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DIRECTOR METHODS
FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND AMATEUR THEATRE IMPLEMENTATION

by

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B.A. Florida Atlantic University, 2015

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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in the College of Arts and Humanities
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ABSTRACT

My aim with this thesis is to take college and professional level directing techniques and break them down in a digestible way so new directors can take these techniques and implement them at the high school and community theatre level. I discuss five different approaches to directing theatre with student or amateur actors, each tied to common practices and standards used in professional theatres. My goal is to take theoretical techniques taught at universities and create a practical mindset to implement them on the high school and community theatre level.

Spending four years balancing teaching world history with being theatre director at an underprivileged Title I-qualifying high school has been filled with learning experiences. Having a degree in Education only partially prepared me for the difficult yet rewarding responsibility of putting on plays with minimal resources, no facilities, and with students who may have low reading levels and limited family support. While professional directors research, collaborate and continually progress as artists, as a one-man-band at a high school I found myself focusing more on achieving a final product than on the creative process. In my research of a variety of directorial methods, I look to improve my own techniques and create a road map that may be beneficial for new directors. I have streamlined professional practices down to five directing practices that can be implemented at the high school and community theatre level. The goal is to view them through a pedagogical lens, to create a variety of implementation tools for a rookie or inexperienced director.

When analyzing ideologies proposed by theatre theorists along with common pedagogical practices, the research naturally broke down into five categories. Intertwining theatre principles with teaching strategies, my intention was to create directing approaches that support newer

actors while aiming to incorporate professional theatre techniques. I applied this research to five short plays I directed at Dunnellon High School (FL), where I was a full-time teacher.

Dunnellon High School is a Title 1-qualifying school in a poor community with a small theatre program. These qualities made DHS a good school to apply my research, as it has students who have minimal experience and require a high reliance on teacher support, with a restricted budget and facility limitations.

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INTRODUCTION

My third year into teaching theatre at an economically disadvantaged high school, I found myself directing with the sole objective of getting a production mounted. Like most teachers, the sheer number of responsibilities and daily stresses started to weigh on me. The bulk of my time was devoted to teaching world history, and my dedication to making creative art started to dwindle. I started this journey of graduate school in pursuit of reigniting my own creativity and quickly became captivated by the variety of theatre theories and approaches taught in my courses. But I noticed a clear divide between what I was learning at the college and what I was teaching as a high school educator. When I directed, I used the same techniques I always used, which included heavy teacher intervention, some improv-based exercises and script analysis. I never delved deeply into any one approach, as I would just stick to whatever was working with the students during that particular rehearsal. For this thesis, I looked to expand my directorial repertoire and implement my knowledge from graduate school by exploring more in-depth with multiple schools of thought in my high school productions.

There is an enormous leap between the way theatre is viewed, taught and practiced in high schools and colleges. Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal and Uta Hagen are among the many theorists I explored at length on the collegiate level that were used sparingly in my own high school teaching and omitted from Florida State Standards. Many approaches that are common practice on the professional and collegiate level are underutilized in high school and amateur theatre. But why? Perhaps, the concern in high school theatre of getting a show completed overshadows the process. Or the emphasis on maintaining an audience base and making money in community theatre limits artistic exploration. Maybe there is lack of faith that amateur and

student actors can execute complex theatre theories. When reflecting upon my own experiences, my view is that teachers are so concerned with a lesson or rehearsal getting out of hand that they limit their creativity to maintain order. I myself am guilty of this, as I was so concerned about getting the show mounted, I would overlook the same creative process that brought me into theatre in the first place. The artistic process pro theatre practitioners enjoy in many ways counters the routine and control teachers wish to maintain. The aim of this thesis is to explore narrowing the gap between collegiate theories and high school and amateur practice, creating productions that are pushing students artistically while supporting them.

I have broken down professional directing methodologies into five basic camps that can be easily identified for the high school or amateur theater company director. *The Authoritarian*, *The Explorer*, *The Bookworm*, *The Architect* and *The Delegator* are streamlined approaches a high school director can utilize and incorporate with their personal management style to maximize it to its fullest potential. At Dunnellon High School, I directed five ten-minute plays, with each one being directed from one specific directorial approach. I took the theatre principles I learned through my graduate course work and viewed them through a high school teacher's lens, developing different implementation tools. I directed each ten-minute play with a different approach.

Each of these plays and casts are different, which creates many variables that would skew a true apples-to-apples comparison between the approaches. My goal is not to compare approaches but rather explore their validity as separate procedures. I did not make any changes to my casting process and did not consider the specific needs of each cast or script when assigning each directorial process to each play. I did not predict that the reactions by the student actors would be as wide-ranging as they were. This random assignment led to many discoveries

on what type of cast and play fits best with which approach. This makes this thesis a menu item of sorts, where a director can evaluate their own situation and potential challenges that may arise and choose an approach that best fits the strengths of the director, the cast, and the text.

