worse) have come to expect more of our productions.

The same is true with my production of The Fantasticks. I wanted to build the platform structure called for in the script to extend over the orchestra pit and into the audience to get the actors as close to the audience as possible. I also wanted to build a pipe structure that would be capable of supporting actor weight and lighting instruments and extend up from the platforms. The pipes were the most expensive item in the set, costing about \$800.00 for the pipes and fittings. Lumber is also expensive. However, the result was a terrific acting space that brought the actors much closer to the audience than our proscenium stage allowed. The show would have worked on the stage without the pipe structure, but it would not have been nearly as effective.

Sources of Revenue

As you begin to purchase materials for costumes, lumber for sets, props, tickets, power and hand tools to build the sets, lighting gels, bulbs for lighting instruments, and much more, you will soon realize that you need funding from your school for your productions. You can rely on ticket income, student fundraisers, and the like, but if the administration is going to offer this activity and sponsor it, they must support your program with more than just lip service. This support may not come immediately. You

may need to prove yourself and the worth of your program first. Unfortunately, the school and district administration will never support the arts with the same fervor and financial assistance that they do athletics. However, when they see the quality of your productions and the impact these quality productions have on the community and the community's attitude toward the school, administrators will be more likely to offer much needed funding. Therefore, it may take some time. Be patient, but be persistent.

This financial support may not come immediately and you will need to decide what you want to do if the administration fails to offer its support. If you wish to produce productions without financial assistance, you will need to develop a reliable funding source. However, I urge you to avoid selling candy bars or holding car washes. These activities are extremely time consuming to organize and to keep organized. **The drama teacher's schedule is already over burdened!**

There are several better methods of raising money for a production. Below are some of the sources I have used to finance productions.

Student Activity Fund / A.S.B. Monies

The first place to look for support is from the school activity fund. Collecting fees from students for ASB cards usually create this fund. At our school, each student who participates in a club, activity, or sport is required to purchase this card. Once the proceeds are collected, the money is disbursed to the organizations based on their request the previous spring. For the musical and drama productions, I usually receive a total of about \$1,000 to help offset costs. Sometimes I have received more than I have requested and sometimes less, depending on the money available in the "pot." If the student body is not in the habit of giving money to the drama program for its productions, put a presentation together that informs the activities administrator and the student body officers how much a typical production costs, the benefits for the students who participate in this activity and for those who attend the productions, etc. You should not have to have a bake sale to produce a production.

Costume Fee

I collect a small fee from the cast members of each production to help offset costume and makeup costs and to help pay for the t-shirts I order for the students to help

advertise the production. I usually charge each cast member \$25.00 to help defray these costs. Depending on the size of the cast, this can generate between \$250.00 from a cast of ten to \$1,000.00 for a cast of forty.

Student sampler shows

One way to try to increase ticket sales for your production is to do a “teaser” performance for the high school students. You can work with the English department or the ASB activities advisor to help coordinate this event. It is best to offer a cutting of scenes and/or songs from the show that will entice the students to want to come and see the full production during the show’s run. For Godspell, we performed the entire first act in it’s entirety. For the Fantasticks, we did the same thing. For straight plays, you can either perform the first act of a two or three act play or do a variety of scenes threaded together with narration. Student samplers can accomplish two goals: You can entice students to come see the production and pay for the entertainment and you can use the event to sell your drama program to students who might be interested in taking the drama classes after seeing the production. See appendix T for more information.

Ticket Sales

There is no simple way to predict exactly how much you will receive from ticket sales. Traditional forms of “advertising” do not necessarily bring in the customers. Attendance at your productions is determined by many factors: the size of your school; the size of the town; competing productions, concerts, or events in your area; ticket prices (either too high or too low), geographic location (isolated or in a big city with much competition), and others. However, two factors are more consistent and more reliable predictors. The first is size of your cast and the second is the reputation of your program.

The larger the cast, the larger the audience. Musicals draw larger crowds than straight plays. Comedies draw larger crowds than dramas. Good word of mouth about a production can push the attendance a little higher. Show choice (familiarity of title) might also have a small impact on attendance, but not much. Very few people in most communities have heard of more than a handful of play titles, unless they were turned into movies.

I also send out ticket order forms (see appendix Q) using interschool mailers (free!) to every teacher at the high school, every school in the district, every district administrator, and every school board member. I also mail them to every parent of the cast and crew members, every patron of the drama program, and to many assorted businesses in the community. This can be a very cheap way to advertise your upcoming production and generate ticket sales.

You can also increase attendance at your productions by consistently doing high quality work. This has been my experience, though I have spoken with several very good directors who have seen little, if any, growth in attendance even though they are producing quality productions. The biggest single consistent factor seems to be cast size. However, larger cast sizes tend to increase expenses, so I am not sure that packing your cast with "extras" is the answer to increased profitability!

Drama Patron Program

The single best method of generating income to use for your drama productions is by establishing a **PATRON PROGRAM** that you can use to augment your budget. See Appendix C for sample forms. Most people are aware of the concept of the patron program. Individuals or companies send a donation in a specified amount to a performing arts organization (theatre, symphony, etc.) and in exchange are provided with a certain number of tickets, priority seating, company newsletter, etc. Patrons can use part of this donation as a tax deduction since the individual or company is donating a certain amount in addition to the value of the tickets to the performing company.

Over the last ten years, I have averaged about \$2000-\$3000 (yearly) in donations from faculty members, parents, community members, and businesses. I have also been able to compile a database of patrons over the years that I continue to send information to even if they have not chosen to remain a patron on a consecutive basis. This way, even if they have forgotten or chosen not to renew their patronage, I can still send them information about the productions, ticket information, etc. and advertise the production through direct mailing to patrons of the arts.

Begin by sending the patron forms and information to all staff members at the high school and in the district. If you want to save paper, you can begin by emailing staff

members to learn who would be interested and then you can send hard copies to only those individuals. You can also create a brochure with information about your program and send these to interested school personnel. Brochures and fliers are also powerful tools to use to send to parents of the drama students and members of your casts.

You should also consider sending patron information out to businesses. Begin by finding out which businesses seem to be supportive of the community's schools and students. Avoid large corporations like STAPLES and KMART. They simply don't contribute to local schools. Instead, approach small businesses, law offices, and other professionals that have students in the district or are alumni of the school district. If you aren't sure who these people are, ask your administration, alumni organization, retire teachers organization, and others who have lived in the community for many years. Create a mail merge program using MS WORD or another program and personalize your letters to the individuals and businesses your are approaching. I don't do this with the information sent to the district staff, but I do send individualized letters to past patrons, community members, and business people. This is an important personalized touch to your request for financial support.

I have also raised additional monies (\$500.00 to \$1,000.00) by selling advertising space in the programs for each production. This income helps to offset the costs for each production. Since our district print shop prints the programs free of cost to my program, these advertisements are pure profit for the drama program. See the Sample Advertisement Form (appendix F) in the appendix.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DIRECTING A PRODUCTION

Obviously, I cannot discuss in one chapter EVERYTHING that goes into directing a production, especially a musical production. What I offer here is merely a “snapshot” of the process of putting a production together. Throughout this chapter, I will discuss how I direct a production, from selecting the production to the end of the rehearsal process. Where possible, I will use a production of Godspell that I directed in the fall of 1999 as an example.

Selecting the Production

In the spring of 1999, I decided that I wanted to direct the well-known musical Godspell. I had just finished directed a production of Pippin and began thinking about the musical for the following year. Like many high schools, we do a musical each year at our high school. I also chose this musical but it has a smaller cast than many, and I had developed a scenic design concept that would not be expensive or time-consuming to construct, but would still be effective.

It is worth noting that I decided several years ago to only do large cast musicals (casts with more than 15 or 20) every other year. I chose to do this for several reasons. David Grote discusses the most important reason in his book Play Directing in the School:

You can't build drama classes if the bulk of your play choices encourage students to take music classes. There must be significantly more roles for non-singers than for singers, or there will be no reasons why students should take any acting classes. (218)

Mr. Grote suggests only doing a musical every two or three years. I decided to compromise with my music director at the time (who was in favor of doing musicals every year since they helped recruit students for his program) and alternate between large and smaller cast shows. I have been able to sell my drama classes to students as a training ground for the co-curricular productions because we don't focus all of our energies every year on the “big musical.”

Secondly, large cast musicals are expensive, time consuming, and incredibly exhausting for the high school director. After about ten years of directing large musical after large musical every year, I was beginning to “burn out” and instead of looking forward to planning for the next year’s musical production, I was groaning at the thought. I decided one way to solve this was to do small cast musicals every other year. During the small cast musical years, I would direct a large cast play to give as many students as I could the opportunity to participate.

There is usually tremendous pressure to do musicals, from students, staff, parents, and administrators. Musical is “fun.” Yes they are fun -- fun to watch, especially if done well. However, few people realize the backbreaking labor of producing a musical. Musical requires three times the people on stage (most of whom will never have acted before), five times as many sets and costumes, many technical elements that are not part of a straight play, additional staff members to coordinate with and supervise, and much more. For the high school director, the large cast, multi-set, lavish costume heavy musical is anything but “fun.”

Don’t be fooled into thinking the large cast musicals will increase enrollment in your drama classes. These productions will improve enrollment in the vocal music program, but not the drama program. The number one requirement of being in a musical is not the ability to act well, but to sing well. Students in your acting classes will sign up for choral classes in the hopes of being cast in the next musical. Music students will not sign up for the drama classes for the same reason.

I also chose Godspell because I love the concept of the show and the musical score. I also chose it because it’s a good show for students to do since it’s mainly ensemble playing. Also, I had the perfect actor/singer/dancers for this production. I had been working with this group of students for a couple of years and knew what many of these actor/singer/dancers strengths and weaknesses were. The director can also interpret Godspell in a way that really suits teenagers. You can use the individual actor’s strengths in this production and we did.

Let's go through the whole process of getting the show ready, from start to finish, and that will give some indication of the approach to the school play that works for me. I can't stress that point enough: it works for me but may not for you.

Decision Making: Choosing the Show

The decision to do Godspell was arrived at by discussion between the music director and myself. You know the kind of thing:

Music director: "What should we do for next fall's musical?"

Me: "Let me just get through this next show and...."

Often this is how the discussion with the music director and myself begins after every musical production has closed! I actually had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do the following year and why. I had just finished directing a production of Pippin and found that I had many, many talented young actor/singer/dancer/improvisers. I knew that Godspell would be perfect for them. In late spring 1999, five months before auditions would take place, an informational meeting was held in which students were informed of the selection of Godspell as the fall musical. Attendees were provided with an overview of the story and audition procedures. Scripts were made available for check out as well. (See the appendix M for sample information sheets.)

Providing potential auditioners with as much information as possible about the play, characters, etc. as well as an outline of the rehearsal and performance schedule is very important. You want your potential cast members as well prepared to audition as they can possibly be. I also require students and their parents to sign the audition forms which outlines rehearsal times, expected rehearsal behaviors, etc. This is to make sure that students are held accountable if they are cast in a production. There should be no sudden realizations by those cast that they will be gone for a week of rehearsals!

I began seriously thinking about what direction the production was going to take late in the spring, four months before auditions. I first read the script three or four times without any attempt to do any interpretation or impose any structure, and then I forgot it for a week or so as it could ferment in my mind. I also purchased the available soundtracks and cast albums and listened to them constantly. I watched the film, but tried not to let it

influence me too much. Sometimes I don't even watch the film if one is available. I don't want to feel "obligated" or unduly influenced by someone else's concept of the material.

Research and Concept Formation

Because of the religious nature of the show, I also needed to research the production's history to find out if public high schools had encountered problems with groups opposing its presentation. (This became an invaluable step in the pre-production process as I will discuss later!) I spent hours on the internet and in the public library conducting research and found numerous examples of schools (and church groups) that had successfully produced this musical without any problems. I found little information about problems directors of public schools had encountered. I also knew a few colleagues at other public high schools that had produced Godspell without any problems. I shared my findings with the school and district administrations and they gave me the "thumbs up." I plunged in. Little did I know of what was to come!

In the course of my research I did "speak" on the internet with many directors who had successfully directed Godspell and spoke very highly of its impact on the students, directors, and the audiences. I also learned about some of the challenges directors faced in staging the production and some of the solutions they came up with. I read articles by composer Stephen Schwartz and others about the creation of the original musical production. In short, I spend many hours immersing myself in the history and aura of this musical. Once I felt comfortable that I had sufficient evidence that public high schools had successfully produced this production, I approached the school administration with my plan to direct this production. In my initial meeting with the principals, I stressed that I would play down the religious nature of the material and focus more on the underlying message of the script which is really "Love thy neighbor" and "treat others as you would wish to be treated." The principal supported my decision to do the production but passed my concept and plans on to the school district administrators. They also agreed that I could produce this production.

Gradually the idea began to take shape that all of the characters, with the exception of Jesus and John the Baptist, were very childlike. There was a quality of innocence about the script, in the first act especially that reminded me of young children.

This gave me the start I needed and the ideas began to flow. The cast would not be children, but child-like adolescents, and the setting would be a children's playground.

Then I had the idea that this playground would not be a real playground, but a construction site in the "inner-city." This construction site would be changed during the first act of the play, into a playground. The exterior would look like a building site or a derelict building propped up by scaffolding. Behind the scaffolding would be blank walls of buildings covered with graffiti. (I left the students to do this themselves, insisting only that there should be no obscenity.) In the early fall, I rented the scaffolding for two months for less than \$300.00. One problem was solved. I also contacted a local machinery shop to have a "slide" constructed. I would use this slide in the construction site into playground transformation during act one. Now I could really get down to work.

During the summer I decided that I wanted to include as many cast members as I reasonably could without creating more headaches for myself since this was my "small musical" year. The script only calls for eight actors, but I wanted to increase this size somewhat. I began to play with the idea of increasing the number to twice that size by creating the concept of competing gangs that would begin the play antagonizing one another. Within each of these gangs would be the "leading players" with the song solos and lines. The competing gangs would enter the stage during the prologue with the philosophers (leading players) on the scaffolding around the stage. I ended up bringing the gangs in near the end of the prologue to keep from upstaging the leading players and this challenging piece of music. I decided to dress one group primarily in black and white and the other group primarily in red and black. The philosophers would be in black habits with hoods. Early in this concept development process I decided that during the opening of the musical that the gang would then begin to get rid of their "gang colors" and put on bright, happy, colorful clothes as the musical progressed, especially during the song "Day by Day."

I decided I would use the parables at the start of the musical as a competition between the rival gangs with John The Baptist and Jesus working to get rid of the competition and to bring the groups together. It sounds a little odd, but it worked very well. I saw this potential in the script and, though it took some work in rehearsals to make

this work, the concept was executed by the actors and I quite well. I began to see this concept in my mind as I worked on the play during the summer of 1999.

Re-reading the script with this idea in mind, I realized that this concept would work well. The biggest challenge was to make the gangs intermix believably and early in the progress of the musical without seeming unbelievable or artificial. I was able to achieve this very carefully with the playfulness of the parables, improvised business between the players, and the songs to create tension and release. I also used Jesus and John to help merge these two groups into one. By the end of the middle of the first act, the transition was complete and felt logical, natural, and believable. Thus, the overall pattern for the show was established and my next task was to see that everything fitted into it. It is worth pointing out here, however, that you should never try to impose any pattern on a play that is not, first and foremost, supported by the text, and - and I believe this is equally important - does not illuminate the text in some way. Every theatregoer has suffered through plays where the director has clearly imposed a particular style on the production just to be different. Some directors are particularly prone to do this to Shakespeare, feeling that being different is somehow of value in itself. It isn't, of course: if you have nothing new to say, then playing around with costumes and setting isn't going to bring about a great production!

In this case, I felt, the idea I decided to use was supported by the text. The text, in fact, gave me the idea in the first place. I also felt the maturing of the "children" and their behavior would be a reflection of the maturing of Jesus' Disciples (and, by extension, of all Christians) as they came to understand what his message was. The final growing up, brought about by the crucifixion, reflects both the effects upon the Disciples and the fact that we do mature through suffering and pain.

It is difficult to identify what comes next in the directing process since so many things seem to happen at once. The moment the basic idea for the show takes root ideas start flowing fast. If they don't, then the idea isn't a very good one; it'll seem very forced if you continue to use it. So, the order I mention things may not have been the order in which they actually happened.

Working on a show of this nature is very different from doing straight play. With a straight play, you may have no one to consult at the pre-production stage except, possibly, the designers. And I say "possibly" because in most school productions, as in most amateur shows, the director is almost always at least the set and lighting designer. In a musical, however, you will probably have a *musical director* and, hopefully, a *choreographer* (See sample contracts: Appendix I.) These staff members need to be included immediately. I try to hold production meetings with all of the various heads of department: musical director, choreographer, stage manager, designer or set artists, sound, costumes, etc...everyone who will be effected by my concept. When a group meeting isn't possible, I meet with each on an individual basis.

I began by meeting with the choreographer. I made a list of those songs for which I wanted dance routines, added notes on what effect I was after in the routines, and gave her the Broadway cast CD to listen to. It would, obviously, have been better to have the accompanist and musical director make a tape of the music, but I didn't have this person hired yet. The show was, after all, over four months away.

The notes I provided the choreographer were fairly sketchy. I discussed my concept of the two gangs and told her I wanted to use the first few songs as competitive challenges between the two groups. By "Day by Day," I wanted the two groups to begin to "come together" and I would use the opening parables and songs to establish this. During "Day by Day," the cast would need to have time to change (both onstage and off) into the colorful clothing they would wear throughout the rest of the show. I also knew I wanted something vaudevillian for Jesus for the second verse of "Learn Your Lessons Well." I wanted something wild and full of movement to close Act I ("The Light of the World") and a sultry (yet innocent!) dance routine for the final chorus of "Turn Back, O Man" that Jesus and the soloist would be singing and dancing together. For "All for the Best," I wanted a wild dance using machine like movements for everyone to accompany a soft-shoe dance routine to accompany Jesus and Judas. My initial request was simply for her to listen to the music, look at what I wanted, and let me know if it was possible. Since I have worked with this choreographer for almost ten years, I felt very comfortable

in leaving her to come up with her own ideas as well, as long as they were aligned with my original concept of the production.

Sometime during this process, I also designed and ordered the t-shirts for the production and made arrangements to receive them before the first week of rehearsals. I like to have the t-shirts early for publicity photos and to build a sense of “family” among the cast and crew.

Dealing with Controversy

As August began to dwindle away and the school year grew closer, I received a call from a concerned parent about the content of Godspell. Apparently, although the students had had the scripts available to them months before, a few students had just recently gotten together and expressed their disapproval of the play to their parents. So a meeting was scheduled between the administrators, the directors, the students, and their parents. As I learned at this meeting, a few students and their parents disapproved of the content of the play and the fact that, in their view, Jesus and Christianity was being mocked in the script. The players are, after all, referred to as “clowns” in the script. (Don’t worry, I didn’t understand it either!) They were also offended by the song “Turn Back O’Man,” which they interpreted as a sexual overture to Jesus. I can’t remember all of the complaints, but I recall at least one or two others. To make a long story short, they didn’t believe that this material was appropriate or acceptable material. I was flabbergasted. During the entire conference I worked to understand the concerns of those opposed to the musical and I calmly explained my concept for the production. I tried to address each of the concerns of these individuals during this conference, but regardless of my explanations they were not persuaded that this was an appropriate production for Walla Walla High School to sponsor. Apparently, the basic idea of the Godspell offended them.

However, because I had gone through all proper channels (school and district administration’s had approved my choice months before) and had made the scripts available to students months in advance, the production was allowed to go forward. The handful of students who protested chose not to be involved in the production. They chose instead to work in a community production of Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat,

despite the fact that one of the characters sings a song in the hip grinding style of Elvis Presley.

In all of my pre-research into the potential controversy of choosing to produce this musical at a public high school, I never even *considered* that some religious people would be offended by this production for religious reasons. I had anticipated concerns from those who might interpret this production as “pro-Christianity,” yet not one person presented this concern to me.

On a side note, the previous year, when I directed Pippin, I received a handful of letters complaining about the “content” of the musical being inappropriate for the high school stage. Therefore, controversy wasn’t something that was new to me. I have included a letter in the appendix (appendix O) responding to a student’s letter complaining about the “graphic nature” of my production of Pippin. I include it in this handbook because I think I raise some very important points about the suitability of many productions that are generally accepted as “acceptable” for the high school stage. Unless you choose to do The Sound of Music every year, you will undoubtedly face challenges from someone displeased with your productions!

The Audition and Rehearsal Process

When I select a cast for a production, I want to cast an ensemble that I know will work together as a team...that will be dedicated to the process, professional in their approach to the project, and positive in their interactions with one another. I also want to cast the most creative, energetic, musically and physically talented young people I can find. When I chose to direct Godspell, I knew I had a strong group of students from the previous year’s production so I was confident I would find my group of 20 easily. Incidentally, as you begin preparations for a new production, make sure you have a responsible, intelligent, hard-working, respected student selected as your stage manager. This person is essential to your production and to your sanity as a director. You will need to find someone willing to spend two to three hours everyday in rehearsals doing little more than taking blocking notation for several weeks. The job is not very exciting until tech week arrives and the student takes over your duties backstage. Find an upperclassman (junior or senior) to be the stage manager and an underclassman to be

his/her assistant. This way you can continually train new students to fill the shoes of your graduating seniors. The stage manager should be a helpful assistant throughout this audition process, making sure audition forms are ready, information sheets photocopied, etc. A sample list of stage manager duties is included in Appendix N.

When I advertise for the auditions for a production, I try to advertise as much as I possibly can to let EVERYONE on campus know about the upcoming “event.” I have included sample advertising information in the appendix (appendix K). At least a week in advance, everybody in the school should know the title of the play you are doing, the time and place of auditions, and how many actors are going to be cast. In addition to working with students to make large audition advertising banners on butcher paper, I use the morning announcements on the PA system, and hold at least one informational meeting at least ONE WEEK before the audition. I advertise this meeting along with the auditions.

The Informational Meeting

The informational meeting is very important and I suggest you do this before every production. At this meeting you should discuss the following information with the students:

- #1. ***Play and character information.*** Pass out handouts for the students that explain the play and the characters. Discuss the play with them and your concept for this production. (See appendix M for sample forms.)
- #2. ***Scripts:*** If you haven’t been able to make scripts available to the students until now, try to do so at this meeting. How you do this is up to you. Establish a “check out” method and keep records of who has the scripts and when they are due. Usually a two-day “rental” is fair. Your student stage manager can be in charge of setting up this system and trying to help track this.
- #3. ***Audition Forms:*** You should have audition forms to pass out to each person. It may be sexist, but I choose pink copy paper for women and blue for the men so I can keep them separate when I begin the casting process. On this form you should put a section that announces the rehearsal schedule, a place for students to indicate dates and times they will not be available during the rehearsal process,

and a place for student and parent signatures verifying that BOTH are aware of the time demands of the production. I have included a sample audition form that I use in the appendix (appendix S). The students then need to bring this form with them when they attend the audition. You can use this as a measurement of how responsible a student is, especially if you don't know the student. Since they have to submit this form to you at the audition, you can learn which students are responsible and organized and which are not. This may factor into your casting choices. I used to include an INFORMATION FORM (with a general rehearsal schedule, behavior expectations, etc. but I decided to put some of this information on the audition form and only hand out ONE piece of paper for the students. A sample audition form is included in the appendix (appendix S.)

#4. Crew Applications: I also discuss the importance of and need for responsible crew members at this meeting. I give a brief overview of the kinds of positions available and encourage students to apply to be a member of the crew if they are interested in helping with the production. Most students who get involved in drama do so because they want to be ON STAGE, not behind the scenes. However, students need to see the importance of working behind the scenes. I tell the students that this is often the best place to prove to me that they are responsible, energetic, and enthusiastic and would make good cast members in upcoming productions if they aren't cast in the current show. This is a big part of how I make casting decisions. It isn't enough to be talented to be cast in my productions. I want to work with good people who are helpful, considerate, enthusiastic, dedicated, energetic, self-motivated, and responsible. Prima donnas, egomaniacs, and class clowns are of little use to me and can destroy productions. One of the best ways to prove to me that you are capable of being in an ensemble and working well with others is to first successfully serve as a member of a stage crew. I don't regard highly those students who are not cast and then choose not to be involved behind the scenes of the production. If I have to choose between casting someone who has previously proven himself backstage and someone who

hasn't, I will cast the person who has proven himself to me. A sample crew application form is included in the appendix (Appendix U).

#5. *Student-Parent Contracts*: The last item I pass out and discuss with the students is the CONTRACT (see appendix D). This document sets forth rules and requirements for being a member of the production. It reminds students and parents of the obligation to the activity, and lest the student know the consequences of not obeying the rules. One of the lessons you will learn as a new high school director is that the PARENTS are often the people who need to sign the contract the most. This contract notifies parents of their child's responsibility to the production and the importance of being punctual at all rehearsals for which he is called. In a follow up letter to the cast's parents I encourage them to try to schedule doctor appointments and the like around the rehearsal schedule as much as possible and emphasize the importance of actors attending all scheduled rehearsals. After the students have been cast I when called and reminds them that high school theatre is expensive. They are and canceling a production means that bills go unpaid; that punishing their child by withdrawing him at the last moment punishes the whole cast and crew; and that teaching responsibility to young people usually means that people have to fulfill obligations.

Auditions

As you begin auditions, I want to make two suggestions:

#1. Casting should be colorblind. You need to look past skin color to give all minority students the chance to audition. Sometimes this is exceedingly difficult. Clearly it is hard to justify casting an African-American "Anne Frank." Casting a white cast in a production of A Raisin in the Sun seems ludicrous. Perhaps it is. We need to try to cast actors of color whenever possible.

#2. You will have to cast women in men's roles. There is no way around this. Some royalty houses will not allow you to do this if you write them and request to do this. Publisher *Samuel French* however rescinded its recent refusal to allow this practice. Simply put, you will have far more women interested in auditioning and being a part of your productions than men. You will be able to recruit men

into your program, but their numbers will never equal the number of women (in your program.) So, what do you do? There are only so many plays available with large female casts. You are going to have to change a male doctor to a female doctor if you have the opportunity and if the change doesn't impact the quality of the play. Don't try to disguise the young woman and try to pass her off as a man. It doesn't work and audiences only laugh at the attempt.

#3. Don't double cast your roles. Rehearsals take twice as long and actors only get half the opportunities to perform. I did this once. ONCE! For me, the value of allowing more students the opportunity to perform does not outweigh the headaches caused for the director.

#4. Understudies don't work at the high school level. When do they rehearse? How do you know that the actor playing "Sarah Brown" in your production of Guys and Dolls will be the one to get sick and not "Adelaide?" How will you adequately rehearse this person for the role? Find other ways to cover in case of emergency. Recently I had to replace a student playing "Flute" in a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream for one performance because of serious illness. I contacted an actor friend of mine in the community to step in and perform this role with a couple of hours of rehearsal time. If the student drops out early in the rehearsal process, you can move another actor into the role from a less important role. Understudies just don't work.

#5. Don't cast everyone. No matter what others might say about the benefits of doing this (increased attendance at the performances, more opportunities for all to participate, etc.) the bottom line is that if anyone can get in without much effort, why put in the effort? Why value the program at all? Being cast in the production or being selected for the crew should be an honor and a privilege, not a right. Cast as many people as you need for the success of the production. Too many bodies cause staging problems, more headaches for your costumer, etc. Doing a good show is your goal...quality, not quantity.

At the high school level, cold readings are the best kind of auditions to encourage the most people to audition. Monologue requirements will scare many students away, or

they will not feel or be adequately prepared and will decide against auditioning. The only time I require a monologue audition is when I am doing a Shakespearean production and want to hear how well the students handle the language to decide if I will call them back for further auditions. My suggestion for auditioning for straight plays is to make many copies of the scripts available several weeks in advance of the auditions and then conduct a first round of cold reading auditions. Allow the actors to read for the roles they would like to read for, even if they aren't right for the roles. You can then make decisions about what roles you will ask specific actors to read for at the call back audition.

Whether you choose to audition with monologue auditions or cold readings from the script, here are a few suggestions.

#1. Make sure access to the scripts is fair. If one student has access to the script before auditions, all students should have access to the scripts. Treat everyone fairly.

#2. Auditions should be open to any student interested in being involved in the production. No "senior only" or "drama class students only" productions.

#3. All auditions should be public. If someone wants to watch auditions, let them, as long as they are quiet. They may decide to audition for this production or future productions. Yes, having an audience will make some auditioners more nervous, but this kind of information may be helpful to you as you begin to make cast selections. Public auditions also give a feeling of openness and fairness to the process. You want to encourage everyone and anyone to audition. You want to expand your program, not limit it to a small, inbred group. Welcome people into the theatre. A tentative would be actor will see that auditioning isn't so terrible and decide to audition. Sure, they may not be strong auditioners, but you might also discover some talent. I have found several talented actors over the years who decided to "just see what this was like."

#4. Be sure to have additional information forms and audition forms on hand for drop in auditioners.

#5. Get ready for auditions by making sure you have enough scripts or sides.

#6. Prepare yourself by making character notes and deciding which roles you will want to have students read for. During the reading audition, see everyone once for the roles they wish to read. Be sure to be fair and see everyone who wants to read for these roles before seeing anyone twice.

For a musical production, I always hold three days of auditions: two days of vocal auditions and a third day of call backs which consists of cold readings, movement/dance, improvisation, and more singing. I schedule two days rather than one day of preliminary auditions to give as many people as possible the chance to audition. This is important at the high school level. You will want to encourage as many students as you can to audition and give them at least two opportunities to do so. At the initial audition, students sing sixteen to thirty-two bars (or one minute) of a song (preferably from a musical) with accompaniment.

In the spring before the end of the school year, I hold an audition workshop (with the choreographer and music director) to help prepare students to audition successfully. If students aren't prepared with a song (many incoming freshman aren't), I have them sing "My Country Tis of Thee" and a few scales. I used to do script readings as well, but no longer. Actors in musicals need to be able to sing. Unless there is a role that doesn't require singing like a featured dancer or character speaking part, I do not worry about hearing students read during this first round or auditions. If I think someone has the right look for a part or I know their work from previous drama productions, class scenes, etc., I will call them back and have them read for the non-speaking roles.

Callbacks

For Godspell, I only called back those students with singing abilities since ALL ENSEMBLE members would need to be able to sing. For most musical productions, I will also call back students who may not be able to sing well, but might be able to read for a small part or non-singing character part (for example, Henry and Mortimer in The Fantasticks.) At the Godspell call back, I spent the first thirty minutes working with students in large groups on a variety of improvisational movement exercises. I also split the actors into small groups and assigned each group to create a brief "hand play" (using only their hands and sounds, no language) based on the title "The Giggle Box." I wanted

to watch the students work together to see how well each was able to both lead and follow within the group's structure. I then had each group perform their scene for the others. I was also looking for those students who seemed to be the most natural and confident on the stage. Finally, I wanted to see how well the students supported one another in these activities. I knew several of the students from previous productions, but many were new to me. I needed to know what kind of people they were.

The next stage of the call back involved choreography with the choreographer teaching the students dance combinations that would be used in various numbers to see who was able to learn to move and remember combinations and who had two left feet. While she worked with one group of actors, I worked with another group and had them read a few parables for me. Since the production is a loosely constructed series of parables, I knew I would be able to select the strongest actors and mix and match them up with the parables they might perform the best. Since the show is a heavy mixture of singing and dancing, I knew I would have to wait to talk with the music director and choreographer to select the strongest twenty actor/singer/dancers. However, I also wanted to select the twenty most professional, enthusiastic, and enjoyable students. I learned long ago not to cast talented people that I didn't trust to also be good, cooperative, and positive people. I want to work with adolescents that aren't always thinking of themselves, but who are also caring, compassionate, and concerned with the good of the others in the company. Nothing can destroy a production more than students who are only there for themselves.

Casting the Production

After auditions are complete, you will need to make the tough decisions. Begin by making an arrangement of the characters in the play, with the most important characters at the top of the sheet. Beside each character, list everyone you saw in auditions that could play this role. Don't put them in an order. You will also find the same actors (usually your best actors) showing up for several characters. Make sure you have at least one actor for each role. Don't limit yourself to only those students who read for specific roles.

Begin your final decisions by identifying the most demanding roles (not necessarily the leading characters.) You will probably only have one or two names penciled in next to these roles. Make a choice and mark the name off your list for other roles he/she might have been considered for. Go to the next most difficult role and repeat this process. Continue this process until you work down to the easiest roles. If only this was the end of the process. Obviously you also have to consider who looks right with whom, scheduling conflicts, etc. But this process of elimination works best for me. There is no way around the difficulty of selecting a cast. It is a gut wrenching experience and can be extremely difficult at times. Always cast talent and the skilled actor (yes, you will have them, even at the high school level) “type” or “look.” Just because someone looks right for the role, doesn’t mean he/she will be able to successfully perform it. Don’t let your ego get the better of you. You may believe yourself to be a terrific acting teacher and director and think you will be able to coach an effective performance out of a neophyte with the right look. Caveat Emptor! Yes, you may be able to do this, but if the part is integral to the success of the production, I suggest you select the actor with the experience and apparent talent, over the actor with the right look. There are just too many other challenges ahead of you as the director. Role the dice if you wish, but be prepared to kick yourself later.

I always emphasize and reinforce the concept of the “*ensemble*” as I begin a production (see appendix R.) There are no stars in a show! Post your cast list in order of appearance. Emphasize that every actor and every character is essential to a production. Destroy the “star” attitude caused by the “big success” in the “big show.” After the auditions for Godspell, the directors chose twenty cast members. However, we did not post the roles these actors would be playing in the production. Instead, we simply called them the Godspell “company” and held a week of rehearsals where we simply sang and worked through the songs, played a variety of theatre games and worked on ensemble building activities. The entire production staff knew who would play Jesus. We knew this before we even began auditioning; however, we did not pre-cast this role nor did we make any final decisions until after the callbacks. By the way, you should never pre-cast roles in a high school production. Doing so will brand you as “unfair” and “biased” and

much more. However, you should always make sure you have the right actors to play the lead roles in your productions. This is vital! One of the major reasons I chose Godspell at this time was because we had a very fine young actor who had a strong voice and was the best natural dancer I had ever worked with. I knew I had an outstanding "Jesus." We also asked various cast members to sing specific solos so we could hear what they could do with the songs.

By the end of the week we had listened to everyone we knew was capable of effectively singing the solos and began to match them up with the songs that would best showcase their abilities. This kind of "auditioning" isn't necessary or efficient in other productions, but with Godspell, I believed it was very helpful. During this time period the cast and I also played around with the parables and began to explore staging possibilities. I asked various people to read some of the storytelling and participating characters to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the actors and their ability to take direction. By the end of the week, I felt confident that we could assign songs and lines to particular actors and form the "principals" (leading soloists and principal actors within the parables) and the "chorus" (those who would have fewer lines and no solos). I knew I wanted to take this kind of time to explore the material and cast the various parts, so I built this into the rehearsal schedule.

The Rehearsal Process: Stage One -- Reading and Training

I always give myself at least ten weeks of rehearsal time when working on a musical and at least eight to nine weeks when rehearsing a non-musical. On average, we rehearse two and a half to three hours each day, five days a week for ten weeks. In working with high school students, I find it is best to err on the side of over-rehearsing the actors and the production. For every production, the first rehearsal is always a reading rehearsal. The cast sits around tables around the stage and we read the play. The first reading is simply for sense. I just want the actors to read the script neutrally without trying to "perform" for one another. They simply need to read the story to get a sense of the plot, the characters, the pronunciations, etc. They also need to identify the entrances and exits and when they are supposed to be on stage. This reading usually takes about two hours. We also sight-read through the songs and I discuss the set design / floor plan. I

also go over rehearsal etiquette (appendix J) with them during this first meeting as well. I usually do one more reading rehearsal on the following day where we begin to read for communication. I ask the actors to work on communicating honestly to the character(s) they are talking to and to listen to what is being said to them by the others. We also discuss some of the most common actor problems to avoid during the reading like avoiding playing pronouns and supporting the ends of the lines to the end thoughts aren't continually thrown away. This problem of trailing off at the ends of phrases and sentences is very common among young actors. I begin to work on these problems early in the process with the actors that demonstrate these tendencies.

As we begin rehearsals, I lay the foundation for successful performance right away. The first lesson of the theatre and of my productions is *discipline*. Showing up at rehearsals punctually and regularly, meeting memorization and homework deadlines (role scoring, character analysis assignments, etc.,) remaining focused during rehearsals, and respecting others performers are all part of this discipline. As Godspell rehearsals began, I made my expectations clear and reinforced these daily in a positive manner. By establishing a sense of "company" early in the rehearsal process with trust exercises and drama games, I created an ensemble with a clear sense of purpose. If actors were late, I spoke with them individually after the rehearsal to learn the cause of their tardiness. I remind the students of the participation contract and give them the opportunity to correct the problem. They are also told that if the problem doesn't improve, they will be dropped from the cast. I also send letter to the parents of the cast members congratulating their students on being selected for the cast (see appendix H). I enclose a copy of the contract, rehearsal schedule, and any other pertinent information. Don't send this information home with the students. Mail it to the parents directly. Parents appreciate this information. They are less likely to argue with you if you need to contact them regarding a cast member's attendance problems.

The second lesson of the rehearsal process is the importance of warming up and getting mentally, physically, and vocally ready for rehearsal. During the first few rehearsals of Godspell, I modeled for the students the vocal and physical warm-ups I expected them to do before every rehearsal. As the actors entered the auditorium for

rehearsal they were expected to begin warming up no later than 3:00 (school releases at 2:50). We began promptly with blocking rehearsals at 3:05. Students were responsible for warming themselves up after they were shown several types of warm ups.

Rehearsal Process: Stage Two -- Staging / Working Rehearsals

After reading rehearsals, we begin to stage the production. In this handbook I will not discuss the mechanics of blocking. There are many excellent directing books that cover this subject in great depth. The “blocking” chapter in David Grote’s Play Directing in the School is especially effective. Francis Hodge’s Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style also covers staging principles in excellent detail. I have little new to offer! Instead, I will discuss some of the tasks, in addition to blocking, that the director undertakes at this stage. By the way, make sure that every member of the cast has a pencil and writes down the moves, otherwise they (and you!) will forget them. Your stage manager of course should write them down in the prompt book as well. You will need to teach your actors some kind of shorthand for taking blocking notation during the first few blocking rehearsals. Insist on a pencil, not a pen, because the moves will change.

During this stage of the process, I begin to teach the actors the importance of the acting process itself. Certain basics must be constantly taught, reinforced, and modeled. These include how to listen, react, identify and pursue objectives, vary tactics, how to use the body and the voice, and more. If the actors are not in your acting classes, as several cast members of Godspell were not, rehearsal time must be devoted to teach and work on the process of acting. This is one of the reasons the rehearsal period needs to be so long. Spending time working on the basics of the acting craft are absolutely essential to quality performances, to creating believable and interesting performances, and to drawing the audience into the play. This kind of work is done primarily in the moment-to-moment workshop rehearsals. As the rehearsal progresses, as it did with Godspell, you and your actors will need to work through every moment of the play, asking such questions as these:

“why do you say that?”

“what do you want the other person to do?”

“what is in your way?”

“what can you do to get what you want?”

“how do you want to effect the other person?”

As we began to work on the parables and scenes in Godspell we addressed these questions right away as we began the blocking stage of the rehearsal. I don't like to direct by just telling the actors where they need to move and when. I want their movements to be based on their intentions and relationships with the other characters in the scene. I want them to understand why I suggest they move or gesture on a specific line. I want them to make intelligent choices about their own movements and to take the initiative to make choices so I don't have to do all of the work. This kind of work takes time and training.

As I have already discussed in chapter four, I avoid talking to the actors in terms of emotional states or adjectives like “be more happy here” or “be angrier.” As a director, you want to learn to speak in terms of “verbs” that the actor can act. This kind of discussion needs to begin early in the rehearsal process so the actors become accustomed to thinking about playing their intentions consistently.

During the staging process, I like to work a little differently than some directors. Some people sit down with many sheets of paper and work out and write down the exact moves of the actors; others do the same, but with a model of the set and figures for the actors; I simply read through the script and scribble down notes to myself as I do so. Often ideas occur to me when I'm doing something else and, wherever possible, I'll jot them down on one of the pages of my diary, or just a bit of paper I happen to have with me. Then when I get home I get out all these pieces of paper and, after rejecting those ideas which on reflection prove to be no good, I put them into a special Notes file on the computer. I'll print them out every now and then, to remind me of what they are, and leave them lying around, altering, adding to or scrubbing out. Since normally I start work on a show two to three months before rehearsals begin, I manage to accumulate a lot of ideas. Incidentally, I've recently modernized this approach and, instead of using scraps of paper which I have -- I confess it! -- been known to lose, I now carry around a Personal Digital Assistant which fits into my pocket and I just note ideas in it.

One of the aspects of directing in educational theatre that is essential that textbooks often overlook are the vital qualities of the director's personality. Successful high school directors must be patient, supportive, optimistic, and energetic. The high school director must have tremendous patience with young actors and be continually optimistic. He can never give up on an actor or a show. Believe me, there will be times when you will feel like giving up on both! Students notoriously lack self-esteem and confidence and those who seem the cockiest are the least cocksure. Confidence must come from you. After all, you cast these individuals. It is your job to help them realize their potential. Praise much; find something they are doing well and acknowledge it at every rehearsal. They will work hard to please you if they trust you and believe you are rooting for them to succeed. Work to give three compliments for every criticism. This will take practice on your part. Never abandon them or communicate that you can't help them. If you are truly stupefied about what to do, tell the actor that you will continue to work on this problem with him/her and together you will find an answer! Encourage and follow through.

In addition to patience, the high school director must have a tremendous amount of energy at every rehearsal. My experience has been that the typical high school actor will give back half the amount of energy that he is given. The larger the cast, the more energy required of you. Your spirit, energy, and positive attitude will unite and inspire the group to achieve greatness. This may sound trite but it is absolutely true. It is your energy and clarity of vision that will lead them to the common goal of quality theatre.

During this process you will also want to begin solidifying your decisions about the blocking of the scenes. As I have suggested, this should be a collaboration between the actors and the director; however, the director should always go into a blocking rehearsal with definite ideas and notations about how the scene might be staged. Don't leave the staging to "inspiration" or to the actors to decide. Nothing is more frustrating than waiting for a director to try to figure out where he thinks an actor should move. At times, this will be unavoidable, but as much as possible, the director should enter blocking rehearsals with a plan of how he plans to stage the scheduled scene. The director's most basic job is to make the action of the play clear to the audience.

Moreover, the adolescent actor needs the safety of repetitive rehearsals in which the blocking for his scenes has been set and rehearsed numerous times well in advance of technical rehearsals. The more the young actor can feel confident in his staging, the safer he will feel. The resulting performance, if the actor has learned and applied the elements of the actors craft, will be polished and effective.

By the way, don't fall into the trap that many amateur (including school) directors do, of thinking of the moves set during the blocking rehearsals as sacrosanct. They're not. They are the basis on which you build, nothing more. When we move in real life, whether in relation to other people or when we are alone, we are prompted to do so for a reason, either because of something external (the movement of other people, for instance) or something internal (a character's intention, perhaps). Once the actors begin to build their characters and relationships, it is inevitable that moves will need to be changed. I always find, too, that, no matter how careful you are in trying to reproduce what the stage will look like when you're working on a rehearsal room floor, things won't look the same once you get on the stage, so you'll almost certainly have to change quite a number of moves. One of the reasons for the stilted look of many school or other amateur productions is a too-close adherence to the preconceived notions of the director which fail to work when the characters develop or the play transfers from the floor to the stage. You will want to make sure you don't make too many changes near the end of the rehearsal process unless you allow the actors time to internalize these new movements so they can feel comfortable and confident, as I discussed earlier.

Directing the Play: The Realities of High School Play Direction and Working with actors

#1. Don't worry about being popular with your actors.

Don't be afraid to work your cast very hard. They'll get used to it, and when newcomers complain they'll be put in their place by the veterans! One of the first speeches I have with every cast is the "being in a show isn't 'fun'" speech. This is often an understandable misconception by new actors to my program. They see the camaraderie between the actors after the curtain call, are impressed by the quality of the production, and enjoy watching the actors "having fun" on stage. What they don't

understand is the work that this kind of “fun” requires. This doesn’t mean that that you aren’t a pleasant, personable and friendly person. This doesn’t mean that rehearsals can’t be exciting, rewarding, invigorating, and fun; however, this is a result of disciplined work during the rehearsal process and the well deserved rest between the first hour and the second hour of rehearsal. My actors understand their commitment to the production and the professionalism that is expected of them to be involved in the drama departments productions. If they don’t, they aren’t cast in future productions. There are too many talented students out there. I don’t need to coddle or humor someone just because he/she is talented. You shouldn’t either.