Each approach is substantiated by research on theatre theories explored on the college and professional theatre levels that are then viewed through the lens of a high school teacher. I then looked to form implementation tools I could infuse into my rehearsal process. After implementation and reflection, I formed my own discoveries that I developed into best practices that can be used to smooth out the directorial process. I discovered that not all these approaches were perfectly suited for the situation I had randomly assigned. I felt that different approaches would have been more beneficial with different casts and pieces. I would often think, I wish I was directing this cast with a different approach. Due to this discovery, I have devised different scenarios where I think each method would work best. This is meant to be a guide when matching what method or aspects of a method would be best to apply to a specific show or cast. These scenarios are based on strengths of the director, cast size and experience, and show type. This does not mean a director can only use these methods with a particular show but is meant to give the prospective director an example, so they can make the best decision for their show. Most directors will end up using pieces of each of these methods and mix them into their directorial toolbox. These scenarios should set the framework for what tools to try with certain situations.

This thesis is the documentation of my own journey of taking the theories I practice with my professors and attempting to work in a similar practice with my high school students. The knowledge I gained from this process was influential to me as an artist, and I believe that my

discoveries can help spark a journey for other teachers to expand upon their typical directorial approach.

CHAPTER 1: THE CANVAS

This thesis process can be related to painting a picture, where the directorial theories are different paints that are being played with and swirled around to create a unique piece of art. Continuing this metaphor, the school and the students themselves act as the canvas.

Low-Economic Status School

Dunnellon High School is a Title I-qualifying school. Title I is an educational program “that provides federal funding to schools that serve an area with high poverty. The funding is meant to help students who are at risk of falling behind academically” (Meador). The extra funding the federal government provides is meant to balance out the school system, providing higher monetary support to schools that serve a student body that is largely in poverty. “Schools must have a child poverty rate of at least 40% to implement a school-wide Title I program” (Meador). Title I money is meant to help even the playing field, as at-risk students may require a higher level of school support to make learning gains.

A prevalent limitation that teachers often face when working with low income students is a lack of attendance. A study conducted by Elaine Weiss and Emma Garcia concluded that “among students missing more than 10 days of school, the share of free-lunch-eligible students was more than twice as large as the share of non-FRPL-eligible students” (Garcia and Weiss). Poor attendance can greatly affect the success of any after school program, particularly one as strenuous as a theatre program. This has affected how scheduling can be approached. The Cleveland Playhouse recommends “if you are able to meet with your students 3-5 times a week, you will want to prepare for at least a 10-15-week rehearsal period. If you are meeting with

students any less than 3 days per week, you will want to plan for 15 or more weeks of rehearsal” (Cleveland Playhouse). In my experience, this is a difficult ask in a low-income school. I find I need to keep my rehearsal schedule inside a 9-week quarter period, due to students dropping out of school, a drop in grades, and students getting their afterschool activities taken away due to absences.

Limited Resources and Facilities

Dunnellon High School does not have a stage or auditorium. For this production we were rehearsing in my classroom, while tech-week and the performances were mounted at the Dunnellon Historical Society, which has a small stage that was once a loading dock for trains. The students have grown accustomed to transitioning to a new performance space and working with limited resources, so I do not believe these limitations affect this process more than any previous production. For this experiment, the lack of resources becomes a benefit as these stripped-down productions serve as neutral testing site, making it easy to see how these directorial approaches impact the storytelling.

Frankly, low attendance, poor hygiene, low reading scores and undiagnosed learning disorders are everyday issues that teachers can encounter when working with low-income students. The biggest issue I encountered was that my students lacked common references to pop culture, cities, time periods, life experiences and expressions that are abundant in many plays. Low-income students do not have the same access to television, internet and plays, with many of the students having not left Marion County (FL), leaving them with very few connection points to texts. “According to a new analysis released this month by the federal government, illustrating disparities in out-of-school experiences, which may be exacerbated by rising income inequality. It also comes as a slew of recent studies have shown measurable benefits from

cultural experiences like attending a play or visiting a museum, including greater appreciation of art, higher tolerance, and stronger critical thinking skills” (Barnum). Dunnellon does not have a theatre and the middle school does not offer the course. The high school is the only convenient access point Dunnellon students have to theatre, and my class is typically their first experience in the world of theatre.

In many ways, the lack of experience the DHS students have make them perfect companions to go on this journey. They are blank canvases that drastically range in the amount of teacher support they need. During the process, it became apparent which methods worked best with new student actors and those who had done a show with me before. This will be valuable information as I continue my pursuit of working with students and highly complex theatre theories. Despite the difficulties that arise in working with impoverished students, they typically have a genuine and endearing quality to their acting. I believe the lack of resources and privileges leads to their acting feeling naturally raw and vulnerable. The knowledge I have gained through this process can be equally applicable to other schools with a wide variety of students. This thesis should be read through the lens of one’s own school, taking techniques I used and modifying them to best fit a different group of students.

Play Selection

Teaching students with low literacy scores is a common occurrence in rural low-economic schools like Dunnellon. “Reading scores may reflect rural poverty due to the influence of home and family life on literacy. Rural students begin school with lower reading achievement than their suburban peers, and about the same as urban kindergartners” (Lavalley). I have found theatre to become a magnet for students who struggle with reading, because they are able to engage with text in a creative and kinesthetic manner that may differ from their

English classes. There is the potential of having an actor that has difficulty reading in any high school cast, regardless of economic status. I typically use best practices that facilitate reading with the entire cast, in order to not single out specific students (Appendix A).

In the past I have chosen shows by popular playwrights like Neil Simon, David Lindsey-Abaire and Yazmina Reza. They were all rewarding but difficult processes from a comprehension standpoint. A 80-120 page script can be a daunting task for a new actor with a potential reading deficiency. For this process I wanted to choose scripts that were more tangible and accessible for my students. In my theatre class, I often work with ten-minute plays because we can read, analyze and perform one in a class period. I chose these five specific plays for this process because the students responded well to them in my class. There was not really any commonality among the pieces in terms of subject matter, but they were all contemporary pieces that had limited stage directions, no required dialects, and no monologues. These happened to be the shows my students gravitated towards, so we ran with it.

As a high school teacher at a rural school, I always felt the pressures of wanting to put on full length and popular plays. Giving myself this challenge was self-inflicted, because my audience did not know or really care which shows were popular or Pulitzer-winning. The ten-minute plays were a big hit among the parents, because every student played a key role in their play. Also, having a mix of dramatic and comedic works with different subject matters led to our small audience being lively and engaged. I strongly suggest the ten-minute play format for newer directors or experienced ones looking to experiment creatively.

CHAPTER 2: *THE AUTHORITARIAN*

This method is about maintaining control and authority of all the creative decisions. The director has a very specific vision that needs to be executed. The director has heavy involvement in the acting decisions, in order to provide support for newer actors. Most of the creative decisions have already been made by the director, and the rehearsal process is less about exploring and more about executing a planned vision. Pre-blocking and other planning techniques would fall under this method.

Research

The Authoritarian stems from the concept that the director has the ultimate creative authority, and the actors become executors of the director's creative vision. The role of the director emerged as a consistent aspect of theatre hierarchy in the mid-19th Century. The first directors had heavy influence and controlled every aspect. Acclaimed director Peter Brook attributes this to the newness of the position, stating "The early pioneers could not help feeling, like any inventor, that the new world belonged to them" (Giannachi et. al. 9). These founders of directing established *The Authoritarian* approach. Brook states "that two myths evolved from this: the first is that the director is a dictator; and the second is that, although dictators are unattractive in all political spheres, the director of a play or film, the conductor of an orchestra, is entitled to be the supreme boss" (Giannachi et. al. 9). Brook is correct that it is a myth that you must work this way, but that does not negate the practicality *The Authoritarian* approach brings.

In *The Naturalistic Theatre and Theatre of The Mood* (1908), Moscow Art Theatre director Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold breaks down the art of directing in to two formulas. The first is the "Theatre-Triangle," which serves as the basis for this approach (Figure 1). In this

triangle of creative authority, the director is the apex of the creative vision as the author and the actors serve as supports. This gives the audience a singular vision and point to engage with as “the spectator comprehends the creation of the latter two through the creation of the director” (Krasner 85). The director, serving as the chief creative through which the spectator views the art, is a relatively common theatre practice.