#2. Be flexible and patient when rehearsals are underway!

It's easy to say what steps you take to get rehearsals started, but to describe how you actually operate during rehearsals is not. A professional director may be able to use the same approach in every production, but you can't do that with adolescent actors. Of course, every actor is different, and requires different handling, but at least professional actors have roughly the same background of technique and expectation. With students, however, you begin with a much greater mixture. Some will have some experience, others none; some will have a lot of talent, others very little, if any; some will be totally dedicated, others just there because their friend is. Some will be incredibly bright, others will barely be able to read at the seventh grade level. Most will be well-behaved, but the occasional jerk does creep in.

#3. You will have to teach the majority of your actors to act.

I have already discussed this at length and it bears repeating. Be prepared to spend the time needed in rehearsals to teach them what they need to be successful actors for your production.

#4. Adolescent egos are much more delicate than professionals.

That doesn't mean that you shouldn't chastise them hard. You should, if they need it! But do so as a group, not picking on individuals. I have had to chastise my acting companies on rare occasions and question their dedication to the production and to one another. Guilt is a powerful motivator, but only if the actors respect you and know

that what you are doing is because you want and know what is best for the production and for the actors. The next rehearsals are always much better.

#5. High school directors need longer rehearsal periods.

This leads to a very difficult question: how long should the rehearsal period last? I can't really give any actual timings because there are far too many variables: the talent and experience of the company, the number in the cast, the play itself, the possible number and frequency of rehearsals in a given period -- these are just the most important. On average, I rehearse a production for eight to ten weeks, depending on whether it is a play or a musical, contemporary or classic. If it is a play, we spend a good deal of time at the beginning in reading rehearsals working on interpretation, characterization, intention, etc. If it is a musical, that time is needed for music and dance work. On average, I schedule at least nine weeks of rehearsal time. ALSO, try to schedule your rehearsals on consecutive days without much of a lapse between rehearsals. The more time between run throughs of scenes, songs, and dances, the more likely the students are to forget what was covered. I usually do run throughs of everything we have worked on during the week on Fridays. I have found this very helpful in keeping the students fresh, yet prepared.

For productions like Godspell and The Fantasticks almost every company member was called for almost every rehearsal, but these were ensemble productions. For most shows I call specific people for specific rehearsals, so, although I may work five days a week from 3:00-6:00, the average member of the cast will only be called for two or three of these rehearsals. The rehearsal week usually consists of three hours a day, five days a week. Over the course of a nine week rehearsal process this is a total of about 120 hours. We usually fit in a longer dress rehearsal on the Saturday before opening and perhaps one or two choreography rehearsals on other Saturdays. Near the end of the process, the rehearsals may last a little longer to accommodate time for a run through of the show and notes afterwards. And that week (or whatever) of performance goes by all too quickly leaving behind it a wonderful feeling of euphoria, the like of which you can get from no other aspect of teaching. It almost makes the day-to-day grind worthwhile -- almost!

The rehearsal period is longer than collegiate rehearsal periods because I also call other kinds of rehearsals during this process. I do much “working rehearsal” work with pairs of actors and individual actors where we explore intentions, tactics, and the subtext of the scenes. I also try to meet with these actors away from the others as much as possible to work on building their confidence. I like to meet with them to give concentrated individual time to work through monologues, songs, etc. to help build their confidence and stroke their egos. We discuss and work on moments they don’t feel comfortable with. High school students’ egos need massaging as much as professionals and the thought that the director is devoting time (even if it's just fifteen minutes) to you helps enormously. I sometimes use lunchtimes for these rehearsals.

#6. Well planned and organized technical and dress rehearsals are vital to a successful production.

I believe in having three to four tech rehearsals FIRST and then adding the costumes and makeup for the last three or four rehearsals before an audience arrives at the final dress rehearsal/preview audience. I try to lessen the strain somewhat by having several technical rehearsals before the dress. During at least one tech rehearsal (usually the first) we go through the lighting and sound cues with the technical staff only. I don't call the actors and give them a chance to rest up for one night. I use stage crew members to stand in for the actors as we double check light cues. Major errors in the lighting plan tend to show up at the Tech. so that only minor "tweaking" is required after the actual dress. This is how professionals do it and it has worked marvelously for me.

I prefer to have three or four dress rehearsals. The last dress is always a “preview performance” so we can work on getting rid of the opening night jitters early and to work on holding for laughs if the play is a comedy. When the play is suitable, I invite our the middle schools to arrange to bring students to our last dress rehearsal. This puts the cast on the spot and has the additional benefit of “selling” our program to those who will soon be freshmen and might want to become involved in the drama program so they too can be in a show like the one they saw at the high school! Actually it's amazing how many turn up on the first night with parents and friends, so it sells tickets as well! The audience is warned that what they are seeing is a dress and that I might have to stop and restart the

show if things aren't going as they should. This makes the cast determined they are not going to be shown up in front of the others and they work even harder than they would ordinarily.

#7. Giving notes is a vital part of the play preparation process.

I have found that notes fall into three categories: Notes given after we start running through scenes to work and experiment with the blocking, actions and intentions. Many of these comments are simple and deal with body positions, masking problems, diction and volume, etc. We discuss when to move and when not to move, how to share the stage, give the stage, and take the stage. Some of the comments will also be suggestions for alternative tactics to play as the character is working through the scene. The students are responsible for taking these notes and writing them in the margins of their scripts or in their journals.

The second category of note taking involve notes on the timing and tempo of the scenes. I give these notes to the actors as we work on polishing the scenes. We work on smoothing out the flow so that the transitions create their own pace. We work to establish a rhythm to the scenes and to the play. Approach these work and note-taking sessions with clear goals of what you want to accomplish during the rehearsal. Here you begin to pull apart important sequences in the play to make sure you and the actors are adequately building up to the desired effect believably and effectively. For example, in The Fantasticks, one of the difficult sections to build is the opening of Act II after the song "This Plum is Too Ripe." The happiness and contentment of Act I is slowly "melting" and the lovers and family members are beginning to learn the truth about one another as illuminated by the harsh sunlight. This scene builds until the two lovers decide to split up right after Luisa slaps Matt. The audience needs to believe this separation is motivated and not just a convenient plot device. The director and the actors need to make sure momentum of the scene builds slowly as the actors discontentment develops. The director needs to make sure the audience sees the growing discontentment of the fathers. The audience needs to believe Huck's (Matt's father) sudden honesty about how he and Bell (Luisa's father) tricked the lovers into thinking their families were feuding is motivated and truthful. To be dramatically effective, this moment has to be set up by his growing

annoyance with his son's comments. The director needs to make sure the actor playing Huck honestly and truthfully plays the behavior leading up to his disclosure of the truth. This event then leads to Matt and Luisa's realization of the shallowness of their affection for one another. The director needs to attend to moments like these during the rehearsal process and to make notes for himself and for the actors to work on clarifying and strengthening these moments.

The last stage of the note-taking process is the hardest. This comes just before the dress rehearsal process because when dress comes, you will be far too frantic and consumed by too many production elements to write fast enough. At this stage you need to work on helping the actors to polish their individual performances. Praise specific moments, gestures, actions, etc. and look for ways to make the characters even stronger. An actor's small gesture can suggest an additional character trait. Look for a lack of reaction due to flawed concentration or "looking ahead" and not staying and living in the moment. Pinpoint the moments with specific lines. Try to give a note of praise to every actor at this stage, but also look for those moments that can be strengthened and improved with a little attention.

Having taken notes you will need to give them to the actors. I prefer to take the notes on a laptop computer, sit everyone down (including the stage manager) after the rehearsal, and go through the notes immediately. There are a couple of exceptions to this. First, a note that requires discussion among just a few cast members should be mentioned in order to set up a separate meeting later. The same should be followed for massive blocking adjustments. Don't force the cast members who aren't in a scene to sit through something which doesn't concern them. This is why I save the principals notes until after the general cast and chorus notes are given. I release the rest of the company and keep just the principals.

The second exception involves tech and dress rehearsals. These usually run long so the cast and crew attention span is severely limited. I only give a few obvious notes for the whole company before I excuse them. I then tell the company I will give the rest of the notes during make-up the next evening. I print out each of the actors' notes on

separate paper and spend some time with each of the actors as they get ready for the next evening's rehearsal. I also reserve some time before the curtain to give company notes.

#8. As the curtain opens...

You can't just wash your hands of the show the minute you've given your last note at the final dress, which is what happens in the professional theatre when then the stage manager takes over full control of the production. Young actors need encouragement. I always speak to them thirty minutes before the show goes up. On the first night it's words of encouragement and points to remember as they get ready to perform for a live audience. On the following nights, you must push them to guard against over-confidence and complacency. If they are not careful, they will relax a little too much and their concentration will falter. Don't allow it to. Challenge them to continue to stay sharp and energized.

#9. As the curtain descends...

Be sure that you are there every night after the curtain to congratulate them, stroke their egos, and let them know you are proud of them, even if there are problems you want to address at the next evening's company meeting. You need to say "thank you" and show your appreciation of their hard work, even if all hasn't gone as well as it should. Shake hands with and/or hug every single person in the cast and on the crew. They need to know you support them and their efforts. If you've rehearsed the show properly, they'll know if they weren't as good as they should have been. They won't need you to tell them, but they will need some reassurance that you're still on their side!

#10. Finally ...

And it is a good idea to have a cast party during the first or second week of your run. Spend some of the profits of the show on pop and food, and have a celebratory party. At our school, a tradition has grown of both staff and students writing mock parodies of songs and/or scenes from the production. This can be great fun as long as the parodies are based on the material and not personal attacks on the students or staff. Again, this activity shows your appreciation of their work and it helps to bond them together into a real company which will have real benefits in future productions.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHING ACTING DURING THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

I'd like to talk a little more about acting. When I am asked about plays I have directed, the questions are rarely about the acting. It is somehow assumed that the performers know how to act. However, this is rarely the case at the high school level. Most of the time, if a show is a success, the acting is truthful and believable, the pacing and tempo effective, etc. it is in large part due to the director's ability to teach his actors to "act." Staging a production is relatively easy if you have taken the right courses and have a good eye. Getting truthful, engaging, exciting performances from actors is the difficult task of the director. Most people don't realize the importance of this aspect of directing. They think all we do is move the students around on stage and instruct them to speak the lines with "emotion." Seriously, many people believe this is what directors do.

Always Start with the Meaning!

That's the best advice I can offer to would-be directors of school plays. And by "meaning," I'm not just referring to the lexical meaning, although this is also important for both the director and the actors to understand. By meaning, I mean everything that is spoken, or is written to be spoken, **has a subtext of emotion**. We almost never speak without a purpose and an intention that effects how we say something. Even the most vacuous gossip has this emotional subtext. Gossip is a prop to the self-esteem, a way of convincing ourselves that we know something important, that we are privy to the secrets of people's lives. It can be, for some, a way of making human contact, perhaps their only way. It makes us feel important, or more secure, or even that we have power over another.

So start with, that word which is central to the actor's skill: "**why?**" "Why does the character say this?" "Why does he use these words?" It's just as important for the actor to know why, if he's playing Flute in A Midsummer Night's Dream, he says "Here, Peter Quince" as it is for Hamlet to know why he says "To be or not to be". If the subtext

is wrong, then no matter how well-delivered the lines, they will not make sense! A good actor, of course, will understand instinctively what we might call the ordinary common subtext, but for the average kid (and let's face it, most of the time we are working with the average kid) words on a page do not translate easily into words in the mouth. They can decode them, of course, but they have difficulty seeing past that decoding. For many, simple decoding is sufficient.

This kind of work takes time, and it's quite possible that the young actor will never get it exactly right, but that line will sound five hundred percent more convincing when you've finished. You won't have to do this for every line because once the actors start thinking like this, they'll start doing it for themselves, and that's the point when they start acting rather than just "reading with expression!"

It's the same with movement. Movement must arise from the character's intention, emotion, and attitude toward the other character(s). Unfortunately, it's a rare young actor who will realize that. If we are not careful, what will happen is that he will say the line with conviction and feeling, but his body language will contradict what he says. You'll need to do something similar to get him to make the movement natural. Back to the dialogue! Discuss the character's intention! Question the actor about the given circumstances that should have an effect on the actor. With luck you'll get exactly the right movement and a natural and believable scene rather than something artificial and wooden.

Of course, it is best if the ideas about the subtext come from the actor rather than you, so you'll have to use leading questions, forcing him to think along the lines you want. But you're a teacher, and so you're doing that every day! Once the actor begins to think like this, then you can leave your questions much more open-ended, offering him the chance to come up with alternatives. Once you've got your actors thinking, you've got to respect their thoughts and ideas. Sometimes they can have a deeper or better insight than you.

This is very easy to forget. As teachers we are used to being the expert, the one that knows it all, imparting knowledge to the ignorant. It's very difficult for most teachers to admit either to ignorance or to being wrong: it requires more self-confidence

than most of us have. However, in this case we are not dealing with knowledge, but with something in which we don't always have a built-in advantage: experience of life, emotional states, and even suffering. It is my experience that there are students who have experienced far more of these than so many of us who have come from a more or less caring middle-class background and have gone from school to college to school. It has to be said that many students have far more meaningful insights in this area than most of us.

If motivation is so important, if it is so vital to get the students thinking "why?" all the time, is there any place for specifically technical acting training? The answer, I believe, is a resounding "yes". Confidence on the part of your actors is the key to a successful production. Anything which boosts that confidence is therefore of great value, and there is no doubt that some training in basic stagecraft and acting technique makes them feel much more at home and at ease on the stage. But you've got to time it right. I think it's a mistake (made all too commonly, I'm afraid) to begin with this kind of training. For it to be effective the students have to see the relevance of technical training. Expose them to it before they experience actual performance and it will have no meaning for them: it's only when they have been on-stage and faced the problems that they realize its value.

Of course, once you have a tradition of school productions up and running, students who are new to you will accept this training because they will have seen its results in terms of the performances which they have watched. They will see the "stars" giving their time and attention to it and will therefore recognize that it must have relevance and value. As every teacher knows, they are much more likely to take the word (or the example) of another kid than of a teacher.

What Should the Training Consist of During the Rehearsal Process?

There are four areas of prime importance in school theatre: *breaking down inhibitions, establishing mutual trust, building concentration, and actual acting technique*, including voice. I think also that they should be tackled in that order, although I would suggest that the first two are interdependent.

The next question, of course, is "what exactly do we do?" For the first three, we rely on games of various kinds. I have already presented several theatre games that could also be used during the rehearsal process. I don't propose to embark upon a coverage of even a proportion of the drama games you can call on - there are many books available which will give you far more than you could ever use - but I will give a few more examples which I find work well.

At the outset of the rehearsal process, my first goal is always to mould the diverse collection of students who will turn up at auditions into a company, a group who feel comfortable with each other. To feel that way, they have to trust each other - and you! - and be uninhibited with each other. The two go together: you can let yourself go and take the most incredible risks in terms of revealing yourself or doing things that might seem silly or even stupid, if you trust those you are with. My first aim at the beginning of every year is to attempt to achieve this comfortable feeling with all the students who join.

There are some students who won't be able to handle this and they'll drop out. Don't pursue them and try to cajole them into staying! We have to recognize that performing in public is not everyone's strength. Let them go! No matter how let down you may feel, or how much you may imagine you have in some way failed these students, let them go. Your function as a play director is not the same as your function as a classroom teacher, nor is the function of the play that of a lesson. If you try to combine the two you will feel very frustrated. You will not succeed with students who are temperamentally unsuited to performance and you will do serious damage to the quality of the finished product.

Breaking down Inhibitions

Try to establish a sense of working together from the word go. The first thing I do at the beginning of a new production, at the first meeting, is to get the students to "find a space" and then say, "On the word 'go', shake hands with everybody in the room, then return to your place. Go." The chances are that the first time you do this it will become obvious that they don't count you as a person! Don't let them get away with it: tell them they haven't done it, but leave them to work out why. Sooner or later the penny will drop

and they'll come and shake hands with you. By this little piece of symbolism you establish that you are part of the group, as is any other member of staff who may be present.

Another useful exercise (which is also a bit silly and usually reduces everyone to fits of laughter) is to get them all to walk around the room with their eyes closed and, when they bump into anyone else, they are stuck to the person and must walk around together. This goes on until everyone is stuck together (and they probably all fall down!). Now this is a game in which staff must remain outsiders: not only must they keep a close eye on the safety aspect (you'll be running around like a mad thing making sure that they don't walk into walls or furniture), but you also have to be careful that you don't put yourself into a compromising position!

Building Trust

As far as trust exercises are concerned, these "blind" games are very effective. Start off by dividing the students into pairs: one is blind and keeps his eyes shut all the time, and the other is the guide and must lead his partner round the room in complete safety by guiding with hand on elbow. Swap over and do it a second time. Then have them guide by voice alone. Taken seriously -- and anyone who doesn't take it seriously must be given the push -- this game engenders both trust in, and a sense of responsibility to, others. These are two qualities which actors must have.

Another good way of establishing mutual dependence is the "shrinking island" game. All gather in a tight group in the middle of the room and a rope or something similar (I use lighting cable, because it's there in the room) is loosely laid on the floor around them. Then they are told that, when they step off the "island", it will shrink. When they are given the command to get back on, they must make sure as many people as possible are "saved" and if anyone drowns it will be accounted a failure on the part of the others: it is the duty of everyone to make sure everyone else is safe. You simply keep reducing the size of the "island" and the game stops whenever there are more "drowned" than "saved". Games of this nature really do work well: they are also great fun to do and there will be many shrieks of laughter and dissolving into giggles, but they will learn to depend upon each other and inhibitions will go.

Concentration

My favorite concentration exercise is one in which everyone has to sing! They sit in a circle (it's best on the floor – more relaxed and informal) in groups of about half a dozen, and everyone sings Baa Baa Black Sheep. This in itself is often the cause of great hilarity (especially since I usually sing it first, just to get them going!), but that's only the beginning. The second time around each group has to sing it individually, each person singing only one syllable: any mistake (one person singing "master", for instance) and they start again from the beginning. Once they've mastered that (and keep them at it until they do), try them on Humpty Dumpty - that's a killer! Another effective concentration exercise is to stand in a circle and, as a group, count as high as you can as a group. No more than one person can speak at a time. If more than one person speaks, the groups begins again at "0." There are many other excellent concentrations games to explore in numerous improvisation and acting texts.

Technique: Voice Work

These games are useful, important and fun, but they must not take up all your time. You must spend some time on acting technique: the students will expect, and want, it. Concentrate first on voice, and then on movement. It's better this way round, for voice flexibility and volume are generally the weakest aspects of most students' technique. There are, again, many exercises which can be used here, but remember that everything to do with the voice begins with breathing, and if the students aren't breathing properly - and the vast majority don't – they will never achieve the flexibility and projection which they need. So exercises and games to get them breathing with the diaphragm are the first priority, closely followed by control of the breath. As all these exercises can involve the production of a lot of silly noises, most students will enjoy doing them. They'll need to, because it's no good doing them once and then forgetting them: you have to keep coming back to these basic exercises time after time after time. My policy, once I have started my group (class or cast) on this kind of game, is to devote fifteen minutes of each meeting to voice exercises. Again there is not the time to go into detail about the various exercises you can use; in any case you can get a great deal of enjoyment out of devising your own.

Practicing correct breathing is just that: practicing. Make them do it time after time: by asking them to keep one hand on their stomachs when they breathe you can detect that they are doing it properly - if there's no back and forth movement, they aren't. And as for breath control, try getting them to expel all the air in their lungs in one burst, then in two equal bursts, then in three, and so on. Or ask them to expel the air gradually - as slowly as they can - and count at a predetermined rate. The idea is to see how far they can count without having to take another breath. Make it into a competition, not only between them but against themselves. Each week tell them that you expect them to be able to count at least an additional ten.

Some understanding of the mechanics of voice production is helpful. I find that taking a break in the middle of a set of exercises and having them sit down where they are for a brief (and I mean very brief) talk on one aspect of the subject is the best way of getting this across. Make particular play of the wrongness of using constriction of the throat to increase volume: get them to compare the strangled shouts which constricting the throat brings about with the much fuller and rounder tone obtained by using the diaphragm. Working with a music teacher who has some knowledge of singing training can be very helpful.

The next aspect of voice to work on is diction, and for this there's nothing better than the good old tongue-twisters, especially "I'm not the pheasant plucker" (Just kidding! I suggest you save that one for private use!) A good one, however, is "Sister Suzie:"

Sister Suzie's sewing shirts for soldiers
 Such skill at sewing shirts my shy young sister Suzie shows
 Some soldiers send epistles
 Saying they'd sooner sleep on thistles
 Than the short serge shirts for soldiers shy young sister
 Suzie sews.

A good exercise, which only really works if you have in excess of twenty students, is to ask them to divide into pairs and stand them at opposite ends of a room. Those at one end have to pass on some information to those at the other end -- all at once!

-- but without shouting. The noise can be horrendous, but you'll find they will automatically start forming their words properly to aid communication. If this proves to be too easy (and after the first time it will be) exacerbate the problem by lining them up alternately as listener/speaker/listener/speaker and so on. There are plenty of possibilities for making the exercise as difficult as you like! In fact the real test is not when they shout to each other, but when they have to whisper!

Encouraging flexibility of tone can be done by getting them to hold intelligible conversations with each other using only one word. There is usually some "buzz" word which you can utilize, but if there are none around at the time use the name of a pop-singer or something else which has meaning for them - "spot" is one of my favorites.

Technique: Movement Work

Then there are movement exercises. The aim of these is to help the students control their movement: we all know how many are awkward and gangling. The majority of these exercises consist of slowing down normal movements to a ridiculous extent. The one I use most of all is picking up a coin lying on the floor in front of you. Ask them to do it a few times normally, and then they should take a full minute. Emphasize that they should be moving all the time - no jerkiness or stopping-starting but smooth, continuous movement. Keep extending the time: one minute, then two, then two and a half, then three, and so on, as long as you feel that you can get away with it! I once managed fifteen minutes, and afterwards I felt as though I'd run a marathon.

Training in one of the martial arts can be very useful, particularly Tai Chi Chuan, but make the movements as slow as possible. Remember, you are not teaching self-defense but bodily control. Also useful are ballet barre exercises - and they'll probably find them the most demanding of all. Doing this has the additional benefit of instilling in them some respect for dancers' strength and endurance!

For movement exercises proper clothing is essential. Working in their normal school clothes is to be avoided, especially by girls who wear tight skirts! Sweat clothes, jogging bottoms, tee-shirts, all are suitable, and I find that the best footwear for movement exercises is bare feet. Those who suffer from athlete's foot or any infectious foot condition should wear the lightest footwear they can find - it often seems to me that

many "fashion" tennis shoes, as distinct from those intended for sports, are as heavy as climbing boots! Girls will find slippers or jazz shoes very useful.

One last thing: make these sessions fun. The exercises themselves may not be, but keep it light, joke about what you're doing, or they'll get fed up and that's no good to either of you. However, they should also follow your lead, listen to you, and take the exercises seriously. This is a difficult balance to strike!

Technique: Text Work

But there's no getting away from the fact that acting starts with the text, and it is on the text (and its associated sub-text) that the bulk of your attention must be focused. Perhaps we should look at a few text-based exercises.

Incidentally, there is no better source of text-understanding exercises than the work of Cicely Berry, Voice Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company: her books Voice and the Actor and, in particular, The Actor and the Text are, I think, essential reading for any would-be actor or director. Another excellent recent text that may be more appropriate for high school teachers and adolescent actors is Wesley VanTassel's text Clues to Acting Shakespeare. Dr. VanTassel has several sections and exercises designed especially for high school teachers and their students. The following exercises come from Berry's books (or, at least, are based on her ideas). I use Shakespearean texts for many of these exercises - just to show the students that he is actually quite easy to understand -- and I normally like to start off with one of Helena's speeches from A Midsummer Night's Dream, the one which begins

"O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment."

I simply give each person a copy of these two lines, written as normal speech, not verse, and ask them to read it aloud. We try to say them in all sorts of different ways: laughing, weeping, howling in anguish, whispering, and (to finish with a flourish!) we go outside and I tell them to run up and down shrieking the lines as loudly and as angrily as they can.

Actually one nice exercise that I like to do here is to get the cast to sing the lines in a style of their own choosing (shades of *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*). I normally

demonstrate by singing it like an aria from grand opera. It sounds silly on the surface, but there is reason behind it: it simply won't work if the style does not suit the words!

They'll realize that soon enough and will have to hunt around for an appropriate style.

Rap sounds pretty damned good!

The next stage is to look at the whole speech:

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
 To set against me for your merriment:
 If you were civil and knew courtesy,
 You would not do me thus much injury.
 Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
 But you must join in souls to mock me too?
 If you were men, as men you are in show,
 You would not use a gentle lady so;
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
 With your derision! none of noble sort
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport. (III,ii)

Each student is to find a space and set himself two chairs about six/eight feet apart. They stand by one chair and read the speech aloud until they come to the first pausing punctuation mark (comma, semi-colon, colon or full-stop), at which point they stop, walk to the other chair, and then read the lines to the next punctuation mark, and so on to the end of the speech. The amazing thing is that you will find the vast majority – even first years - will understand the whole thing without any explanation.

We then play around with the emotions, with one directing the speech at another who has to try to interrupt and defend himself. The speaker is to ignore the protestations

of the other, overriding them if they become too insistent. In no time at all a real scene begins to emerge - and you, as teacher in charge, will not have given them any guidance about tone or moves!

I could fill chapters with these exercises, but I'm sure you get the idea. Read the books, try out their ideas, and devise your own. Change the texts. Use modern plays, poems, anything. The important thing is that you should be focusing the students to look at the text in depth and play around with its emotional and intellectual possibilities.

Move on from this to improvisation of similar or related scenes; use hot-seating and thought-tracking techniques on these improvised scenes; use forum theatre ideas to get the other students to change the direction of the scenes. In short, put the text through the wringer: use every possible approach to squeeze every last drop of meaning from it.

Common Faults

I'd like to finish this chapter by mentioning a few of the most common faults amongst young actors (and the not-so-young, to be honest!). Watch out for them and stop them early. Most will show themselves at the first reading.

First is the dreaded pronoun stress! You know, when unnatural emphasis is placed on every pronoun -- and by unnatural stress I mean **any stress** at all. Read the following sentences aloud:

I would like to go to the movies tonight.

Oh yes, I remember Fred.

Have you got change for a dollar?

Was she at home when you called her?

In normal, everyday speech we throw the pronouns away. They have no stress at all. The inexperienced young actor, however, will give them their full vocal value, making the sentence seem stilted and artificial. Get them out of this habit! Ask them to identify the operative (most important) word in the phrase or sentence and to play that word rather than the pronoun.

Keep your ears open for its recurrence. I was surprised not long ago when I went to a performance of play by a local community theatre to see a few of my ex-students in the cast. One of the ex-pupils had a small speaking role. She'd been a very competent

actor at school and is very bright, but there she was, speaking her lines as if she were a not-very-confident reader reading from a teleprompter for the first time! I wish I could have stopped her right in the middle of her first lines!

A second, just as common, fault is related to this: **giving every word equal stress**. With the less confident this can be difficult to get rid of! The reason is that they are so concerned about getting every word in (and right!) that they don't think about meaning. I usually caution against giving an actor a line reading, but you may need to mimic them (a little exaggeration is fine here, I believe) so that they hear how unnatural they sound. Then ask them to speak the line naturally and ask them to try to isolate what the difference is. Don't just get them to imitate you speaking the line correctly: they need to know what they are doing wrong and what they should be doing.

And pounce on every occurrence: only constant reminders will eliminate it. But make a joke of it and get them laughing at themselves. I've just come from a rehearsal in which I spent nearly fifteen minutes working on one line with an inexperienced girl who, at one point, was helpless with laughter, but who finally got it right. And she won't forget in future!

Many students are afraid of contact. And by that I don't just mean physical contact (although that is true), but eye-contact too. In fact, it's not just students. As an actor in an amateur company many years ago, I worked with one very experienced man who just would not meet the eyes of anyone else on stage. He was hell to work with! Before I appeared with him, I had seen him on stage many times, and wondered why his performances never completely convinced. I knew there was something wrong but could never put my finger on it. It was only after playing opposite him that I realized.

A good exercise to cure this: make them work in twos with a member of the opposite sex, preferably one they don't know very well. Stand facing each other with toes touching; place right hand on the partner's shoulder. Now they must gaze into each other's eyes without flinching or letting their glance slide away for a full minute. They can, however, blink: this is not a staring exercise. Do it as often as is necessary, changing partners a few times.

Finally, for those intimate scenes (not necessarily of a romantic or sexual nature) where they shy away from close physical contact: have them play the scene sitting on the floor, leaning their backs against each other. Then do it again with backs and heads leaning against each other. Then make them exaggerate the feelings of the scene while remaining in the same position. If you have a kissing scene to stage, always work with the actors involved privately without any of the other cast or crew around. This puts the actors at ease and results in a much more professional approach to this kind of moment.

CHAPTER NINE

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS

Building a successful and strong theatre program takes time, patience, stamina, and a great deal of work. The process should be exciting and rewarding. You have to be willing to make sacrifices. You won't have much "free time" for most of the school year and your life will be consumed by your work. However, you will also experience the most glorious, rewarding moments and look back on intensely satisfying memories of moments on stage then the students really moved you -- made you laugh or cry -- even though you have seen the scene for the fiftieth time. You'll be hooked and need to do this exhausting activity once again. You'll begin planning for your next show and pondering the wonderful possibilities!

If you are still reading this handbook and haven't rushed for the nearest exit, then perhaps this profession is for you. You are the stuff that drama advisors are made of. Welcome. Get started. You'll have many successes and a few failures. If you are like me, you will look back on your first few productions and wince! I recently directed a production of The Fantasticks for the second time in my career. I began my high school directing career with this production twelve years ago and I was truly amazed at how much I missed the first time I directed this production. The quality this time around was considerable higher in every aspect of the production. There is no teacher like experience, as long as you allow yourself to learn from her.

Be a sponge. Soak up everything you experience and witness as a teacher and director. Attend workshops. Visit high school theatre programs and teachers who are known for their success. Be critical of yourself and your productions. When people tell you that your production is "better than the professional one they saw on Broadway, graciously and professionally accept the compliment. However, don't believe it. People have short memories and fault productions for many reasons. As good as your production may be, it is doubtful that it is better than Broadway! It most certainly can ALWAYS be better. As good as your direction is, it can ALWAYS be better. As good as your actors are, they can ALWAYS be better. Be critical of everything you do as a director. Learn from your mistakes and successes.

Above all else, have high expectations for your actors and help them see the importance of dedicating themselves to this discipline. If they have chosen to be a part of your production, they need to understand the commitment they have made and their responsibility to the writer who wrote this production and to the audiences who will attend the production. I always tell my actors at some opportune moment in the process that the last thing we want to do is produce a show that “only a mother could love.” We want to produce a production that the non-theatre going audience member leaves saying to his friends “Wow. I never thought I liked plays before, but that was really cool!” This is our target audience.

BREAK A LEG!

APPENDIX A: ACTING TERMS DEFINED

Advocacy of Character: Getting inside your character's skin so you can understand why the character does what he does; behaving as your character and fighting as hard as he does to achieve the character's intentions.

As If: An acting tool that allows the actor to transfer personal experience to the performance of the character; finding parallels between your experiences and the character's life.

Beats: a new section of action in a monologue or scene, shown by a change in tactics by the character, refers to both the moment of change and to the whole new unit of action, the new tactics it is played out.

Biographical Analysis: The process of determining all the pertinent information about the character's life, background, situation, and circumstance.

Blocking: The movement of the actors about the stage; also the process of working out this movement and patterns of movement before or during rehearsal.

Creative Listening: Thinking as the character and listening for clues from the other characters about how you are doing and how you need to change or modify your tactics to succeed in your intention.

Creative Responsiveness: Being open and willing to change your responses and choices on stage as your character is changing and adjusting; the inventive process of making your acting more alive. "Playing off" the other actors -- what they are giving you.

Discoveries: New external information. Those points in a scene or play where the character (usually suddenly) becomes aware of information from the outside world which has some bearing on achieving an Intention.

Given Circumstances: The available information in the play itself which tells us about the time, place, action, details, and all the available background of the characters and the situation they are in. It is absolutely VITAL that the actor make choices about who his character is and how he feels about everything that has happened and is happening to him in the play. He must then apply these choices to his work on stage.

Indicating: Performing an action without an intention. INDICATING is a derogatory term in psychologically motivated acting. "You are allowing yourself to represent a

picture of the experience and avoiding a personal commitment to the want of the character. You are indicating a feeling rather than playing your objective."

Inner Monologue: The continuous thinking while another character speaks, or during pauses in your own lines -- the characters thoughts, images, fantasies, etc. To create inner monologue the actor must have continuous thoughts while on stage. Life does not stop when we are silent! Actors should work on this inner monologue at home writing down all the images, ideas, thoughts, etc. that go through the actor's mind as the character they are playing. They must be right for the character. To create inner monologue you must understand the play, the meaning the playwright wishes to project, and your character. Numerous readings of the script are required!

Intention/Objective/Goal: the thing the character wants to achieve; the goal, the aim, the desired end the character hopes to achieve.

Intentional Acting: the process of playing a character by acting out the intentions of what the character hopes to achieve; its very weak opposite is emotional acting -- playing emotions instead of character.

Moments: Those points in the action of a scene or play when the character gains new insight, figures something out; those points -- as in cartoons -- where the light bulb goes on over the character's head.

Motivating Desire (Also known as super-objective or super-intention) is the term for that which gives the character a sufficient reason to pursue the course of action demanded by the play. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy's motivating desire might be, "I can't succeed on the road -- I want a way out." His intention in the scene with his boss, Howard, would need to flow from the wellspring of possibilities suggested by this statement. He might choose, for example, "I want to get an inside selling job." The motivating desire for the play and the intention for the scene would thus be compatible.

Mugging: A derogatory term for exaggerated facial expressions.

Nested Intentions/Actions: The various goals a character hopes to achieve in the various scene of the play; in addition to some overall intention for the whole play, the character has numerous short term goals as well -- all are stacked inside the overall goal or intention the character has throughout the play.

Obstacle: What keeps a character from achieving an intention; the thing (person, object, idea, fear, concern, etc.) that stands in the way.

Realization: New internal information. Those points in a scene or play where the character (usually suddenly) becomes aware of information from inside him/herself which has some bearing on achieving an intention.

Rehearse: The process of going over a scene, either alone or with your partner, to come up with, try out, and perfect choices of action which will make your character more clear and more complete for your audience during performance.

Relacom (Relationship Communication): Occurs with or without a text -- may be conveyed BY the line as well as under it, and it may be totally irrespective of the lines. RELACOM occurs without a "text" and involves...

- (a) the invocation of a relationship, not the announcement of one,
- (b) is not necessarily communicated consciously, and in fact is usually an unconscious communication,
- (c) creates the basis for communication content,
- (d) always exists when people are in contact, even without an accompanying content communication,
- (e) is most usually nonverbal, and may not necessarily be closely definable at the verbal level.

Scene Analysis: Breaking a scene down into its various elements, the better to understand how the scene itself works and how your character responds to the ongoing action of the scene as it unfolds.

Scoring: The process of breaking down a scene, speech, or monologue into its separate action steps; it maps out and makes specific the sequence of choices the character makes in playing out the scene.

Stakes: The extent or degree to which the character wants to achieve an Intention; the higher the stakes the more badly, more desperately, more completely the character wants the Intention.

Spine: The theme or basic line of the play and is synonymous with its superobjective. In this context it is a directional term. In addition, each role has a spine that must be

compatible with the overall spine of the play. If the spine of *Cat on a Hot tin Roof* is the study of mendacity, all the roles must be related to this objective. The actress playing Maggie MIGHT have as her super-objective "I want to strip away the lies that prevent Brick from fathering our child."

Subtext: Subtext literally means "under the text or beneath the lines." This is what the characters are saying underneath their lines or the "real meaning" behind the lines -- the meaning behind the words which makes them say them. The actor's continuous thoughts that give meaning to the dialogue and the stage directions. The lines of the author are dead until an actor analyzes and brings out the sense that the author intended.

Tactics: The specific actions a character takes to get rid of the Obstacles standing in the way of desired Intentions. The moment to moment involvement of the character, who is constantly selecting and acting out these actions.

The Through Line of Action: The progressive movement from one unit of the play to the next. It assumes a series of consistent and logical actions, a pattern of behavior that is the route an actor takes to the super-objective. The attempt to fulfill the objectives of the character against a series of obstacles moves the play to a conclusion, and the through line of action is the thread that links all the character's actions.

APPENDIX B: PUBLISHERS OF PLAYS & SCRIPTS

The catalogues of the following play publishers and licensing organizations include shows that are appropriate for secondary school actors and audiences, as well as other groups. Most publishers handle licensing of rights as well. If you remember a title or author but don't know who the publisher is, search an online database of major publishers at <http://www.findaplay.com/>, a free service offered by Playscripts.com.

Anchorage Press Plays

P.O. Box 2901
Louisville, KY 40201
(502) 583-2288
fax: (502) 583-2281
applays@bellsouth.net
<http://www.applays.com/>

Anchorage Press is generally regarded as the premiere publisher of plays for young audiences in the United States, representing Suzan Zeder and Aurand Harris, among others. Catalogue includes dramatic versions of folk tales and fables, world classics, and stories of search and growth.

Baker's Plays

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fax: (617) 745-9891
<http://www.bakersplays.com/>

Baker's Plays publishes a large collection of plays appropriate for young actors and audiences, in addition to its holiday, religious, and adult offerings.

Broadway Play Publishing Inc.

56 East 81st Street
New York, NY 10028
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fax: (212) 772-8358
<http://www.broadwayplaypubl.com/>

Broadway Play Publishing specializes in full-length, contemporary American plays, published individually and in anthologies.

I. E. Clark

P.O. Box 246
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ieclark@cvtv.net
<http://www.ieclark.com/>

I. E. Clark offers many scripts for secondary school production, including one-acts, full-length plays, musicals, and skits. Plays tend to be didactic works or adaptations of well-known fairy tales and fables.

Direct Plays

NuComm Marketing
80 King Street, 3rd Floor
St. Catharines, ON
Canada L2R 7G1
(877) 305-1569

directplays@nucomm.net
<http://www.directplays.com/>

Direct Plays is a small online publisher of ten-minute plays, one-person shows, and full-length plays. They offer printed copies of scripts as well as electronic ones.

Dramatic Publishing Company

311 Washington Street
Woodstock, IL 60098
(800) 448-7469
fax: (800) 334-5302

plays@dramaticpublishing.com
<http://www.dramaticpublishing.com/>

Dramatic Publishing has an extensive collection of plays for young audiences, including new works recently developed in major professional children's theatres around the United States. Their catalogue of works for professional, stock, and amateur markets also includes full-length plays, one-acts, translations, adaptations, and musicals. *Dramatics* advertiser.

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<http://www.samuelfrench.com/>

French is a major publisher of acting editions of scripts, including full-length plays, one-acts, solo works, musicals, and plays for young audiences. Their catalogue contains many scripts never produced in New York, including light comedies and mysteries.

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421 West 54th Street

New York, NY 10019

(212) 541-4684

fax: (212) 397-4684

<http://www.mtishows.com/>

MTI's catalogue features classic and contemporary Broadway musicals. Its holdings include youth musical collections: author-approved packages that are abridged for secondary school performance. They also license full productions, revues, and concert versions of musicals and offer various production resources.

New Plays Incorporated

P.O. Box 5074

Charlottesville, VA 22905

(804) 979-2777

fax: (804) 984-2230

patwhitton@aol.com

<http://www.newplaysforchildren.com/>

New Plays is a small but reputable publisher devoted primarily to plays for young audiences. Many are based on familiar fairy tales, but their scripts are generally more innovative and better constructed than other published adaptations of the same source material.

Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.

P.O. Box 4267

Englewood, CO 80155

(303) 779-4035 or (800) 333-7262

fax: (303) 779-4315

orders@pioneerdrama.com

<http://www.pioneerdrama.com/>

Pioneer Drama Service offers new plays, musicals, melodramas, participation plays, and holiday scripts, as well as text and production resources, for school groups and other theatres.

Playscripts.com

P.O. Box 380996

Cambridge, MA 02238

questions@playscripts.com

<http://www.playscripts.com/>

An online new-play publisher, Playscripts includes some former Thespian Playworks finalists in their catalogue.

Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library

229 West 28th Street, 11th Floor

New York, NY 10001

(800) 400-8160

fax: (212) 268-1245

theatre@rnh.com

<http://www.rnh.com/>

R&H includes classic Broadway musicals, from the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein to Andrew Lloyd Webber, plus a few other new shows. They also offer fairy-tale musicals for young audiences and revues.

Smith and Kraus

4 Lower Mill Road

North Stratford, NH 03590

orders: (800) 895-4331

customer service: (603) 669-7032

catalogue requests: c/o IDS, 300 Bedford Street, Building B, Suite 213, Manchester, NH 03101

fax: (603) 795-4427

smithkraus@propagandize.com

<http://www.smithkraus.com/>

Smith and Kraus publishes anthologies of plays that premiered at the Seattle Children's Theatre and in the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, plus other collections for secondary schools. They also have many anthologies of monologues and scenes. They don't handle licensing, but their books contain contact information for rights.

Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc.

560 Lexington Avenue

New York, NY 10022

(212) 688-9191

fax: (212) 688-3232

<http://www.tamswitmark.com/>

Tams-Witmark licenses Broadway musicals, from Gershwin and Porter classics to contemporary hits. Rental often includes choice of orchestration and stage manager's guide.

Theatre Communications Group, Inc.

355 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017
(212) 697-5230
fax: (212) 983-4847
<http://www.tcg.org/>

TCG publishes scripts appropriate for regional theatres, some in thematic anthologies. Their catalogue includes British and Canadian play publishers, too. TCG doesn't handle licensing, but books contain contact information for rights.

USA Plays for Kids

Drury University
900 North Benton Ave.
Springfield, MO 65802
(417) 873-7430
fax: (417) 873-7250
sasher@lib.drury.edu
usaplays4kids.cjb.net

A literacy and creativity project of Drury University, USA Plays for Kids provides information from playwrights who focus on K-12 scripts. Scripts are not available directly through the service, but descriptions of the plays include publisher name and, in some cases, website link.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PATRON FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

From: Paul Wickline, theatre arts director

August 20, 1998

To: Arts supporters

Concerning: *WaHi's Musical Theatre Patron Program*

Greetings and thank you for taking the time to read the following information about **Walla Walla High School's** fall production of **PIPPIN and the PATRON PROGRAM.**

The 1998 fall musical **PIPPIN** will be presented by the **Walla Walla High School Drama and Music Departments** on ***November 6-7 and 12-14***. The musical is directed by Paul Wickline and choreographed by Idalee Hutson-Fish. Paul Dennis will provide the vocal music direction and Glen Mitchell will direct the orchestra. We're all very excited about this event and hope you can attend. There will be approximately 100 students, parents, and community volunteers involved in this production, making it a huge production!

However, the undertaking of such a production is a great financial one, and we are asking for your help. Ticket sales alone will not be enough to produce this show. That is why we are contacting YOU and other business and professional people in our school district to become *patrons* of this year's musical production.

- 1. SPECIAL ANGEL (a donation of \$50.00)**
- 2. ANGEL (a donation of \$40.00)**
- 3. DONOR (a donation of \$25.00)**
- 4. SPONSOR (a donation of \$15.00)**

WWHS MUSICAL THEATRE PATRON FEATURES

- 1. FREE TICKETS**
 - Special Angels = four tickets (**\$20.00 value**)
 - Angels = three tickets (**\$15.00 value**)
 - Donors = two tickets (**\$10.00 value**)
 - Sponsors = one ticket (**\$5.00 value**)
2. Priority reservations and seating preferences
3. Tax deductible donation
4. Name in hundreds of programs
5. Name on Special Board in the Lobby (Special Angels only)

Help make this production and the performing arts at WA-HI a success. Please return your completed form and check to me by ***October 30th*** to ensure that your name is in the program. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at school (**527-3020**) or at home . Join your friends and neighbors in supporting the talented performing artists at WAHI today!

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline

**YES!! -- I WOULD LIKE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE 1998
WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE
PROGRAM AS A:**

- SPECIAL ANGEL (\$50.00)
- ANGEL (\$40.00)
- DONOR (\$25.00)
- SPONSOR (\$15.00)

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION *AS IT WILL APPEAR IN THE PROGRAM. PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY.*

NAME: _____

COMPANY ((if
appropriate): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL _____

**MAIL PATRON FORMS AND CHECKS TO:
PAUL WICKLINE, WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL,
800 ABBOTT ROAD, WALLA WALLA WA, 99362.**

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL

Dear prospective patron:

October 1st, 2001

Greetings and thank you for taking the time to read the following information about Walla Walla High School's THEATRE PROGRAM.