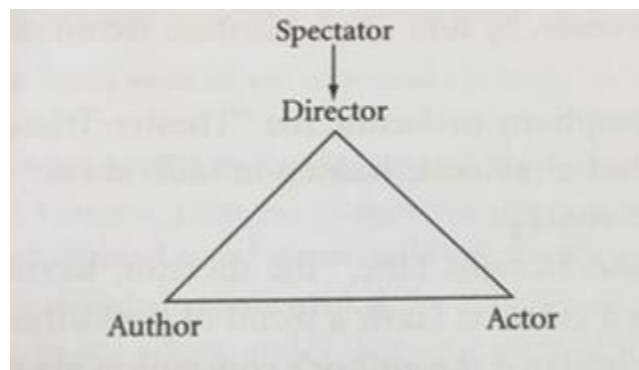


Figure 1: Theatre-Triangle. Created by Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold – 1908

The Theatre-Triangle creates a singular and clear vision from the perspective of the director. However, due to the promotion of only the director’s perspective over those of the actor and the author, creative freedom for the actor becomes limited. This centralization of creative authority makes the Theatre-Triangle criticized by many, including Meyerhold. But centralized authority is a familiar classroom dynamic, giving this approach validity on the high school level. Just as a teacher must be prepared for class with a clear lesson plan, *The Authoritarian* director needs to have a clear, strong and well-thought-out production concept that the student actors can execute. Meyerhold details that “the director explains his *mise-en-scène* in detail, describes the characters as he sees them, prescribes every pause, and then rehearses the play until his personal conception of it is exactly reproduced in the performance” (Meyerhold 85). This lessens the creative responsibility of the student actors, which makes this an

appropriate directorial approach for a less experienced cast, so they can focus on the technical skills of performance that are still in development.

As theatre has continued to progress over the 20th Century, many theorists have moved away from the authoritarian director, in pursuit of a more collaborative approach. Although the Theatre-Triangle is seen as dated by many practicing professional directors, it has in some ways become a standardized approach on the high school level. But why? In Kristin Olson's book *Wounded by School: Recapturing the Joy in Learning and Standing Up to Old School Culture*, she discusses the resistance to change that permeates throughout the school system. She believes there is a "set of old-fashioned ideas and attitudes [...] that construct teaching as hierarchical, learning as passive, and the bureaucratic structures of school as about serving adults, not kids. Old School culture also says: 'we can't change school, that's just the way it is', or 'it's too hard to change school, it's too complicated, this isn't the right moment. Just wait'" (Olsen 2009, 203). This entrenched position that slows progress in schools, may be why many theatre teachers continue to take this approach.

Theatre teacher Joan Lazuras has been on the forefront of leading this march of modernizing and progressing theatre in the classroom. In her book *Signs of Change: New Direction in Theatre Education* she explains the viewpoint expressed by many teachers, stating, "most theatre teachers already feel overwhelmed with work responsibilities. Some may see educational reform as change of such magnitude that, given their schedules, they do not even enter the conversation" (Lazuras 41). These teachers that have stuck to the top-down approach are having moderate success. Although *The Authoritarian* has been dismissed by many modern professional theorists, it continues to be common method used on the high school level.

The casting process in high school differs from the professional model, which changes both the show selection and the initial planning process. On the high school level, shows are chosen before the casting process, and an individual actor generally does not have a huge impact on show choice. Professionally, an actor can inspire the show selection. In *How to Direct a Play*, Braham Murray shares, “I did Othello because I met Paterson Joseph, I did Antony and Cleopatra because I met Josette Bushell-Mingo. I wanted to do those plays but I knew that there were few actors who could” (Murray 21). On the high school level, securing the return of student talent is not always a luxury that high school teachers have. Often, the directorial concept lies largely separate from individual talent, as the director’s vision is one that must be executed by whomever auditions. The amount of talent available is a variable that can be unpredictable in high school and community theatre, so *The Authoritarian* has validity in these spheres as this approach is not bound to talent.

Meyerhold sees this differently on the professional level, as he believes a certain type of actor works best in the Theatre-Triangle. Due to the power dynamic formed by the Theatre-Triangle, the audience is viewing the creative experience through the director’s prism, the Authoritarian Director must “employ actors with virtuoso technique, but at all costs lacking in individuality, so that they are able to convey the director’s exact concept” (Meyerhold 86). This may seem contradictory to Meyerhold, but when examining this approach on the high school level, the actors who would work best in this system are newer actors. They lack the individuality that Meyerhold is concerned about; however, they have yet to develop the technique he also requires. *The Authoritarian* director can help teach technique, as the director has full control of the process. This ultimate authority enables a strong vision to be executed, while giving heavy support to student actors.

Pre-establishing two aspects of the production will greatly support the unexperienced actor. The first is a vivid and unwavering directorial concept, so the finished product becomes a tangible vision the new actor can aspire to complete. *The Authoritarian* director has a specific vision in mind and ask themselves, *how* will I bring this to life? Viewing directing as a *how* question is an approach that Peter Brook has long grappled with, stating “the world of *how* is the world in which the director is a craftsman; in which the director is responsible for bringing everything down to earth” (Giannachi et. al. 7). The director’s aim is to bring this creative vision into actuality. Brook goes on to discuss the full scope of tasks that a director must be prepared for, as “this involves such things as knowing the difference between people on stage being close together or far apart; between a platform being high or low; between a taut and a sloppy tempo, between the lights being bright or dark; between the audience being able to participate or not participate” (Giannachi et. al 7). It is the responsibility of *The Authoritarian* to answer this “how” question, and it should be answered before the rehearsal process.

The second aid the director can pre-establish to assist the actor is blocking. Pre-blocking is predetermining the movement, entrances and exits for the actors. This can be instituted out of necessity, even on the professional level. Braham Murray attributes the use of pre-blocking on the professional level to time constraints, stating, “in theory, blocking is best done with the actors in rehearsal, when they know enough about what they are doing to feel their moves, rather than have them imposed upon them. In practice, unless you are doing a small cast play like *The Glass Menagerie*, you won’t have time to wait” (Murray 54). On the high school level, new student-actors struggle with being able to move on stage without direction. Pre-blocking is not just used to conserve time, but also to aid the new actor in moving on stage for the first time. In *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and style* Francis Hodge and Michael McClain advocate for

an improv-based blocking style, which will be covered in future approaches. They also acknowledge that different approaches need to be taken depending on the skill level of the actor, stating “beginning actors on the other hand, are movement bound; that is, they may not move unless required by the director to do so, because they have not yet learned the illustrative values of movement” (Hodge and McLain 128). Most new actors have not developed the skill to take risks and make decisions when it comes to movement.

Pre-blocking can provide formulated movement to the scene for newer actors. Hodge and McLain refer to this as paper blocking, defining it as the “homework preceding rehearsal periods...The learning director’s blocking homework, then, is a playing of the scene in the imagination: experimenting with what various option of staging might look like visually” (Hodge and McLain 133). This blocking homework is then communicated to the student actors. The new actors are no longer responsible for making their own movement decisions, because it has been predetermined by the director. This approach alleviates the pressure on new actors and teaches them the basic conventions of movement. By having full control of both the vision and the stage movement, *The Authoritarian* will dictate the final staged product, giving strong support to amateur actors

Tools for Implementation

Front Loading

Front Loading is a pedagogical theory that involves heavy instruction at the start of a lesson to create a strong foundation that can be explored further in future lessons. Teacher Regie Routman writes in *Teaching Essentials*, “the better job we do preparing students to do a task (frontloading), the more independently students—even our youngest ones—are able to work and problem solve and produce better quality work. We cannot expect them to succeed without

adequate frontloading” (Routman 90). *The Authoritarian* provides heavy instruction to student-actors, supporting the student through the process. Once the student actor has a grasp of basic stage and acting conventions, then student actors can begin to work off their own instincts with less dependence on the director. *The Authoritarian’s* vision for the show should be fully conceived going into the rehearsal process so they can frontload instruction to student actors. Hodge and McLain state that “because the job is to help actors, the director must be, in one sense, a big jump ahead knowing the playscript and what is to be done with it” (Hodge and McLain 133). In other approaches, the director’s understanding and perception of a piece can grow in tandem with their cast; *The Authoritarian* comes to rehearsal as the ultimate authority on the piece, to give the new actors maximum support and direction.

The pioneers of directing practiced their own form of frontloading. When discussing the early principals of directors, Braham Murray described “he chooses the play, he casts the actors, he chooses the creative team and he is the final arbiter of everything they do. By the time the actors arrive, the show is designed and fundamentally they have to fit in with the decisions that have been taken” (Murray 13). The establishment of blocking before the rehearsal period starts, forms a strong skeletal system that supports the production. The risk of running behind schedule or having to cancel the show maybe minimized because *The Authoritarian* has frontloaded the essential aspects to mounting a production.

Pre-blocking

To have full creative authority a plan must be in place, and many of the questions I hear from students are movement based. Pre-blocking is the implementation tool at the heart of this method. *The Authoritarian* is crafting the movement in the scene on paper with a lack of actor

exploration of the space. The actor's decision of where to move has already been determined by the director. This can be extremely beneficial to newer actors or actors struggling with a role.

Evaluating Pre-blocking

If the director has determined the stage movement before seeing the actor move on stage, how do they know their blocking will be successful? This is the risk *The Authoritarian* directors are taking, as they have chosen to limit the movement process to what they can paper block ahead of time in order to provide maximum support. There is no one right way to block, so *The Authoritarian* should free their mind and make several different attempts at paper blocking the piece. The goal is to replicate the same experimentation that one would go through with improv-based blocking with the cast. Hodge and McLain advise directors to push creatively on paper – “Remember: A dozen ground plans, tested out in your study beforehand, are better than one in trying to find the best choice, because your imagination and improvisational force” (Hodge McLain 133).