The 2001 fall musical **THE FANTASTICKS** will be presented by the **Walla Walla High School Drama and Music Departments** on *November 1st-3rd and 8th-10th*. The musical is directed by Paul Wickline and choreographed by Idalee Hutson-Fish. Norb Rossi will provide the vocal music direction and Glen Mitchell will help coordinate the instrumental music. We're all very excited about this event and hope you can attend.

The 2002 winter production will be Shakespeare's hilarious romantic comedy **A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM**. Production dates are **March 13th-16th** with special touring performances planned for the elementary and middle schools as well.

The **Spring Scene and One Act Festival** will be **May 9th-11th**. This is the annual performance of student selected and directed monologues, scenes, and one-act plays. Mr. Wickline will also direct the advanced drama class in a one act play that will be performed at this time.

However, the undertaking of such a production is a great financial one, and we are asking for your help. Ticket sales alone will not be enough to produce this show. That is why we are contacting YOU and other business and professional people in our school district to become *patrons* of this year's **musical production**.

Patron Program

1. **SPECIAL ANGEL (a donation of \$60.00)**
2. **ANGEL (a donation of \$50.00)**
3. **DONOR (a donation of \$30.00)**
4. **SPONSOR (a donation of \$20.00)**

PATRON FEATURES

1. **FREE TICKETS**
 - Special Angels = six tickets (\$36.00 value)
 - Angels = four tickets (\$24.00 value)
 - Donors = three tickets (\$10.00 value)
 - Sponsors = two tickets (\$5.00 value)
2. Priority reservations and seating preferences
3. Receive the ENCORE newsletter SPOTLIGHT each fall, winter, and spring
4. A "tax deductible donation"
5. Name in hundreds of programs
6. Name on Special Board in the Lobby (Special Angels only)
7. Certificate suitable for displaying (Special Angel *Businesses* only)

Please pay by check if possible. If you would like to help us out with your contribution, please fill out the attached form and clip to it your check. Make checks payable to:

WAHI DRAMA DEPARTMENT

We hope you will help make this production and the performing arts at WA-HI a success. Please return your completed form and check (the address is on the enclosed form) by October 26th to ensure that your name is in the program. The sooner we receive your check and form, the sooner we can reserve your tickets for the fall musical!

If you have any questions, feel free to call Paul Wickline at school (527-3063) or at home or by email at pwickline@wwps.org. You can also contact Connie Taylor-Randall at crandall@wwps.org or

Join your friends and neighbors in supporting the talented performing artists at WAHI today!

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline, production director

**WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL
THEATRE ARTS PATRON PROGRAM**

YES! I WANT TO BECOME A PATRON!
I would like to become a

- SPECIAL ANGEL (\$60.00)**
- ANGEL (\$50.00)**
- DONOR (\$30.00)**
- SPONSOR (\$20.00)**

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION *AS IT WILL APPEAR IN THE PROGRAM. PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY.*

NAME: _____

COMPANY (if appropriate): _____

(The following is for our records only)

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL _____

Example: SPECIAL ANGEL: Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Jones, The Rubber Stamp Store

If you would like to help support the arts at WAHI, please mail this form with your check to...

**PAUL WICKLINE, WAHI DRAMA
WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL
800 ABBOTT ROAD, WALLA WALLA WA, 99362.**

October 1st, 2001

Dear Prospective Patron of the Performing Arts:

Greetings and thank you for taking the time to read the following information about Walla Walla High School's ***THEATRE PROGRAM***.

The 2001 fall musical **THE FANTASTICKS** will be presented by the **Walla Walla High School Drama and Music Departments** on ***November 1st-3rd and 8th-10th***. This classic musical is directed by Paul Wickline and choreographed by Idalee Hutson-Fish. Robert Randall is the assistant director, Norb Rossi will provide the vocal music direction and Glen Mitchell will help coordinate the instrumental music.

We're all very excited about this event and hope you can attend. The cast of **THE FANTASTICKS** includes an experienced and talented group of young actors. In the cast are Alainna Fielding as "Luisa," Michael Barber as "Matt," Tom Karich as "El Gallo," David Lassen as "Bell," Jeff Moore as "Huck," Geoff Waring as "The Old Actor," Kevin Waring as "Mortimer," and Alex Stiles as "The Mute." Summer Willis is the stage manager for the production.

The 2002 winter production will be Shakespeare's hilarious romantic comedy ... **A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM**. Auditions are in January and production dates are **March 13th-16th** with special touring performances planned for the elementary and middle schools as well.

The **Spring Scene and One Act Festival** will be **May 9th-11th**. This is the annual performance of student selected and directed monologues, scenes, and one-act plays. Mr. Wickline will also direct the advanced drama class in a one act play that will be performed at this time.

Producing quality theatre is expensive. The sets (lumber, tools, etc...), costumes, props, lights, make-up, etc... all cost much more than you might realize. To adequately produce quality theatre at Walla Walla High School, we need your help. Ticket sales alone will not be enough to produce these shows. That is why we are contacting YOU and other business and professional people in our school district to become ***patrons*** of this year's theatre program.

These are our patron options:

- 1. SPECIAL ANGEL (a donation of \$60.00)**
- 2. ANGEL (a donation of \$50.00)**
- 3. DONOR (a donation of \$30.00)**
- 4. SPONSOR (a donation of \$25.00)**

These are our patron features:

- 1. FREE TICKETS TO THE THEATRICAL SEASON**
 - Special Angels = six tickets (\$36.00 value)

- Angels = four tickets (\$24.00 value)
 - Donors = three tickets (\$18.00 value)
 - Sponsors = two tickets (\$12.00 value)
2. Priority reservations and seating preferences
 3. Receive the ENCORE newsletter SPOTLIGHT each fall, winter, and spring
 4. A "tax deductible donation"
 5. Name in hundreds of programs
 6. Name on Special Board in the Lobby (Special Angels only)
 7. Certificate suitable for displaying (Special Angel *Businesses* only)

Please pay by check if possible. If you would like to help us out with your contribution, please fill out the attached form and clip to it your check.

Make checks payable to:

WAHI DRAMA DEPT.

We hope you will help make our productions a success. Please return your completed form and check (the address is on the enclosed form) by **October 26th** to ensure that your name is in the program. ***The sooner we receive your check and form, the sooner we can reserve your tickets for the fall musical!***

If you have any questions, feel free to call Paul Wickline at school (527-3063) or at home or by email at pwickline@wwps.org . You can also contact Connie Taylor-Randall at crandall@wwps.org or

Join your friends and neighbors in supporting the talented performing artists at WAHI today!

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline

Connie Taylor-Randall

APPENDIX D: CAST CONTRACT**CAST CONTRACT**

It is extremely important that each student cast understands the commitment and furthermore agrees to fulfill the requirements to make this show a success! Below is a contract that explains my expectations of you. READ THE CONTRACT CAREFULLY. You and a parent must sign and return this document no later than the first rehearsal.

- 1) As a cast member I understand the time commitment and that I must attend all rehearsals for which I am called. If I must miss a rehearsal because of a legitimate reason, I will contact Mr. Wickline at least **TWO (2) days** before that scheduled rehearsal. If I am ill, I will call Mr. Wickline to let him know of my illness. If I miss more than two (2) rehearsals I will be replaced. I understand that **WORK AND HOMEWORK ARE NOT VALID EXCUSES TO MISS REHEARSALS.**
- 2) I will remain available if extra rehearsals are needed. I understand that I will be notified at least **ONE WEEK** in advance of all extra rehearsals.
- 3) I will always come to rehearsal prepared to work. I will bring my **SCRIPT** and a **PENCIL**. I understand that failure to do so will slow down rehearsals and hurt my fellow actors and the production.
- 4) I understand that I may mark my script in light black lead pencil only and that I must take care of my script and return it in good condition or I will be charged **\$25.00** for the cost of the script.
- 5) I will have all lines, songs, dances, and blocking memorized by the deadlines set by the director.
- 6) I will give 100 + % at all rehearsals and performances.
- 7) I will have a good working relationship with the directors, the stage managers, my fellow cast and crew members, and be willing to take constructive criticism from the directors.
- 8) I agree to help with the cost of costumes by paying a **\$25.00 ACTIVITIES FEE.**
- 9) I agree to attend at least **ONE SET WORK PARTY** to help paint and/or build the set.
- 10) I agree to be a positive, productive member of this ensemble and will refrain from displaying a poor attitude around others. I will also refrain from gossiping about the show to anyone and will keep all problems "In the family."

11) I have read and submitted a **WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITY CONTRACT** and will abide by the guidelines on this school district document.

12) I have purchased a **WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL A.S.B. CARD** for this year because I am participating in an activity(ies) that benefits from this organization.

I have read this contract and promise to fulfill my obligations to this production. I also understand that if the director thinks at any time I am not fulfilling my obligations, he will have a conference with me and that could result in my removal from this show. If this does happen, I understand that his decision will be final.

Student Signature

Date

I understand the commitments required of the student named above and agree to support him/her in this activity.

_____ (parent's signature)

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASES

Walla Walla High School
Music and Drama Departments

PRESS RELEASE

HIP BROADWAY MUSICAL TO HIT WAHI STAGE!

RELEASE DATE: October 16th, 1998

EVENT: Walla Walla High School **MUSICAL PRODUCTION OF PIPPIN**

Production Dates: November 6,7,12,13,14

Contact Person: Paul Wickline (527-3020 school and home) or Connie Taylor-Randall

Interesting Note:

Guest artist and teacher Phyllis Bonds plays a cameo role in the production...
 Sharpstein 5th grader George Burgess plays the role of THEO...

What is the meaning of life? What will we accomplish in our lives that will be special...that will set us apart from the crowd? The directors and the cast of the Walla Walla High School fall musical attempt to answer this very human question.

The WAHI Music and Drama departments have combined staff and talent to produce the musical **PIPPIN**, which opens at the WaHi Auditorium November 6th. This **magical** show by Stephen Schwartz (the composer of Godspell and Children of Eden) is directed by Paul Wickline and choreographed by the very talented **Idalee Hutson-Fish**. These two artists have collaborated on several of WAHI's past musical successes including **GUYS AND DOLLS** and **THE MUSIC MAN**. Glen Mitchell provides the orchestra direction and Bill Gilbert and Paul Dennis combine their talents and expertise to prepare the singers for the challenging vocal demands of the score.

In this charming show, we learn of the story of **PIPPIN**, who not only finds it difficult being the son of a great man -- CHARLEMAGNE -- but also has a tough time finding his purpose in life. The musical chronicles his journey to "find himself" as he goes to war, tries painting, religion, protesting, fantasizing about being KING, and much more.

The production features a **soaring pop/rock score** by Stephen Schwartz, marvelous chorus numbers and dances, magic tricks, pyrotechnics, and a mature script by Roger Hirson that teaches a good lesson on what's really important in life.

The cast of PIPPIN is a talented group of young actor/singer/dancers who should be familiar to audiences who have attended previous WAHI, Little Theatre, and Community College productions.

CAST INFORMATION

The Leading Player/Narrator is played by junior Brad Willcuts who audiences may remember stole the show last year in ONCE UPON A MATTRESS as "King Sextimus." Brad also danced the nights away at the Amphitheatre last summer in GUYS AND DOLLS with Tyson Kaup.

Tyson Kaup, who plays the character of PIPPIN, is a veteran of the Walla Walla High School, Little Theatre, and WWCC Summer theatre stages. Tyson has had leading roles in such shows as ONCE UPON A MATTRESS, BYE BYE BIRDIE, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, THE KING AND I, and AN INSPECTOR CALLS. Tyson has also had leading roles in the last four WaHi musicals. An accomplished musician, Tyson won 2nd place in 1998 as a baritone in the state solo/ensemble contest. A senior this year, Tyson plans to attend Julliard next fall to study music and theatre.

Senior music and drama student Ciana Fielding returns to the WAHI stage playing PIPPIN's love interest, Catherine. Senior actor and A.S.B. officer John Junke, "Sir Studley" in last year's ONCE UPON A MATTRESS, portrays the powerful Charlemagne, newcomer Michael Walker plays Pippin's egotistical brother LEWIS, and senior Summer Phillips, "Renee" in last winter's successful ANNE FRANK AND ME, struts her stuff as Pippin's sexy step-mother Fastrada.

The cast also features two VERY DIFFERENT "newcomers" to the WaHi stage. George Burgess, a 5th grade Sharpstein Elementary student and son of Whitman professor and director Dana Burgess, will charm audiences as Catherine's son.

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, the WAHI musical has chosen to cast a faculty member in a role in the musical. Guest artist and Walla Walla theatre veteran PHYLLIS BONDS plays Pippin's feisty and fun-loving grandmother Berthe who will dazzle audiences as she sings ... "It's time to start livin'!" Phyllis is familiar to theatre audiences who will recall her delightful "Mrs. Shinn" in 1997's summer production of MUSIC MAN, as the "Wicked Witch" in the WIZARD OF OZ, and as Professor Higgin's mother in MY FAIR LADY. A fine character actress, Phyllis brings a wonderfully realistic quality to the role of Pippin's grandmother.

According to director Paul Wickline, "this is perhaps the finest cast and crew I have had the pleasure of working with at Walla Walla High School. The students are not only very talented, but also focused, professional, and dedicated to producing the best show possible."

"We are also blessed this year to have many members of WAHI's Chamber Singers vocal group in our cast. The Chambers Singers, under the direction of Paul

Dennis, won the first place choral award at the 1998 Washington State Ensemble Contest. The quality of sound that this cast makes is phenomenal!”

Paul is also excited and encouraged by the help of so many volunteers this year. According to Wickline, “the supporting personnel and parent volunteers have also been outstanding. We have an incredibly dedicated and energetic team of costumers, choreographers, producers, and parents who have stepped in to help shape this show. I am so pleased to see the support this team has demonstrated for this program.”

Don't miss this show! WaHi's theatre program is fast becoming one of the best in the state and has been honored by Central Washington University and the Washington Association for Theatre Educators for its commitment to quality high school theatre! Come see a positive example of what the youth of Walla Walla can and is doing to contribute to the culture of the Walla Walla Valley.

This promises to be an exciting production! **Production dates are November 6,7,12,13,14 with a curtain time of 7:30. Tickets are on sale beginning Oct. 26th at Walla Walla High School. Box Office Hours are 3:00-6:00 p.m. beginning OCT. 26th. Call 527-3020 to reserve tickets.** All seats are reserved. Brochures and ticket order forms are available at HOT POOP, EARTHLIGHT BOOKS, and other area businesses.

END OF PRESS RELEASE

GODSPELL PRESS RELEASE*News Media Contact :***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Paul Wickline
(509) 527-3020

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL PRODUCTION SURVIVES CONTROVERSY

After a controversial beginning, Walla Walla High School is ready to open its 1999 fall production of the musical **GODSPELL**. Since late August, the Walla Walla High School music and drama departments have been busy "Day by Day" preparing for opening night on Thursday, November 4th.

Wa-Hi's preparation of its production of **GODSPELL** has not been without some controversy. Last summer, about a dozen parents and community members expressed a concern over the religious nature of the show. Despite such concerns, the school and district administrations gave the "go ahead" for the production.

In early September, the director, Paul Wickline, received a letter from Stephen Schwartz, the composer of **GODSPELL** concerning the controversy that occasionally accompanies productions of **GODSPELL**. Below is an excerpt from this letter defending **GODSPELL**.

"It is interesting that this problem seems to be more widespread in the 90's than in the 70's when the show premiered. This could be an indication of pre-millennial anxiety, or further proof that we are regressing, not progressing, in many areas.

GODSPELL was conceived by John-Michael Tebelak, who was combining his interests in theatre and his calling to become an Episcopal minister. John-Michael ultimately spent a great deal of time before he died working at the Cathedral of St.

John the Divine in New York City. In addition, he based his conception of **GODSPELL** on the work and teachings of Harvey Cox, the famous professor of Divinity at Harvard. Clearly, this is not a work intended to "mock" Christianity. **GODSPELL** has been performed before countless members of Christian orders and denominations, including (at their invitation) two Popes; again, a work that was intended to "mock" Christianity would hardly have been so enthusiastically greeted by people who have made Christianity their life's work.

What **GODSPELL** does do is find humor in the Gospels and in the responses of human beings to them. The show was conceived by John-Michael partly as a response to the humorlessness, joylessness, and narrow-mindedness he found in many organized Christian congregations... "

According to director Paul Wickline, "Despite the early controversy in the fall which put the production behind schedule, we are ready for an audience. The production staff, an extremely talented cast led by one of Walla Walla's best actors, Brad Willcuts, and a top-notch musical combo have created an outstanding music and theatrical event appropriate for the whole family. Idalee Hutson-Fish's dance numbers are packed with so much energy, I am thinking of putting safety belts on the auditorium seats! Paul Dennis' chorus sounds as professional as always and the soloists are the best we have ever had."

Whether you are "religious" or not, you are likely to find this production exciting and entertaining. The musical score, written by Stephen Schwartz, (**CHILDREN OF EDEN**, **PIPPIN**, Disney's **POCAHONTAS** and **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME**) is a rich tapestry of many musical colors - folk, ballad, pop, rock, light musical

comedy, and dramatic. Among the numbers you are sure to remember are: "Day by Day," "Prepare Ye," "Turn Back O' Man" and "By My Side."

SYNOPSIS

GODSPELL is a musical based on the Gospel according to Matthew. The first act covers many of the teachings of Jesus from his early ministry including the beatitudes, parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The second act shows Jesus interacting with the Pharisees and his disciples. The original production was set in present day and the cast was a group of "clown-like" characters. Wa-Hi's production is set in an inner city construction site.

For Paul Wickline choosing to produce and direct a production as controversial and challenging as **GODSPELL** was an easy decision.

"We have such a talented group of students involved in our program. After the incredible success of **PIPPIN** last fall, I wanted to follow up with a show that would both challenge the students and production staff and entertain and educate the audience. For me, **GODSPELL** is not about religion. It is about love. **GODSPELL** is about basic human kindness -- something that I think that we are not teaching our children. When teenagers bring firearms to school and mindlessly gun down their peers, something is terribly wrong with our society. I hope our production of **GODSPELL** can help spread a message of love and tolerance. The story of **GODSPELL** speaks to the love and joy in the hearts of people rather than hate and sadness. It speaks of loving your neighbor, forgiveness, tolerance and celebration."

CAST and CREW

GODSPELL features senior Brad Willcuts (the "Leading Player" in last year's production of **PIPPIN**) as "Jesus" and junior Joe Keown as "John/Judas." Other leading roles are played by seniors Anne Lohrmann and Cami Davis and juniors Crystal Robinson and Amber Randall. These six talented young people were also featured last summer in the Walla Walla Little Theatre's **Musical Revue 99**.

Steve Katz, Janet Toews, Andrew Harper, and Jim Johnson complete the cast of "named characters" in **GODSPELL**. Also in the cast are seniors Peter Alexander, Judith Muro, Denise Lundstrom, Adam Henrichsen, and Tina Winters; sophomores Alex Stiles and Becka Hopkinson, and freshmen Kimi Saffer and Geoff Waring.

Paul Wickline is the production and technical director, Robert G. Randall is the assistant director, Paul Dennis is the vocal coach and music director, senior Darrel Frost is directing the combo with guidance from Glen Mitchell, Idalee Hutson-Fish is the choreographer, Jennifer Kirk is the stage manager, and Karol Matson is the costume designer.

TICKET INFORMATION

GODSPELL opens Thursday, November 4th at 7:30 in the WA-HI auditorium. Performance dates are November 4th-6th and 12th and 13th. Ticket prices are \$4.00 for students and seniors and \$5.00 for adults. Tickets for **GODSPELL** may be purchased at the Walla Walla High School main office beginning on Monday, October 25th from 3:00-5:00 p.m. or at the door on the day of the performance. Call **Paul Wickline** at **527-3020** for more information.

END OF PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

OCTOBER 12th, 2001

A Fantastic Musical is Coming to Walla Walla....

The FANTASTICKS

Released By:

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

Walla Walla High School

800 Abbott Road

Wickline

Walla Walla, Washington 99362

For Release:

Immediately

Contact: Paul

Fantastic music, fantastic dialogue, fantastic characters, and fantastic costumes! What do these things have in common? They all describe Walla Walla High School's musical production of THE FANTASTICKS. The show will be presented November 1st-3rd and 8th-10th with curtain time at 7:30 PM.

The production staff includes: Paul Wickline as the production and technical director, Norb Rossi is the music director, Idalee Hutson-Fish is the choreographer, Robert Randall and Bill Gilbert as the assistant directors.

THE FANTASTICKS is a wonderful musical based on the play "Les Romanesques" by Edmund Rostand, who is best known for creating the classic romantic drama Cyrano de Bergerac. The book and lyrics are by Tom Jones and the music is by Harvey Schmidt. Audiences will surely recognize

many of the songs from the score, such as “Try to Remember,” “Plant a Radish,” and “Soon It’s Gonna Rain.”

According to Paul Wickline, the rehearsals are going extremely well! “We have such a fantastic (pardon the pun!) group of students this year. The show is quite challenging, but it is tremendous fun for the actors and the audience. I am very excited to be producing this musical with this group of actors. Prepared to be entertained!”

THE FANTASTICKS opened off-Broadway on May 3rd, 1960, becoming an immediate success. It currently is the longest running show in the history of musical theatre. It has become one of the world's most loved musicals and one of the most widely performed. This musical is a touching, romantic and at times very comic story about young love, innocence, and relationships.

The story is about two fathers and their two teenagers. The fathers, Huck and Bell, have promised and planned to have their children marry each other. Knowing that children generally do the opposite of what they are told, the fathers have forbidden their children, Matt and Luisa, to see each other. To accomplish this, the fathers have pretended to feud and even built a high wall between the two houses. All of this is part of their elaborate plan to trick their children into falling in love with one another.

As the play opens, we learn that the plan has succeeded and the children have fallen in love. Now the parents realize they must find a way to end the feud, without letting their children know. They hire a villain, El Gallo, to stage a fake kidnapping attempt of Luisa. Matt, races to the rescue, saves the girl, and Act I ends happily.

In Act II, however, the families and the lovers soon tire of one another and they begin arguing. Matt and Luisa learn of the fake feud and they become angry with their parents and with each other. The parents are feuding for real now! Matt decides to set out into the world, to find his fame and fortune. Luisa is visited by El Gallo who shows her the wonders of the world.

The audience will enjoy finding out the exciting and touching conclusion to this story, and hearing favorite hit tunes such as "Try to Remember" and "Soon It's Gonna Rain." The cast includes many extremely talented WaHi actor/singer/dancers.

CAST LIST (in order of appearance)

MIME: Alex Stiles

EL GALLO: Tom Karich

MATT: Michael Barber

LUISA: Alainna Fielding

HUCK: Jeff Moore

BELL: David Lassen

HENRY: Geoff Waring

MORTIMER: Kevin Waring

All tickets can be obtained by calling the high school between 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM at 527-3020 beginning on October 29th. They will also be sold at the door beginning at 6:30 on the nights of the performances. Adult tickets are \$6.00 and students are \$5.00 (18 and under). Call Paul Wickline @ 527-3063 if you would like more information.

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE ADVERTISING LETTER TO BUSINESSES



Advertise in the Walla Walla High School Musical Program!

What's this all about?

For the low cost of **\$30.00**, you can advertise in the program for the WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL FALL MUSICAL GODSPELL. This program will be seen by over 2,000 teenagers and adults who attend this production in November. We are offering local businesses the opportunity to place a BUSINESS CARD size advertisement for this low fee. If you are interested, please place your business card in the space below and we will do the rest! We will send you a bill or you can enclose a check with this form. It's that simple!

Greetings! We are searching for businesses interested in ...

- ◆ **IMPROVING THEIR COMPANY'S PUBLIC RELATIONS**
- ◆ **INCREASING THEIR EXPOSURE**
- ◆ **SUPPORTING PROGRAMS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE YOUTH OF WALLA WALLA**

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT THE ARTS AT WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL AND PROMOTE MY BUSINESS....

MY CHECK IS ENCLOSED.

PLEASE BILL ME.

MY BUSINESS CARD IS ATTACHED!

MAIL THIS FORM TO:

Paul Wickline
 Walla Walla High School
 800 Abbott Road
 Walla Walla, WA 99362

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO

**WALLA WALLA HIGH
 SCHOOL**

(509) 527-3020
 (509) 527-3039
 Email: pwickline@wwps.org

I, _____, authorize the purchase of this
 (the advertiser)
 advertising space.

Signature: _____

**PLEASE ATTACH BUSINESS CARD HERE
 (OR ENCLOSE IN AN ENVELOPE WITH
 THIS FORM)**

DEADLINE is MONDAY, OCTOBER 25th, 2001

PAUL WICKLINE

Drama Department
Walla Walla High School
800 Abbott Road
Walla Walla, WA 99362

509-527-3020 (Voice)
509-527-3034 (Fax)

September 9, 1998

Dear Business Owner:

I am writing to let you know of a **terrific advertising opportunity** for your company.

We are currently putting the WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTION of PIPPIN program together and are offering the opportunity for local businesses to advertise in this program.

This program is read by more than 2,000 people (students and adults) who attend our musical productions each year. By advertising in our program you are announcing to the public that you support the arts and, more importantly, the youth of our community.

This year we are offering a BUSINESS CARD size advertisement space for the low cost of \$25.

All we ask is that you attach the business card to the enclosed form and return it to **PAUL WICKLINE** at **WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL** no later than **MONDAY, OCTOBER 19th**. Make the check payable to **WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL**. We will take care of the rest! It's that simple.

We sincerely hope you will consider advertising in our program. The money that we raise from the sales of these advertising spaces will help support our program and will allow us to purchase much needed lighting, costume and other supplies for this and future shows. **BUT WAIT...There is more!**

We **ALSO** have a **SPONSOR PROGRAM**. I have enclosed a brochure which includes details about this program. If you wish to give us a **GIFT of \$50.00** we will place a **business size card advertisement** in the program **AND** send you **four free tickets** to use for our show. We will also send your business a nice **DISPLAY CARD** which you can display in your business which announces your support of our program.

I hope you will decide to help support our program in some way. If you have any questions, please call me. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely, Paul Wickline

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE DRAMA RECRUITMENT LETTER

January 18, 2000

First, I want to thank you for auditioning for THE CURIOUS SAVAGE. Almost 40 people auditioned and with only 11 roles available the quantity and quality of those auditioning made my job very difficult.

If you were not cast in this production, do not take it personally. Many factors are involved in selecting a cast – the way you look (height, size, hair color, etc...), the way you sound (volume, quality of the voice, etc...), your presence on stage, your ability to interact with the other actors, and much more. All you can do in an audition is put your best effort forward and hope for the best.

Now to the true purpose of this letter...I would like to encourage and invite students interested in drama and in acting to take the **Drama I-II** class next year. This is an excellent place for you to develop your acting and people skills and for me to get to know you as an actor and as a person. We do a great deal of active drama work on the stage and learn a great deal of basic acting technique.

This class is a great place for me to get to know you better as a person and as an actor. Although I do cast people whom I don't know in productions I direct, one of the things I consider when selecting a cast is how well the cast will work together as a whole. If I don't know you very well, I am going to be less likely to cast you. That doesn't mean that I only cast people I know, but unless I have a really good reason to cast someone I don't know over someone I know, I will choose the actor whose work I know and trust.

If you still want to be involved, please consider becoming a member of the CREW for the show. Crew information forms will be available outside of C-2 at the start of the new semester. Light crew, stage crew, prop crew and many other crew positions are available. Also – don't forget about the SPRING SCENES AND ONE ACT PLAYS in May. Auditions will be in early April so if you are interested, plan to audition. Stay tuned for more information!!!

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline

Paul Wickline

Director of Theatre Arts
 Walla Walla High School
 800 Abbott Road
 Walla Walla WA 99362

527-3063 (office)
 527-3034 (fax)
 pwickline@wwps.org

Dear:

One of your teachers has informed me that you might be interested in taking the **Acting Workshop 1-2** class offered **3rd or 7th periods** next year. **I would like to invite you to enroll in this class if you would like to explore the exciting world of the theatre!**

The Acting Workshop class is a very active class. Students learn and participate in a variety of theatre games, improvisational activities (like on WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY,) and exercises to develop the basic skills needed to be a successful stage actor. We also work on a variety of scenes and monologues, learn about the technical elements of the theatre (lighting, set design, etc....) and much more.

These are some of the WAHI students currently enrolled in the drama classes. In parentheses are some of the other activities they participate in:

Jane Farrington (ASB / dance team)	Liz Reardon (Tennis)	Diana Brinkley (Art)
Jenny Isely (ASB officer)	Rachel Rudnick (Tennis)	Katie Bartlow
Natalie Coleman (Tennis)	Cassandra Sept (Tennis)	Alisha Robison (TV production)
Geoff Waring (ASB officer/Choir)	Tom Klicker	Laura Southern (Band)
Kevin Waring (Tennis / Choir)	Kit Crawford (Jazz Band)	Chase Harvey (ROTC)
Rob Waring (Tennis / Choir)	Preston Beebe	Martin Fortney (Tennis)
Cammie Byerley (ASB / AP classes)	Jennifer Beckmeyer (AP classes)	Meghan McKinney
Alex Stiles (ASB/AP classes)	Andrea Barnes (AP classes)	Melissa Walker (choir)
Riley Clubb (AP classes/Choir)	Katie Pritchard (AP classes)	Bren Byerley
Matt Anderson (Tennis)	Veronica Gomez (AP classes)	Gloria Yera (FFA)
Angela Snedker	Davin Zitterkopf	Amanda Brown (AP classes)
Terra Howard	Chris Johnson (Cross country/Band)	Geneva Skeen (AP classes)
Ahmod Smith-Chambers (Varsity Football)	Rebecca Lea	Elizet Santana
Jeff Moore (Chamber / AP classes)	Meghan Horner (Band/AP classes)	Aubrey Brown (Adv. Art)
Alainna Fielding (Chamber / AP classes)	Emily Hicks (Choir)	David Abajian (sports)

If you would like to know more about the activities of the drama classes, feel free to email me at pwickline@wwps.org. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have. **Remember, this class satisfies a FINE ARTS, ELECTIVE, AND ENGLISH CREDIT**. If you are interested in being involved in an **exciting class** that will help you **develop confidence** in front of others ... **this is the class for you!!!**

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE LETTERS TO CAST PARENTS

Dear Parent:

9/10/01

As you are aware of, your student has begun rehearsals for The Fantasticks. The directors are all very excited by and pleased with the quality of this company of actor/singer/dancers. You should feel proud that your child was selected to be part of this cast.

Being involved in a musical is a big commitment. Your student has elected to participate in this extracurricular activity and to meet a variety of expectations to be a member of this company. Above all, attendance is mandatory. Please try to schedule all doctor appointments, etc... around this rehearsal schedule as much as possible. If the students miss rehearsals, they will fall behind and struggle to "catch up." This can ultimately result in a poor quality production. Please see the enclosed **contract** and **rehearsal schedule** for a better understanding of the expectations that the directors have of the students.

We have always received wonderful support from parents of the company members in the past and look forward to the same support this year. The producer, Connie Taylor-Randall, will be contacting you individually in the next few weeks for assistance with a variety of tasks related to this production. I hope you will volunteer to lend a hand when and where you can.

Ticket prices and information, and patron program forms will be given to students in the near future. We will begin reserving tickets and seats for you by the third week in October.

Thank you for supporting your student in this activity. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or send me EMAIL to us. Our school email addresses are pwickline@wwsp.org and nrossi@wwps.org. We look forward to seeing you at the performances!!

Sincerely,

Production Director
Paul Wickline

Musical Director
Norbert Rossi

Dear Parent:

12/15/2000

As you are aware of, your student has been cast in the winter musical production **THE BOYFRIEND**. The directors are all very excited by and pleased with the quality of this company of actor/singer/dancers. You should feel proud that your child was selected to be part of this cast.

Being involved in a musical is a big commitment. Your student has elected to participate in this extracurricular activity and to meet a variety of expectations to be a member of this company. Above all, ***regular attendance is mandatory***. Please try to schedule all doctor appointments, etc... around this rehearsal schedule as much as possible. If the students miss rehearsals, they will fall behind and struggle to "catch up." In some cases, they may not be able to participate in a dance number or scene if they are absent from a crucial rehearsal. ***If the student misses more than three (3) rehearsals, they can be removed from the cast.*** Please see the enclosed **contract** and **rehearsal schedule** for a better understanding of the expectations that the directors have of the students.

We have always received wonderful support from parents of the company members in the past and look forward to the same support this year. The producer, ***Connie Taylor-Randall*** (crandall@wwps.org) will be contacting parents individually in the next few weeks for assistance with a variety of tasks related to this production. I hope you will volunteer to lend a hand when and where you can.

Ticket prices and information, and patron program forms will be given to students in the near future. We will begin reserving tickets and seats for you by the second week of February.

Thank you for supporting your student in this activity. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or send me EMAIL to us. Our school email addresses are pwickline@wwps.org and nrossi@wwps.org.

We look forward to seeing you at the performances!!

Sincerely,

Production Director
Paul Wickline

Musical Director
Norbert Rossi

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE CONTRACTS

**WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL
DRAMA PRODUCTION CONTRACT**

Position: **CHOREOGRAPHER**

It is hereby agreed by and between WALLA WALLA SCHOOL DISTRICT, represented by PAUL WICKLINE and **IDALEE HUTSON-FISH** herein after called the "Employee":

That the employee agrees to carry out the following duties which are over and above any duties that may be included in any other existing contracts with the aforementioned school.

The CHOREOGRAPHER WILL.....

- 1) Attend all **dance rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and at least one of the performances.**
- 2) Work with **large group and individual dancing.**
- 3) Maintain **discipline** at each rehearsal.
- 4) Will work with the music director on any problems that deal with dancing.
- 5) Will **prepare an agenda** and have it approved by PAUL WICKLINE before each scheduled dance rehearsal.
- 6) Will help **supervise at dress rehearsals and performances.**
- 7) Will attend all **production staff meetings** called by PAUL WICKLINE.
- 8) Will report directly to PAUL WICKLINE, production director, who will have final say in all matters.

The said employee will be paid according to the following scale:

FLAT RATE FOR ENTIRE JOB: **\$400.00**

Pay assumes the following: 40 hours @ \$10.00 per hour

(This amount will be disbursed no later than the first performance)

Date

Signature of Employer

Date

Signature of Employee

WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA PRODUCTION CONTRACT

Position: ACCOMPANIST

It is hereby agreed by and between WALLA WALLA SCHOOL DISTRICT, represented by PAUL WICKLINE and _____ herein after called the "Employee":

That the employee agrees to carry out the following duties which are over and above any duties that may be included in any other existing contracts with the aforementioned school.

The ACCOMPANIST WILL.....

- 9) Will accompany one day of auditions.
- 10) Attend and play all **music rehearsals, dress rehearsals, performances, and scheduled special assemblies.**
- 11) Will have music prepared for each rehearsal.
- 12) Work with **large group and individuals.**
- 13) Will **record tapes** for choreographer and others when needed
- 14) Will work with the music director and help supervise music rehearsals.
- 15) Will report directly to **PAUL WICKLINE**, production director, who will have final say in all matters.

The said employee will be paid according to the following scale:

FLAT RATE FOR ENTIRE JOB **\$ 600.00**
This amount will be distributed at the first performance

Date

Signature of Employer

Date

Signature of Employee

APPENDIX J: REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE FOR CAST MEETING**REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE**

1. Rehearsals will start promptly at 3:05. Arrive AT LEAST 5 minutes early and begin warm ups and preparations (stretching, vocalizing, review your lines, etc...) for dance rehearsals, music rehearsals, blocking rehearsals, etc...
2. Dress appropriately. Wear loose fitting clothing and comfortable shoes.
3. ALWAYS BRING A PENCIL AND YOUR SCRIPT TO EACH REHEARSAL.
4. Don't chew gum during a REHEARSAL OR A PERFORMANCE!!!
5. Hair should be pulled back out of your face during rehearsals.
6. NO FOOD IN THE AUDITORIUM OR CHOIR ROOM DURING REHEARSALS
7. CASUAL AND EXCESSIVE TALKING is not allowed in the rehearsal hall — this includes the choir room during music rehearsals.
8. VISITORS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO OBSERVE REHEARSALS UNLESS CLEARED BY MR. WICKLINE AT LEAST ONE DAY IN ADVANCE. FRIENDS ARE RARELY ALLOWED TO OBSERVE. Visitors are NEVER allowed backstage during the run of a production.
9. STAY IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM. IF YOU NEED TO LEAVE THE AREA, ALWAYS INFORM THE SM OR ASM OF YOUR WHEREABOUTS. NEVER leave rehearsal until dismissed by the director.
10. ACTORS waiting to work are STRONGLY urged to use their time PRODUCTIVELY. Memorize lines, review blocking and music, or do your homework.
11. PLEASE LEAVE YOUR "BAGGAGE" AT THE DOOR. When you are working, you need to concentrate on the show. You need to focus and concentrate ALL your ENERGY on rehearsal every day.
12. ALWAYS TREAT EVERYONE WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT. NEVER TALK ABOUT ANYONE BEHIND THEIR BACK, GOSSIP, OR PUT OTHERS DOWN. THERE ARE NO "STARS" IN A SHOW; EACH CAST, CREW, and ORCHESTRA MEMBER IS NEEDED TO CREATE A GOOD PRODUCTION
13. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE YOU TO GIVE DIRECTIONS TO ANOTHER ACTOR. Don't feed him/her a line, tell him/her how to move, give him or her acting advice. If you have a suggestion, talk to the director.
14. If anything accidentally falls on the floor, pick it up!
15. DON'T TOUCH ITEMS SUCH AS PROPS OR COSTUMES THAT ARE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ANOTHER PERSON.
16. KEEP YOUR GRADES UP! If you can't participate in drama and simultaneously maintain good grades, don't accept a position. You must be passing at least 5 classes in a semester to remain in this cast.
17. BE READY FOR CUES WITHOUT BEING CALLED. NEVER be LATE for a CUE or leave your assigned station during rehearsals or performances.

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE POSTER FOR AUDITION ADVERTISING

PLEASE POST PLEASE POST PLEASE POST

***MUSICAL
INFORMATION
Meeting***

For the hit musical...

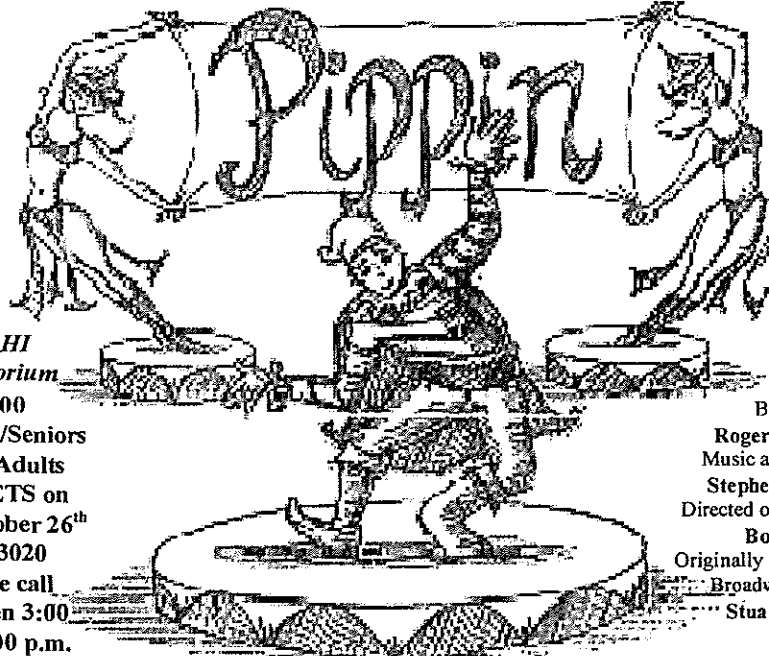


***Thursday, August 30th
3:00-3:30
Auditorium***

Come learn about the musical, audition procedures, etc....

APPENDIX L: SAMPLE PRODUCTION POSTER

WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL
PRESENTS



WAHI
Auditorium
\$4.00
Students/Seniors
\$5.00 Adults
TICKETS on
sale October 26th
527-3020
Please call
between 3:00
and 6:00 p.m.

Book by
Roger O. Hirson
Music and Lyrics by
Stephen Schwartz
Directed on Broadway by
Bob Fosse
Originally produced on the
Broadway stage by
Stuart Ostrow

7:30 P.M.

NOVEMBER
6, 7, 12, 13, 14

Pippin is presented through special arrangement with and all authorized materials are supplied by Music Theatre International, 421 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10029

APPENDIX M: SAMPLE INFORMATION GIVEN TO STUDENTS BEFORE AUDITIONS

P I P P I N

SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

The “Leading Player” tells us the tongue-in-cheek story of Pippin, son of the 8th Century King Charlemagne, who is on a quest to find his true calling in life. Pippin goes through war, love, politics, and other pursuits before settling down with a decent woman (Catherine) and her son. Growing restless with family life, he leaves and the Leading Player tries to seduce him into contemplating suicide. Pippin decides he loves the simple life with his new family: “trapped, but happy.”

History of the ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

- Opened 10/23/72
- Ran for nearly 2000 performances
- Started careers of Ben Vereen (Leading player), Jill Clayburgh (Catherine) and John Rubinstein (Pippin), and Ann Reinking.
- During the original run, Irene Ryan (Granny on “Beverly Hillbillies” tv show) collapsed and died after performing the big showstopper, “No Time at All.”

CAST INFORMATION

Cast Size: Approximately 25

Principals: 6 Men and 6 Women

Partial Cast of Characters:

- **Leading Player** (Male or Female): Dynamic, magnetic. Baritone or Alto. Must be able to move well and should have some dance experience or be able to learn quickly.
- **Pippin**: Earnest, attractive, misguided. Baritone.
- **Fastrada**: Pippin’s conniving stepmother. Mezzo.
- **Catherine**: Attractive, sharp woman. Mezzo.
- **King Charlemagne**: military, imposing. Bass.
- **Pippin’s saucy Grandmother**. Mezzo.
- **Lewis**: Pippin’s foppish stepbrother.
- **Catherine’s 8-year-old son** (will be played by an elementary or jr. high student)
- The **ensemble** dances, sings, and plays a variety of roles, places and objects. The ensemble must be able to **sing, dance, and act**. There are several magic tricks that are performed by the company as well.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Heavy Dancing: Choreographer *Idalee Hutson-Fish* has agreed to choreograph the production.

Set/Costume Design: Suggestive sets and costumes. Stylized rather than realistic

Orchestra Size: 12-17

Music Style: Broadway, Contemporary, Pop/Rock. CD is available from Hot Poop / \$12.00

Production will be directed and designed by **Paul Wickline**

Musical Direction by **Paul Dennis**

Orchestra Direction by **Glen Mitchell**

Producer will be **Connie Taylor-Randall**

Costume Designs by **Karol Matson and Robin Winters**

AUDITION INFORMATION

Audition Dates:

Wednesday, August 26th	3:00-3:30 (short meeting – please attend)
Thursday, August 27th	3:00 – 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.
Friday, August 28th	3:00 – 5:30 p.m. (if needed – or used for callback auditions)
Monday, August 31st	3:00 - 5:30 p.m. Call back auditions or first read through.

THERE WILL BE ONE MORE INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26th at 3:00 IN THE CHOIR ROOM. Please plan to attend. The directors will use the attendance at this meeting to determine how many days to hold auditions and pass out **INFORMATION FORMS** for your parents, answer any questions you may have, and help prepare you for the audition. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!**

Audition Procedure:

- The first step is to pick up and fill out the **audition form** and bring it with you to the audition. Audition forms will be available at the second informative meeting at **3:00** on **Wednesday, August 26th** in the Choir Room.
- The **first round** of auditions will be **OPEN** next fall. **OPEN** means that all those auditioning will sit in the auditorium and each auditioner will audition in front of the other auditioners.

Each audition will take approximately 90 seconds.

1. The auditioner will introduce himself/herself and sing through his/her 16 bars of music in front of the directors and other auditioners. **Prepare and bring the sheet music for 16 bars (30 to 45 seconds -- no longer!) of a song that shows your range.** The song should preferably be from a musical.
- If you do not have a song prepared, you will be asked to sing “Happy Birthday” or “My Country Tis of Thee.”

2. The auditioner will then read a short monologue (20 seconds) to demonstrate his/her vocal skills and acting abilities.

That is all there is to the **first round** of auditions! All auditioners considered for a role in the musical will be called back for a **second audition** where they will read scenes from the script and participate in a **dance audition** with Idalee Hutson-Fish if being considered for "**Leading Player**," "**Pippin**," "**Fastrada**," or one of the **ensemble chorus members**.

CREW POSITIONS

If you are interested in a crew position, please attend the informational meeting in the fall and pick up a crew application form and complete it and return it to Mr. Wickline.