Another question then arises; how do I choose which paper blocking ground plan is *best*? Again, this is difficult to answer, because the term best is relative to each piece and cast. However, there are certain aspects and techniques that can be employed in blocking to perpetuate strong creative movement choices. The following questions can be used by the Authoritarian to evaluate their pre-blocking before communicating it to the cast and instilling it in the production:

- Is the movement derived from dramatic action that is presented in the text?
- Are triangles and diagonals being used to create an interesting visual?
- Does it fit with the conventions of my stage and technical elements I have at my disposal?

- Does the proposed movement assist student actors in their own process of developing their character?
- Are you creating strong picturizations or illustrations? (Hodge and McLain 125-133)

Pacing and Scoring the Script

One of the problem areas a director may encounter in high school and community theatre is pace. Newer actors tend to add a two-beat pause at every period and another beat before they deliver their line. New actors often sound like they are reading rather than acting, because they fall into this stagnant pace. One of the reasons *The Authoritarian* works well with newer actors is because the director can control the pace. *The Authoritarian* director can go through the piece with the actors and score the script, which will be an indication for the actor to quicken or lengthen the cue.

How can the director indicate to the student actor when to speed up or slow down the pace? When searching for teaching strategies to answer this question, annotation techniques would seemingly provide support for new actors. In her article *More Than Highlighting: Creative Annotations*, Lauren Gehr advocates for using a personalized note system as it is a “critical strategy teachers can use to encourage students to interact with a text” (Gehr). For a director, what symbols one uses to indicate a change in pace is inconsequential, but Gehr promotes students annotating by using illustrations. “The process of creating an illustration helps students synthesize information and increases student engagement and creativity. It makes annotating texts a more hands-on experience and makes their learning meaningful and personal” (Gehr). Using illustrative annotations is not strategy that is restricted to *The Authoritarian* and

limited to the subject matter of pace, as the strategy would be beneficial to students in a wide variety of contexts.

Reflection

I had a very specific vision in my head of how I wanted Nancy Temple's *Dog Park Afternoon* to look and a specific pace I wanted to make sure the actors hit. This strong vision made this play a natural fit for *The Authoritarian* approach, as I held a lot of the control over that vision. I planned in the pre-audition process far more than I typically would. I had to have every detail planned and written down ahead of time. This was a new experience for me. I typically work much more organically and spontaneously, where this method forced me to be a planner. If I did not have every detail planned out ahead of time, the authority could have fallen to the actors or the tech crew. If I did not have everything planned out, I would not have been able to establish this method.

With this method, I certainly had the most control as a director. That created a very serious and focused atmosphere. The initial rehearsals were not full of exercises or theatre games. You could even argue that they were not all that fun, but they certainly were productive. After the initial read, we were able to block the ten-minute play in a rehearsal. I had pre-blocked the play and had every detail written down. *Dog Park Afternoon* is about two people at a dog park, who are sitting on a bench. In my mind, I wanted a lot of movement, energy, and a fast pace. The pre-blocking process made me think about their movement and positioning line by line, alleviating this task from student actors. This method did not require student actors to make an abundance of creative decisions as the actors just had to execute my vision. When what I pre-blocked didn't look exactly how I had intended, I added more detailed and step-by-step

instruction to the actors. I hardly deviated from what the students had written down the first day of rehearsal.

I found using this method alleviated some of the typical director stress. I had more control over the process than how I've worked with students in the past, which culminated in a final product that was in alignment with my initial vision for the show. Being a director that tends to obsess over things, I was able to keep myself accountable with staying on schedule, which was much easier due to the extent of pre-planning. This kept the rehearsals extremely focused. The ultimate outcome was a clean, controlled show with few objective flaws, but it did not have the creative punch we found with some of the other methods.

An actress dropped out two days before opening night. I do not have any evidence to lead me to believe the actress quitting had any connection to the method. The process of substituting an actor who was not familiar with the script went smoothly considering the short notice. We were able to quickly get the student actor acclimated to our rendition of the piece.

Audience Data

I wanted some form of data that I could analyze. I gave my audience members an audience feedback form (Appendix B) at the beginning of the show to fill out for each play. I wanted to see if there was any further analysis, I could acquire from the audience responses. I typically require my student audience evaluate their peers. I used a rubric that my students are familiar with, that I modified from the Florida State Thespians student directed scene adjudication form (Appendix C). The feedback was shared with the actors and was followed with a group reflection. Each scene was graded 1-5 (with 5 being the highest) on believability, movement, creative choices, and clarity, giving each piece an overall 1-20 score. These scores are not an objective view of how successful these methodologies could be in future productions.