SCRIPT PERUSAL

SCRIPTS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO CHECK OUT ON AN ***OVERNIGHT BASIS*** DURING ***FINALS WEEK*** FROM ***MR. WICKLINE'S ROOM C-2***. ALL SCRIPTS MUST BE RETURNED THE MORNING OF THE NEXT DAY ***OR YOU WILL BE FINED \$1.00. NO SCRIPTS*** WILL BE BORROWED AFTER ***WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10TH*** OF FINALS WEEK.

GODSPELL INFORMATION

GODSPELL SYNOPSIS

GODSPELL is a musical based on the Gospel according to Matthew. The first act covers many of the teachings of Jesus from his early ministry including the beatitudes, parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The second act shows Jesus interacting with the Pharisees and his disciples. The original production of GODSPELL was set in present day and the cast was a group of clown-like characters. Other productions have set this musical from vastly different perspectives: from a New York City street gang to a Kindergarten classroom.

GODSPELL, as conceived by John-Michael Tebelak, is a jubilant celebration of the Gospel as told by St. Matthew. It is a religious experience to be felt joyously. It is a release of one's spirit into the larger heart of mankind. In brief, it is the belief of John-Michael and his generation that the passion of Jesus Christ was to teach love and joy in the hearts of people rather than hate and sadness.

In staging these well-known sayings and stories of the Bible, John-Michael calls on many theatrical devices -- pantomime, children's games, charades, puppetry, vaudeville antics, the question-answer technique of minstrel shows, tap and soft shoe dancing, and songs and music of many colors - folk, ballad, pop, rock, light musical comedy, and dramatic. His people are cast primarily as clowns, in improvised costumes, to enact the simple stories, sayings and parables of the Gospel.

The main advice to the players is to speak honestly with open simplicity, but never coy nor naive; not to push for exuberance, but to be exuberant; not to play to the audience, but to be one in a party of celebration with them; and when the moment comes for the symbolic crucifixion, to feel deeply man's anguish for his sins.

Lawrence Carra
Professor of Play Directing
Carnegie-Mellon University

This is an **ENSEMBLE SHOW**. There are really no "leading roles." Jesus and Judas are the only "named" characters in the script. The other characters are simply called by the actors first names.

The cast on stage will be limited to about 10 to 12 characters. Too many characters muddies the stage and the action of the script and music. There MAY be "chorus" that is used periodically in the show, but this is yet to be decided.

Since 1971 this show has been performed thousands of times by high school, college, church theatre, community theatre, collegiate theatre, and professional theatre companies all over the world. GODSPELL is one of the most loved and respected musicals ever written. The score is a collection of pop/ rock, folk, tin-pan alley, and

Gospel flavored tunes. The script is well written with a great deal of comedy and a very dramatic section near the end when Judas betrays Jesus, the Last Supper is recreated, and Jesus is arrested, crucified, and dies on the cross.

GODSPELL INFORMATION

Book by John-Michael Tebelak

Music/Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz (Pippin, Children of Eden)

CAST

A Small Cast Production of about 10 to 12 people with a possible chorus

Jesus (male)

Judas (male)

The Players (approximately 10-12 males and females)

All performers must be able to sing, dance, and act (with minimum competence.)

CREW

Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager (2)

Light Crew (4)

Sound Crew (2)

Set Shift Crew (4)

Props Crew (2-4)

Set Construction Crew (6)

Set Painting Crew (4-6)

Costume Construction (6)

Costume Dressing Crew (4)

ORCHESTRA / INSTRUMENTATION (On Stage)

(4-6 members)

Keyboards: Piano and Electric Organ

Guitars: Acoustic 6-string Guitar, Electric Guitar

Electric Bass Guitar

Drums and Percussion

Recorder ("All Good Gifts")

Two Tambourines ("Bless the Lord")

Two or Three Acoustic Guitars ("By My Side")

Vibra-slap ("Light of the World")

Various Toy Instruments

MUSICAL NUMBERS:

ACT ONE

Prologue (Tower of Babble)

Prepare Ye The Way of The Lord

Company

Judas and Company

Save the People	Jesus and Company
Day by Day	Female & Company
Learn Your Lessons Well	Man and Woman
Bless the Lord	Female and Company
All for the Best	Jesus and Judas
All Good Gifts	Female and Company
Light of the World	Company

ACT TWO

Learn Your Lessons Well (reprise)	Females
Turn Back, O Man	Female and Company
Alas for You	Jesus
By My Side	Females and Company
We Beseech Thee	Male and Company
On The Willows	Band (Or Chorus)
Finale	Company

GODSPELL AUDITION INFORMATION

STEPS:

- #1. Pick up and fill out an audition form at the **INFORMATION MEETING** on August 25th.
- #2. Choose a date to audition and **SIGN UP** (August 26th or 27th)
- #3. Prepare a song (see instructions below)
- #4. Relax and **HAVE FUN!!**

SINGING

All those interested in auditioning for GODSPELL are encouraged to prepare 16 to 32 bars (no more than one minute) of a song from the musical theatre. If you do not prepare a song, you will be asked to sing "Happy Birthday," "My Country Tis of Thee," or "America the Beautiful." **ALL AUDITIONERS MUST SING.**

ACTING

If you are called back for a **second audition**, you will be asked to "cold read" a scene, chosen by the director, from GODSPELL. Because the show also relies heavily on a cast that can take risks, have fun, play, and improvise in rehearsals, you will be asked to participate in a variety of drama games and activities on the second day of rehearsals.

DANCE

If you are called back for a **second audition** you will also be asked to learn and perform a very short (20 to 30 seconds) dance routine choreographed by the choreographer. You will need to wear clothes you can move easily in (sweats, workout, or dance clothes.)

AUDITION SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
August 25 th :	3:00 - 3:15	INFORMATION MEETING (Please attend)

August 26 th :	3:00 - 5:30	1 st round of Auditions, Day One
August 27 th :	3:00 - 5:30	1 st round of Auditions, Day Two
August 30 th :	3:00 - 6:00	Call back Auditions (SHOW CAST @ 6:00)
August 31 st :	3:00 - 5:30	CAST MEETING; SING THROUGH
September 1 st :	3:00 - 5:30	Music Rehearsal
September 2 nd :	3:00 - 5:30	Music Rehearsal

Rehearsals will be each day after school beginning August 31st and through October 27th (Wednesday). Although you will not ALWAYS be called for each rehearsal, you will need to be available EVERY DAY after school.

There will also be **AT LEAST ONE SATURDAY rehearsal** (10/30) and you will be required to work at least **ONE REQUIRED SATURDAY work party** (the month of September through October)

Evening rehearsals (6:30 - 9:30) will begin **October 28th - November 3rd**.

The show runs for two weekends: **November 4th, 5th, 6th, 12th, and 13th @ 7:30**

You must be available for rehearsals and ALL PERFORMANCES!!!! Please DO NOT audition if you can not attend rehearsals or will be gone for any of the performances.

CREW POSITIONS

A variety of Crew Positions are available. Students who do not want to audition or are not cast are **STRONGLY URGED** to participate on one of the crews. Although the job is not as "glamorous," it is no less vital to the success of a production!

Consider serving on one of the many crews needed for the show by filling out a "CREW APPLICATION" form.

DIRECTING AND DESIGN STAFF

Production Director and Designer:	Paul Wickline
Assistant Director:	Robert G. Randall
Producer:	Connie Taylor-Randall
Musical Director:	Paul Dennis
Orchestra Director:	Glen Mitchell
Choreographer:	Idalee Hutson-Fish
Set Artist:	Aaron Randall
Costume Designer:	Karol Matson
*Stage Manager:	_____
*Assistant S.M.	_____
Accompanist:	Linda Henry
Photographer:	Keven Peck
*Sound Designer:	_____

Set Construction Foreman: _____
Parent Promotion Committee _____
*Apprentice Lighting Designer: _____
*Light board operator: _____
*Spot Light Operator #1: _____

*Spot Light Operator #2: _____

*Sound board Operator: _____

*Props Designer: _____
*Costume Assistants: _____
*Set Construction Crew: _____
*Light Hang/Focus Crew: _____
*Set and Prop Backstage Crew: _____
*Publicity Crew _____
 (Producer's Assistants)

APPENDIX N: STAGE MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

**STAGE MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES
DURING REHEARSAL**

General things to remember...

Work on building a positive relationship with the cast and crew...

Never talk about anyone behind their backs...

The director is always right...

Don't complain...Be a problem solver...not a problem creator

BE ORGANIZED!!!

Be decisive, yet diplomatic...

Anticipate the directors' needs...try to help without being asked and solve problems before they become problems...

More Specific Duties...

Help supervise AUDITIONS AND CALL BACKS

Create prompt book – during rehearsals note blocking, obvious light, sound, and SFX cues

Create sign in sheet with columns for actors names and dates

Create a cast/crew contact sheet

Maintain the call-board

Prepare the rehearsal space – please arrive at least ten minutes before rehearsal to set up

Sweep floor

Set up stage for scene work

Check bulletin board for attendance

Call missing actors

Start rehearsal ON TIME

Keep rehearsals running smoothly and on schedule

Prompt actors unless otherwise directed by director

Make sure actors are delivering lines as written...

Spike furniture

At the end of rehearsals please help put furniture, props away, etc... and help make sure building is secure

Help notify those who are called for special meetings, photo shoots, etc...

Keep s.m./first aid kit up to date and available to cast/crew

Help organize set/prop shifts and determine technical cues...

Organize Set/Prop shift rehearsals

Be sure to get all light and sound cues written in prompt book

Begin calling light , effect, and sound cues aloud before tech rehearsals begin (during later rehearsals).

***APPENDIX 0: LETTER IN RESPONSE TO A STUDENT CONCERNED ABOUT
THE CONTENT OF PRODUCTION OF PIPPIN.***

Dear _____:

November 17, 1998

First of all, I am pleased you took the time to write this letter regarding your feelings about the production PIPPIN. It is helpful to get feedback on the productions I direct. Thank you. Although I doubt I can do much to alter your perception of the show, I will try to explain my choice of this musical and clarify a few points about the show.

You stated in your letter that you found the show "immoral and inappropriate" for high school audiences. You also mention that you thought the play had "many parts" that offended you and your friends. Since you only mention the "drug scene," I am not sure what other elements of the show bothered you. Therefore, I will focus on responding to your concerns about this one scene.

At the beginning of October, I asked Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Schroeder to both come in and watch this dance number because I was concerned that the message that I wanted to convey through the dance number might offend some people. I wanted them to be aware of the dance and explain to them what I was trying to accomplish with it. After seeing the dance, they both felt strongly that they knew what the message was and they supported my inclusion of it into the show. I will explain what I wanted to do with this dance number and how I believe I succeeded.

The dance number was designed to convey the concept of "peer pressure." I wanted Pippin to be faced with a problem our modern audiences could relate to. After seeing the survey in the Union Bulletin and the WaHi Journal this fall about the significant number of WAHI students who smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, and take drugs, I decided I would use drugs as the primary tool to illustrate this concept of **peer pressure**.

I asked the choreographer to create a modern dance that showed Pippin being offered drugs, having these drugs FORCED upon him, and reacting violently to the effects of these drugs. To help illustrate this concept we staged the number so Pippin **collapses** after drinking, **vomits** after smoking pot, and is **completely physically deadened** by the rest of the drugs pushed upon him. (Tyson Kaup clearly did all of these things in this dance. At no time does he (Pippin) even hint that he is enjoying what he is doing.) He then turns away from the group after he realizes what he has done and what has happened to him as a result of succumbing to this pressure. At the end of the dance he shouts "NO! NO! LEAVE ME ALONE!" as the others try to continue to tempt him. They taunt him as they leave as a further symbol of peer pressure. He has made a bad decision in his life (drugs) and tells us and the Leading Player in the next scene that he feels "empty and vacant" and desperately wants to do "something worthwhile" with his life.

To the majority of those individuals whom I have talked to, the message I wanted to convey was clear. You did not interpret this dance as I would have liked you to, but that is the chance I chose to take as a director. I knew that some people would be offended by this number and perhaps not interpret its message as I had intended. However, I didn't want to write a speech about the "evils of drugs" to have the character give after his encounter, which to me would have seemed preachy and ineffective. I didn't and still don't think I needed to have Pippin announce that drugs are bad for you. It was apparent in the dance that drugs are dangerous. As the director, I decided to rely on the audience to interpret the scene correctly.

Studies and research both have clearly demonstrated that "preaching" to adolescents about the dangers and evils of drugs is ineffective. People don't enjoy being told what to think and feel. I think this is what you may have wanted at the end of this scene. Experts believe that a better alternative is to try to open up a discussion about choices and show young people what can happen to them if they make the wrong choices. I chose to leave the issue open for the audience to think about rather than **telling** them how to feel and what to think. Maybe after seeing this show, parents of the younger children in the audience will feel motivated to talk to their children about drugs and the dangers of their

use to help them understand the message they want their children to get from this dance. I hope so.

Since you don't tell me your other concerns about the show, I am not sure what else to discuss in this letter. You mention that "a lot of things that go on in PIPPIN go against school policies," but I'm not sure what you refer to other than the pantomimed use of drugs on stage. As I am sure you are aware, there is a big difference between pantomiming something and actually doing it.

Other than this scene, I do not know what you perceive as a violation of school policies. Perhaps you were offended by the kissing (public display of affection?) or the use of "hell" and "damn" (foul language). Although Pippin and Catherine do sit on the bed together and kiss, nothing is indicated that they have premarital sex. The words hell and damn were kept in the show because I feel it helped to further develop the characters of Pippin and the Leading Player. I personally don't consider the terms "damn" and "hell" very offensive. I don't allow students to use inappropriate language in the classroom, but the stage is not the classroom. I don't allow students to kiss in the classroom or shoot pyrotechnics off either. But what you see on stage is "on stage" and not "the classroom." I did remove all mention of the Lord's name ("Goddamn it") however. King Charlemagne does call Lewis an "ass" in the play. However, "ass" has two meanings, one of which is "mule or donkey." Although I do admit that I wanted to keep that line for the shock value and the laugh it would and did get. I also rewrote dialogue to remove the word "bullshit" because I didn't think it was necessary to the show and might offend people. Although King Charlemagne does begin to say the word, he isn't allowed to complete it.

I'd like to comment on your suggestion that I avoid "controversial" musicals and stick to the "classics" that can be enjoyed by the whole family. If I were to avoid all of the shows that have "controversial" material in them, I would never be able to produce the following "classics"...

GREASE (everyone's favorite)

Many of the lyrics are quite crude in such songs as "Summer Lovin'" and several sections of dialogue are even more loaded with sexual innuendo. Moreover, the show is essentially about a "good girl" who is pushed into turning into a "bad girl" just so she can win the man she "loves." The plot is almost completely focused on the assault on Sandy's virginity. One of the characters gets pregnant and another drops out of school. Talk about evidence of the power of "peer pressure!"

ROMEO AND JULIET or WEST SIDE STORY (both classics)

Well, let's see -- Teen sex, violence, death, prejudice, suicide, drug use (poison), gangs...these shows have it all.

OKLAHOMA (a "family classic")

One character (Ado Annie) sings an entire song about how she "Cain't Say No" to any offer a man makes to her, implying strongly that she will "roll in the hay" with any man who asks her. She simply can't control herself. This show also deals with suicide and hate with the sub plot of Jed and Curly. There is also the issue of sexual harassment which is tolerated by the characters in the play. Personally, I find the toleration of sexual harassment and the fact that one character seems powerless to control her sexual urges far more offensive than anything that happens in PIPPIN.

SOUTH PACIFIC (another "family classic")

This show deals with premarital sex (one song even leads to the consummation of a sexual relationship), racism, interracial relationships, prostitution, illegitimate children, etc.... Men on stage take their shirts off, women take showers on the stage and although they are hidden by the shower curtain, our imaginations are left to run wild...

ARSENIC AND OLD LACE (a classic comedy play performed by hundreds of high schools every year.)

Two elderly ladies poison elderly old men with **liquor** and hide their bodies in their basement. These ladies become “serial murderers” and the subject of killing is treated humorously.

MY FAIR LADY (considered a family classic musical)

Henry Higgins scatters “damns” about the stage with abandon. He sings an entire song which begins with a string of “damns.” Alfie Dolittle lives with a woman he isn’t married to. He tries to sell his daughter Eliza to Higgins as though she were a prostitute. Alfie Dolittle ends up getting rich as a result of his meeting with Higgins. His behavior is tolerated and rewarded.

ANNIE (“a family show”)

Mrs Hannigan is a drunk, spending half the show drinking. She also abuses the children verbally and mentally. She threatens them constantly with threats of violence.

GUYS AND DOLLS (another family musical)

An addition to gambling is seen as both acceptable and humorous, women are treated as sex objects (the Hot Box Girls), men are shown as unreliable and untrustworthy, and women are referred to throughout the show as “broads.”

ONCE UPON A MATTRESS (another family musical)

This production (which I directed at WAHI last year) is a good example of a “family show.” The musical is based on a fairy tale and is enjoyable on many levels. There are many moments in the play when King Sextimus (notice his last name) chases a variety of young kitchen wenches around the stage. He is desperately trying to catch them. It is quite amusing and got a big laugh last year. It is also fairly offensive when you think about it. He is a married man, chasing women half his age so he can have sex with them. At the end of the play he ridicules his wife and forces her to hop around on the stage. He is verbally abusive and this too gets a big laugh. There is also a scene in which Princess Winnifred is drinking at a party at the castle and gets quite tipsy and passes out at the end of the number. In another scene she drinks a sleeping potion -- a drug -- to make her fall

asleep. Do these scenes encourage teen drinking and the use of drugs? Hardly, yet one could interpret these scenes as encouraging and validating this behavior.

There are many more shows I could discuss and analyze to prove my point. I admit that there are elements of PIPPIN that are controversial. There are elements of many plays and musicals that are controversial. If I were to only produce plays that I thought would please everybody and modify productions to make sure I didn't offend anyone, the end result would be a fairly limited selection of shows and rather watered down productions.

I never publicized this show as a "family show." I didn't feel the subject matter (a young man's search for the meaning of his life) was something that young children would find interesting. I strongly disagree with you that this production is going to harm any young person who might have seen it. Most of the show is going to be over their heads anyway. Certainly the sexual innuendoes would be. If a parent is concerned that his/her child may have received the wrong impression from the "drug scene", it is the parent's responsibility and duty to discuss this scene with their child.

The purpose of the arts, even at the high school level, should not only be to entertain, but also to educate. Good theatre should make us think...to make us ponder our existence...to make us realize what it means to be human...to make us realize what it means to be alive. The issues that PIPPIN raises are worthy of contemplation and examination. Written in the 1960's, PIPPIN examines issues of individuality, non-conformity, the thirst for and abuse of power, religious hypocrisy, the glamour and glory of war, what it means to be happy, and so much more. The final scene of the play in which Pippin chooses Catherine and Theo over everything else he has tried in his life is a powerful message about what is important in life ... not glory, power, sex, material wealth, or extraordinary accomplishments but love, companionship, and being kind to others.

In your letter you also mention that although you and your friends "highly disliked the musical" you believed the "acting was tremendous." One of the reasons for the high

quality of the acting in this show was the play itself. The cast absolutely loved and believed in this script, score, and production. They could relate to the trials and conflicts faced by the characters and could create believable characterizations because of the relevance of the plays themes to their own lives. The cast enjoyed the fact that the play had substance and was controversial. The play was more mature in content and theme than anything any of them had ever done before and this excited them. I could see it in their eyes, faces, and bodies at every rehearsal. This is one of the primary reasons the “acting was tremendous.”

As you can probably tell, I am passionate about this production. I believe in it and am confident we (Mr. Dennis, Mr. Mitchell, and myself) made a good decision in selecting it. I don't choose my productions without careful and painstaking consideration. Your final comment in the letter mentioned that next year I should choose a show that the “whole family can enjoy without any controversy.” There are many reasons why I choose the shows I choose. I don't choose shows to please the public. I choose shows based on their quality, the talent that is available to me, and whether or not I am passionate about the production. After all, I have to spend four months of my life working on the show so it better be something I truly enjoy working on.

, I thank you again for your feedback. Although I don't agree with you, I respect your feelings and hope you will continue to patronize our productions. The theatre is a wonderful, magical, and often thought-provoking art form. I will always do my best to provide WaHi with top quality productions. However, I can't promise that they will always be productions “the whole family can enjoy.” If I had produced GREASE, one of the most popular musicals among adolescents, I doubt that I ever would have received a letter from you. Yet I believe GREASE is far more “immoral and inappropriate” than PIPPIN ever could be. As I have already said, my job is not to simply entertain the audience. My job is to create **quality theatrical experiences** for my cast -- experiences that will translate into ticket sales and an audience that attends my productions because of the reputation of the quality of my shows. I want to entertain and to teach – both my casts and the audiences who come to support them.

If you would like to discuss this letter or anything about the show in more detail, please feel free to stop by my room -- C-2 in the commons.

Sincerely,

Paul Wickline,
Production and Technical Director for **PIPPIN**

APPENDIX P: LIST OF PRODUCER DUTIES FOR MUSICAL

Here is a list of “producer” type stuff that needs to get done... I know this is a huge list –feel free to tell me what you feel comfortable and uncomfortable doing.

1. Karol would really like to find a team of about 4-5 mothers, grandmothers, etc...who can help sew the costumes. We are having to create a great deal of basic costuming for the characters to help save money...so we need some helpers.

Both Karol and Robin Winters are working on the designs and will be in charge of putting the supplies together for the projects and sewing several of the items obviously...but a few helpers would be great!

Let's start with cast members parents and grandparents...

Staff members around the school district who can and would like to sew a few things...

R.S.V.P. volunteers in the community...

Other ideas???

2. We also need to put together a team of creative individuals to help create some of the armour for the show...we need a variety of helmets to be made out of a variety of materials...perhaps some breastplates, etc....

3. I need a team of at least 2-3 carpenter types who would be willing to help me construct platforms and turntables for the show. I have the designs, but I would sure like a couple of good carpenter type people to help me put this set together. Do you have any ideas?

I know that Roger Treis is an excellent carpenter...Jim Tomlin is as well but I plan to ask him to build a few of the prop and furniture pieces.... and Kurt Hoffman (Barbara's husband)... Do you know of any other resources you could call for help? What I would give to be able to rely on some helpers to help build this set!!!

4. Aaron could use some talented artist types to help detail and paint the set pieces. Perhaps we could begin finding people like Jason Stroe to begin helping us paint the set pieces early in the fall. It sure would be nice to get many of the set pieces painted by mid October.

5. Box Office help: Is your mom willing to sell tickets again after school beginning on Monday, October 26th. We could do 3:00-5:00 p.m.from October 26th-October 30th and November 2nd to November 5th. Would love to have her help if she isn't too busy doing her nursing thing! If she isn't available, we will need to find other help. Also – can we talk to Susan Morasch about selling tickets in the main office. If she has time to do this for us, this would be preferable to selling them in the English office. Jaci will probably be willing to sell tickets during the school day in the English office if Susan is unwilling to do this. Thanks!

6. Let's contact the Nursing Homes in the area to invite them to our NOVEMBER 3rd DRESS REHEARSAL. Could you put this on your schedule. We will do a 6:00 curtain – the show will run 90 minutes without an intermission. Residents would be back in their facilities by 8:00 p.m.

7. I'd like to put together a publicity packet with pictures to go to the UB, WHAT'S UP, perhaps a few radio stations, etc... by the **end of SEPTEMBER**. I have scheduled a picture day for September 14th to take pictures for this press packet. I'd like to put a variety of things in this packet. Maybe we could get together and talk about this. I'd like to get this information mailed or hand delivered to each company by the end of September...

8. I'd like to find a parent, teacher, staff member – perhaps someone at WAHI?, etc... who would be willing to be in charge of the PATRON PROGRAM. This would simply entail setting up a database and mail merging about 100 or so names and helping mail off the patron flyers...collecting donations...keeping track of our patrons for free ticket purposes, etc...I had DOTTIE THOMAS help with this four years ago and it was wonderful having someone be in charge of this... I am also playing with the idea of asking JACI HOPPEN to do this as part of her ENGLISH SECRETARY duties...

9. I'd like to get a group of people together to help canvass the town with our posters by the end of SEPTEMBER. I have tried to rely on students with poor results. There has to be a reliable method of getting these posters out to area businesses without me having to do it myself. I think the best method would be to have a mandatory promotion party one SATURDAY morning in September or October.

We call the cast at 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Saturday and load them into school vans and turn them loose downtown. Three vans – three drivers...one van to the Eastgate area ... two to downtown with maps and businesses to hit! We would only need to do this for about one hour at the most!

One group of cast members can stay and help do other publicity chores...make posters for the school...paint a display flat for display in the commons...write publicity advertising for the morning announcements...make table tents for area businesses, stuff envelopes...whatever...

We could schedule this for OCTOBER 4th. That would give us 4 weeks of poster displaying...

We could make a list of area businesses to make sure we hit...Any thoughts? I think I'll put this date on the master calendar...

10. Make continual contact with the media to get them to do a story of some kind on this musical. Let's find an angle ... a hook...to get them to want to do a story on this production. Let's talk about this as well...

11. I'd like to have someone MAKE TICKETS for us using a pagemaker program, or a business card template, or something. I usually pay about 130.00 to have our ticket's done professionally. I think we could do this at no cost to ourselves using our district printer. I have used a business card template with some success...putting in the necessary info and leaving a place to hand write the row and seat numbers....It's something to think about.
12. How about making bookmarks, handbills, flyers or the like...
13. How about TABLE TENTS and/or placemats? We could coordinate with several local restaurants to put up table tents or placemats in their restaurants as free publicity about three to four weeks before the opening? We could contact 5 or 6 restaurants in town...
14. What about WINDOW DISPLAYS? Any ideas of businesses who might be willing to let up put up a display downtown for PIPPIN? We could put up pictures from previous musicals? It could be a window celebrating musical theatre or the music program at Walla Walla High School and advertising the show?
15. Contact the WWCC beauty college about coming in to do hair and help with make-up for the show... I'd like to do a combination of white face paint and vinyl appliques using spirit gum for adhesion on a number of characters... I also need a couple of wigs and a good bald cap/facial hair beard and moustache for Charlemagne. I sure would like to find an interested party to help create this bald cap, wig and beard for King Charlemagne. Also - I want to do an older wig for Pippin's Grandmother, Berthe.
16. Perhaps we want to find a couple of parents or faculty members/staff members who would be willing to be in charge of our publicity campaign? They could help create table-top tents, flyers, be in charge of poster distribution, set up a window display downtown, etc... It would be wonderful to find a couple of interested, creative types!

APPENDIX Q: SAMPLE TICKET ORDER FORM

Walla Walla High School Music and Drama Departments present...



November 4, 5, 6, 12, and 13

GODSPELL Ticket Order Form

I would like to purchase tickets for the following performances of GODSPELL....

Thursday, November 4th

_____ Student/Senior tickets at \$4.00
_____ Adult tickets at \$5.00

Friday, November 5th

_____ Student/Senior tickets at \$4.00
_____ Adult tickets at \$5.00

Saturday, November 6th

_____ Student/Senior tickets at \$4.00
_____ Adult tickets at \$5.00

Friday, November 12th

_____ Student/Senior tickets at \$4.00
_____ Adult tickets at \$5.00

Saturday, November 13th

_____ Student/Senior tickets at \$4.00
_____ Adult tickets at \$5.00

Please enclose a check to WAHI MUSICAL

SEND PAYMENT TO...

**Paul Wickline
Walla Walla High School
800 Abbott Road
Walla Walla WA 99362
(509) 527-3020**

_____ **Total Enclosed**

YOUR INFORMATION

NAME: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

For your convenience, your tickets will be held at the box office for you. Pick them up at least 20 minutes before the show.

APPENDIX R: SPEECH MADE TO CAST ON FIRST DAY OF REHEARSAL FOR GODSPELL

Welcome to the **GODSPELL** company ... We are a diverse company of twenty very talented individuals. The directors are looking forward to the next eight weeks and what we will be able to create together.

We have an awesome responsibility. To learn to work together as a family, to get along with one another, and to appreciate what each person in this company has to offer our production, we all need to make an active effort to get to know one another as friends and to trust one another. The directors expect everyone involved to be professionals and to work hard to establish and maintain a productive and safe environment for the magic that is the theatre to unfold! Let's have a great production!

Choosing to direct **GODSPELL** was a difficult decision, not because I questioned the quality of the show or doubted that we had the talent to do the show. I was concerned about the obvious religious nature of the show. The text of **GODSPELL** comes from scripture. However, I did not feel that the show was primarily about Christianity, nor did I feel that it "preached" or "recruited." The theme of **GODSPELL** is not "become a Christian," but "treat everyone with the kindness and the respect that they deserve..." This is the fundamental message of our production and this theme, more than any other reason, convinced me of the need to do this production.

The 1990's has been a decade that has been punctuated with irrational and incomprehensible acts of violence. In the last ten years we have witnessed the following events: the beating of Rodney King, the LA riots; the Waco, Texas deaths; the student killings at Columbine, in Moses Lake, and in Springfield; the dragging death of James Byrd, Jr.; the murder of Matthew Wayne Shepard; and many, many more. Gang violence has claimed the lives of countless teenagers. School bullying has become a national concern. "Road rage" has entered our vocabulary. Wrestling is more popular than ever before. Jerry Spring has made a fortune exploiting people's pain and built a comfortable retirement nest egg encouraging his guests to physically attack one another.

I decided that I wanted to end the decade on a positive note. In the midst of all the violence, hatred, and bigotry, I wanted to offer audiences a positive glimpse of humanity as we journey together into the millennium. This is one of the reasons I found **GODSPELL** so appealing. Christianity is just the backdrop of this production. It isn't the message. "Always treat others, as you would have them treat you" is the moral of this story.... **GODSPELL** speaks of loving your neighbor, forgiveness, tolerance, and celebration. We hope you agree.

There have also been concerns expressed that **GODSPELL** mocks Christianity and that some elements of the musical are offensive. I honestly do not see this. I received a personal letter from the composer of **GODSPELL**, Stephen Schwartz, concerning this very issue. I have included an excerpt from this letter for your benefit...

"It is interesting that this problem seems to be more widespread in the 90's than in the 70's when the show premiered. This could be an indication of pre-Millennial anxiety, or further proof that we are regressing, not progressing, in many areas. **GODSPELL** was conceived by John-Michael Tebelak, who was combining his interests in theatre and his calling to become an Episcopal minister. John-Michael ultimately spent a great deal of time before he died working at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. In addition, he based his conception of **GODSPELL** on the work and teachings of Harvey Cox, the famous professor of Divinity at Harvard. Clearly, this is not a work intended to "mock" Christianity. **GODSPELL** has been performed before countless members of Christian orders and denominations, including (at their invitation) two Popes; again, a work that was intended to "mock" Christianity would hardly have been so enthusiastically greeted by people who have made Christianity their life's work. What **GODSPELL** does do is find humor in the Gospels and in the responses of human beings to them. The show was conceived by John-Michael partly as a response to the humorlessness, joylessness, and narrow-mindedness he found in many organized Christian congregations..."

We are going to have a wonderful time together as we work hard to make this show a success.

Paul Wickline

APPENDIX S: AUDITION FORM

NAME: _____
 Sex: _____ Year in School: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____ Hair: _____
 Home Address: _____ Phone: _____
 Parents'/Guardians' names: _____

CLASS SCHEDULE

	CLASS	ROOM	TEACHER
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____
7	_____	_____	_____

(For the questions below, use the back of this sheet if necessary)

List recent roles you have acted and groups you have performed with (use back if needed)

List other performance experience (choir, band, magic, etc....)

What instrument(s) can you play? _____

List any dance training/experience you have had...

Do you have any special, perhaps hidden, talents? Explain... (magic, juggling, acrobatics, gymnastics?)

If not cast, would you like to work on a crew? (check as many as you would like):
 Stage manager _____ Props: _____ Costumes _____ Scenery: _____ Sound: _____
 Lighting: _____ Publicity: _____ House manager: _____ Usher: _____
 Other: _____

Please read the information below very carefully!

In general, rehearsals will be held every school day from 3:05 to 5:30 p.m. You need to be available each day after school! We will move to Evening rehearsals (6:30-9:00) on Monday February 25th until the opening performance to allow those students who are involved in spring sports to also be involved in the play. Performances are scheduled to run from March 13th through the 16th.

If you know of any conflicts for any of these times (job, family commitments, etc...) please list them:

STUDENT AND PARENT – PLEASE READ AND SIGN

I am aware of my student's interest in this production and have agreed to allow him/her to audition. I have read the information form that accompanied this audition form and will support his/her involvement in this production.

Student's Signature: _____ **Parent's Signature:** _____

APPENDIX T: STAFF LETTER ABOUT GODSPELL PERFORMANCES**DEAR TEACHER: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY...**

Walla Walla High School Music and Drama departments are presenting TWO (2) student preview performances of GODSPELL on **Wednesday, November 3rd** during **3rd and 4th periods**. We will be presenting a **45 minute "cutting"** of the show for the students at the **LOW price of \$1.00**.

WE NEED YOUR HELP.....

We would like to ask you to help COLLECT MONEY from students and put it in the **attached envelope** and **write students' names** (whom you allow to attend) on the **attached form**.

This seems to be the easiest method to help students who would like and are allowed to attend by their teacher, the opportunity to see a cutting of this musical. My goal is to try to expose as many students as possible to the theatrical experience here at WAHL.

PLEASE TURN IN THIS LIST OF STUDENT NAMES AND THE MONEY TO PAUL WICKLINE OR MARY LYNNE BY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29th.

We will then put **TICKETS** in **your box** on the morning of **Tuesday, November 2nd** for those students who have paid to attend.

ALL THOSE TEACHERS WHO SIGN UP 25 or more students will receive a **FREE TEACHER TICKET** to an evening performance of the production....

SIGN UP FOR GODSPELL PREVIEW

	NAME	ID#	CLASSROOM TEACHER
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			
5)			
6)			
7)			
8)			
9)			
10)			
11)			
12)			
13)			
14)			
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35)			
36)			

APPENDIX U: CREW APPLICATION FORM**WALLA WALLA HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA PROGRAM
Crew Application Form (read carefully and complete)****Department Descriptions:****COSTUME CREW: (number varies depending on type of production)**

- Helps with sewing -- either pattern or finish work
- Wardrobe work helping to maintain costumes during run of show

PROPS CREW: (usually 3 or 4 with one props master or mistress)

- Help with construction in pre-production and management of props during show
- Responsible for making sure props are preplaced before show and shifted for various scenes

LIGHT CREW: (number varies depending on type of production)

- Begins work two to three weeks before opening, helps with lighting hang and focus, run light board or spot lights depending on production
- Responsibilities depend upon position on the crew

PUBLICITY CREW: (3-5 people)

- Work on banners for display around campus
- Help distribute posters
- Write and produce morning announcements during production week
- Etc....

STAGE CREW: (3 to 10 or so....number varies according to complexity of the show)

- Help building and painting the set pieces for the production
- Help with scene shifting during tech week and production dates

MAKE UP CREW: (1-2 during dress rehearsals and performances)

- Help with maintenance of make-up area and supplies
- Offer limited assistance to actors during dress rehearsals and performances. The actors are responsible for putting on their own make up.

SEE BACK SIDE

CREW APPLICATION FORM

Department Head: Junior/Senior

Apprentices: Freshman/Sophomore

Name _____ Grade _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ EMAIL: _____

Department(s) applying for _____

Position (Head or Apprentice) _____

Theatre Experience (Most recent first):

<i>Play</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Month/Year</i>	<i>Organization</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Other experience related to interest area:

Are there any times during the week or dates during the course of the play that you are not available? (List specific dates and times)

Answer the following questions with a short paragraph on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form:

5. Why are you interested in this position?
6. How can you help make this production a success by working on a crew? Explain what you have to offer the production team.

I understand the commitments associated with the position for which the above student is applying and furthermore agree to support him/her if he/she is chosen for this activity.

Parent Signature

Student Signature

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Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

I developed this project for two reasons. First, I wanted to share with others what I have learned from my brief career as a drama teacher and director of a theatre arts program at the high school level. Secondly, I wanted to look more closely at what I do as a director and teacher of drama in my co-curricular production program. As a teacher, production director, and auditorium manager for a large high school (1800 students), finding the time to sit down and write about what I “do” and have done to build a theatre arts program where none previously existed is very difficult. However, doing this kind of writing is important. The more resources that address the problem of developing a drama program that are available to teachers who are beginning their theatre teaching and directing careers, the better.

Conclusions

There are only a handful of truly helpful books available on this subject. As I began working on this project in 1996, the only truly helpful book available on the subject of developing a high school drama program was James Opelt’s Organizing and Managing the High School Theatre Program. Then in late 1997, David Grote’s Play Directing in the School: A Drama Director’s Survival Guide was published and in 2001 Jeff Bennett published his book Secondary Stages: Revitalizing High School Theatre. All three books are invaluable resources for both the neophyte and veteran drama director. My hope is that my handbook also offers beginning directors helpful information that is based on my research and experience.

During the course of my research and writing of the handbook, I learned how little information is easily available for secondary theatre arts teachers. In addition to the three books mentioned above, helpful periodicals on this subject are Dramatics and Teaching Theatre. However, these periodicals are not found in circulation in libraries, nor are they available through inter-library loan services. The Educational Theatre Association publishes these periodicals, but you need to subscribe to each or become a member of their International Thespian Organization to receive these publications. In my case, to read the articles I was interested in reading, I had to make arrangements to purchase the individual back issues (when available) at a cost of about \$7.00 per issue. This frustrated me since I only had the abstract in the ERIC database to read to see if the article would be truly helpful. On several occasions, I tried to order selected back issues from the Educational Theatre Association (ETA) only to find that they were no longer in print.

However, I did utilize the Central Washington University's Interlibrary Loan service a great deal and secured copies of articles from the now defunct periodical, The Secondary Theatre Journal. Though not based on quantitative research, these articles contained extremely helpful advice and reflection from high school theatre practitioners. I found many helpful articles for the project as well as for my own use as a drama director and teacher that were not related to this project. I also used the interlibrary loan service to find more research-based articles in the periodical The Drama/Theatre Teacher (now called the Youth Theatre Journal) published by the American Alliance for Theatre Education (AATE.) So one of pleasant surprises of the research I conducted for this handbook was my new-found awareness of several excellent books available for

secondary drama teachers and my discovery of the periodicals and services offered by the ETA and AATE, both of which I am now a member.

In working on this handbook I also discovered that very little research concerning anything “theatre” related has been conducted. Researchers have only recently (within the last twenty years) begun to explore the effects of an education in or participation in the theatre arts. Much of the research that has been conducted has been focused on younger children and the impact participating in creative drama has had on them. Clearly more research must be conducted which focuses on the impact of a theatre arts education on adolescents.

A significant benefit of creating this handbook was that it forced me to scrutinize the methods I use as a theatre arts teacher and director. Since I was writing much of this handbook while I was directing productions, I had a laboratory in which I could “experiment” and test my methods. I found myself more closely evaluating the “why” and the “what” of my rehearsal practices. I must confess that I did not really change my practices as a result of the articles and research I read. In some cases, I did not agree with the philosophy of the authors of the articles. For example, in the article “Open Casting: High School Theatre That Is Inclusive and Not Exclusive,” Devine proposes that a high school drama program should allow everyone who auditions to be a part of the cast of the production (4). Although the author makes several convincing arguments concerning the rationale for this practice (increased interest and support for the drama program from parents, rewarding all students for their bravery in the audition process, universalizing the general appeal of drama at the high school level, etc.) I was unconvinced. Although I am constantly trying to think of ways to continually build my drama program, I do not believe that “bigger is better,” nor do I believe that all students who wish to be on stage

are ready to be there or belong there. This may seem like a harsh statement, and though I believe that all students can learn to become actors, not all are equally adept at acting nor are they committed enough to the discipline that acting requires of young actors. If I were to follow this philosophy, I would not be able to choose shows that I feel are excellent examples of the art and are challenging and worthwhile for student actors to work on. There is simply no way to direct an effective production of The Fantasticks with a cast of thirty-five! Even a production like Godspell loses its intimacy and charm with a large cast. The concept of open casting in the truest sense is simply absurd.

Additionally, according to my review of literature, the latest popular practice in secondary theatre education is towards “student centered” theatre production rehearsals. Jo Beth Gonzalez discusses her attempts to put this theory into practice in her research study “Directing High School Theater: The Impact of Student-Empowerment Strategies and Unconventional Staging Techniques on Actors, Director, and the Audience.” This very ambitious study by a high school drama director was published in Youth Theatre Journal and won the prestigious 1998 AATE Distinguished Dissertation Award.

During the course of directing Taming of the Shrew with a group of high school students she attempted to direct the production “non-traditionally” by allowing the students to cast themselves, allowing all who were interested in participating to do so by pre-determining that the actors would “triple” each role and that the three casts would perform the play simultaneously (she didn’t predetermine how to make this concept work but left it to the students to decide,) making the student actors also responsible for many of the technical elements of the production (photographic slides, costumes, etc.,) and more. The study is fascinating. However, the outcome was expected:

Equal, democratic, and emancipated directing is unattainable. Directing in the high school setting is a dialectical movement between freedom and constraint. At best, perhaps what I seek are moments of sustained encounters with oppressive forms of power relations in the rehearsal environment, moments that are tempered by the acknowledgment of my own implicature in those forms of power relations, and moments that illuminate alternative relationships between myself as director and my student actors. (Gonzalez 20)

A truly student-centered theatrical production simply isn't possible. Someone (usually a director) must be in charge. A director's creative vision for a production must be established and shared with all those involved. This doesn't mean that it can't be modified or that input from students can't or shouldn't be asked for. Like most good theatre directors, the successful high school director is not an "auteur." She is going to collaborate with as many people, including the student actors and designers, as she believes will be helpful for her and the production. If the director doesn't solicit input from her actors and ask them to make decisions about characterization, line delivery, etc. then the end product is likely to be soulless and lifeless, at whatever level she is working at, with students, amateurs, or professionals. So, I did not agree with some of the philosophies and ideas of the teacher/director/researcher/authors that I discovered during this process.

In many cases, I found that what the authors and/or researchers were suggesting, I was already doing. Certainly, I discovered ideas and practices that were new to me, but as a result of trial and error, discussions with colleagues, and training in undergraduate and graduate programs prior to and during my work on this project, I had already discovered

much of what I found in the research about the best practices and suggestions for building a theatre program at the high school level. However, I did find myself more critically analyzing and questioning my current practices as a result of writing this handbook and working on this project. This perhaps was the greatest benefit for me as I worked on this project.

Recommendations

I recommend putting this handbook into practice in a secondary school and developing a case study research model to measure the effectiveness of the handbook in a secondary theatre arts program. Clearly a need exists to provide educators, parents, administrators, and students with concrete reasons for participating in a theatre arts program. Although research results are available that support the inclusion of the arts in the curriculum, more research needs to be done on the benefits of participating in a co-curricular theatre arts program, the “best practices” of teaching acting to adolescents, the most effective directing strategies to use with adolescents, and the most effective methods of building a high school drama program. This handbook could be implemented and the results of the handbook’s implementation could be evaluated over several years through a variety of assessment tools.

In conclusion, this handbook is not yet finished. I have several sections that I want to add to it before I consider it completed. My hope is to modify it and prepare it for publishing in the near future. One of my long-term goals as an educator is to teach theater courses at the University level, including a methods course for future high school theatre arts educators. This project and the information I have acquired as a result of the literature review and writing I have done for this project has given me ideas for future projects, articles, and perhaps even a PhD dissertation. The literature review I have

completed clearly reveals a lack of substantial research into the benefits of participating in a co-curricular theatre arts production program. Moreover, more research into the most effective methods of directing adolescents in theatre productions is needed. Very little truly exceptional studies have been conducted in either of these areas. Finally, the examination of the available literature strongly illustrates the need for better training for future middle and high school drama teacher/directors. Even those prospective teachers who majored in theatre (like I did as an undergraduate) are unlikely to be well prepared to develop a high school drama program and effectively direct adolescent actors. These kinds of methods courses are not covered in most collegiate drama programs. Colleges need to do a better job of training future theatre arts educators. State departments of public instruction need to close loopholes and force school districts to hire endorsed drama teachers who are truly qualified to teach the theatre arts and direct productions. Although teacher preparation and certification was not the purpose of the project or the literature review, I learned much about the inadequate training of those teachers currently teaching theatre arts in our secondary schools. Without the development and implementation of college programs aimed at adequately training future high school theatre teachers, the theatre arts teachers and students will continue to be second-class citizens in the public schools. The handbook I have created is meant to be a resource for those theatre arts teachers who are in need of guidance in their journey toward building a successful drama program. The work I have completed in reviewing the literature, attending arts conferences, dialoguing with theatre arts teachers across the state, taking graduate courses in various aspects of the theatre arts, and writing the handbook has made me a better theatre arts teacher and director.

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