I used these personalized rubrics to give me some numerical data that I could reflect upon further.

Dog Park Afternoon

Believability 4.2

Movement 4.3

Creative Choices 4.1

Clarity 4.3

Overall 16.9

The *Dog Park Afternoon* audience scores represent the strengths and drawbacks of the authoritative method. This show was clean and solid largely due to how much control I had over this piece. That is probably why all the categories received similar, fairly high scores: because I made sure they hit all those marks. None of the scores were low, but no section was particularly high either. The lack of collaboration and actor freedom that comes with this method severely limits its ability to ever get a high score in one of these aspects. Viewing this data reversely, the amount of authority I had over decisions kept any one subject from being below a four.

Ultimately, this method gives a lot of power to the director minimizing the responsibilities of the actor. This method led to achieving a final production that fell in line with my initial vision for the piece, but the lack of collaboration led to a performance that seemed to be missing a creative edge.

Best Practices/Optimal Scenarios

The best practice for a director is to go into a production with a vision and a methodology to implement that vision, while still maintaining some flexibility. A director needs to be able to adapt their vision to the needs of the cast, the restrictions of the space, and attending to the wants

of the audience base. This thesis experiment did not allow for any deviation, as the goal was to apply these approaches individually, prove their validity for a new director who is looking to direct from one specific methodology. At times, this may have not been the best course of action for the production, but it did prove that these methods do work as a stand-alone process. After reflecting upon the implementation process, most of the issues I encountered were not due to the method itself, but rather the situation for which I chose to use the method.

The optimal scenario is aimed to provide a show and cast example that would work best with that approach. These are not laws that must be followed but suggestions that can inform directors to make decisions for themselves. Shows that one is trying to mount can be compared to the shows listed in the optimal scenario, to give some guidelines on matching the piece with the approach.

Best Practices

The Authoritarian works best with a medium-to-large scale cast that is relatively new and needs specific direction. In the amateur and high school theatre, you see a wide variety of experience levels. One way to still use *The Authoritarian* method with higher-level actors is to form your directions as questions or suggestions, guiding the actor to execute your vision through their process. For example, “After that line, move angrily down stage left and sit in the chair” would be a note for newer actors, while “Find a line that allows the anger of the moment to guide you to your seat” would be a note for more experienced actors. The phrasing gives a more experienced actor room to explore, while the director’s vision of the character angrily sitting is still being executed.

The Authoritarian method is best applied to a show that has a very specific vision that needs to be executed. Shows that have a lot of movement, entrances, exits, large ensemble blocking, and specific timing naturally lend themselves to this method. *The Authoritarian* may work well with non-fiction pieces because the director now can be more involved in the acting choices, supporting the student actors in portraying historical or real-life figures that must have certain traits and mannerisms on stage. Ultimately, this method works best when the show has complicated aspects that require the director to have full authority over the creative decisions, in a simpler or smaller piece more authority can be given to the actors.

Optimal Scenario: Unseasoned, medium-to-large cast that requires complicated blocking and a strong director's vision. Show Examples: *Noises Off!* By Michael Frayn, *Phillip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread* by David Ives, *Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman

CHAPTER 3: *THE EXPLORER*

The Explorer focuses on the actors and giving them exercises and creative room to allow them to explore and create genuine reactions. Very little is set in stone before the rehearsal, as the emphasis is on creating an ensemble and stimulating creativity through an organic and free-flowing process. The rehearsal process is never truly complete, because there is always room to explore with each repetition of the show. It is about working beyond text analysis and simple characterization in hopes of realizing something truly creative and unique to your production. *The Explorer* is opting to trust the student actors more than *The Authoritarian*, giving them less direction in order to increase their creative involvement.

This approach is substantially used in contemporary professional theatre productions. But when implementing this approach, it needs to be woven into your pedagogy when teaching high school drama. On the professional level, it has been a continual pursuit of directors to move away from an authoritarian relationship with actors to a more collaborative approach. This same transition will take time on the high school level. Joan Lazuras discusses the process of shifting away for *The Authoritarian* method to approaching high school directing as an *Explorer*, stating “no one claims perfect adherence to this level of practice, however, and it can be scary to work in a new way or from an unfamiliar perspective. We are each on an individual journey toward best practice. It is as much a direction in which we are moving in our careers as it is a destination” (Lazuras 57). This method may take time to establish in the principles that make up your class or theatre, allowing you to create a culture where exploration is not just encouraged but is required in order to create a truly organic and original piece.

Research

The opposite end of the spectrum from *The Authoritarian* is *The Explorer*, which operates under the premise that giving the actors freedom will lead to a more spontaneous and genuine feeling performance. By constructing an environment where artistic discovery and collaboration is promoted, the director can surrender some creative control in order to empower and free the actor. This approach is substantiated by Meyerhold's Theatre of the Straight Line theory. Meyerhold believed the Theatre-Triangle "deprives not only the actor but also the spectator of creative freedom", and constructed Theatre of the Straight Line where the author, director and actor all operate with the same creative authority (Figure 2).

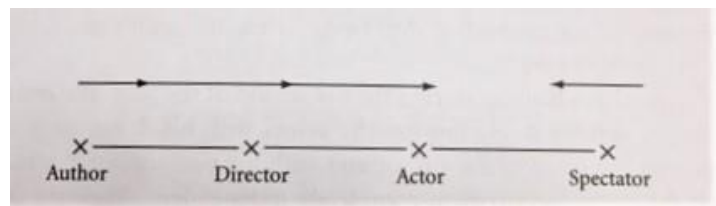


Figure 2: Theatre of the Straight Line. Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold-1908

Meyerhold believed the disbursement of creative authority greatly effects how the art is perceived by the spectator. He claims, "the director, having absorbed the author's conception, conveys his own creation (now a blend of the author and the director) to the actor. The actor, having assimilated the author's conception via the director, stands face to face with the spectator (with the director and author behind him) and freely reveals his soul to him thus intensifying the fundamental relationship of performer and spectator" (Meyerhold 84-88). *The Explorer* looks to give student-actors independence in interpreting, exploring and growing with the piece.

Many contemporary theatre directors work collaboratively, where the actors' voice is highly prevalent in the creative decisions, which would align with *The Explorer* approach. British playwright and director Julia Pascal has committed to this approach stating, "I do try to

set up a democratic forum where everyone can contribute, but it's hard" (Pascal 187). This difficulty of balancing creative authority explains why this movement is not prevalent in high schools and community theatres. Just as a teacher would scaffold in the classroom, where concepts are introduced slowly in steps that culminate in independent learning, the same can be applied in the rehearsal process. Grounding the start of each rehearsal with an exercise that leads to the actors making creative decisions creates a structure that keeps student-actors under control while committing to Pascal's professional approach.

If *The Authoritarian* peruses directing through Peter Brook's *how* question, then *The Explorer* looks at directing through Brook's *why* question. *The Authoritarian* looks at *how* they can produce a piece, where *The Explorer* questions *why* produce this piece? This may seem like semantics, but it creates a huge mindset difference that determines the structure of the rehearsal process. Brook explains that, "Why relates to intuition, which tells us that any artistic form is an opening; an opening in which the *Why* is wide, wide-open, wide-eyed and opens onto perspectives that are normally closed" (Giannachi et. al. 7). *The Explorer* is appropriately named as the director should always be questioning and pushing for artistic exploration.

In Peter Brook's own work, he looks to strike a balance between the *how* and *why*, proclaiming that "how and why are inseparable" (Giannachi et. al. 9). Luckily, the answer to both questions can be searched for at the same time. If we view the directorial methods in their purest form, the *how* and *why* can operate in separate directorial spheres. Brook's *why* question forces the director and the cast to view the play as more than just a final product. On the macro level, Brook is asking why do *we* pursue theatre? Transitioning this concept to the rehearsal process, we are questioning what does the piece tell us about ourselves? *The Explorer* is looking

to make discoveries about the characters, text, the actors and society to create a piece that transcends the limits of the *how* question.

Just as pre-blocking is a staple of *The Authoritarian* approach, the absence of it is a key aspect of *The Explorer*. The purpose in not pre-blocking is to allow the actors to make decisions for themselves. This makes the stage movement seem more impulsive, building the illusion of the first time, which is often missing from high school shows. Julia Pascal also works organically stating in an interview, “I never block, I let the actors find their own space relationships” (Pascal 187). When entrusting student actors with this responsibility, you are running the risk that they are not able to develop their own blocking. But, by training the student actors to explore the piece through movement without directions, you are empowering the student as an artist which will help their long-term development as creatives.

Theatre practitioner and educator Viola Spolin looked to work organically with student actors and developed a system of improv-based theatre games. Spolin’s book, *Improvisation for the Theatre*, has greatly influenced the warm-ups and improv games theatre teachers use. However, many theatre teachers use her exercises separate from the production, where Spolin’s intention was to use the improv to produce a play collaboratively. Her work has been referred to as non-authoritarian, as she viewed directing as being in partnership with actors.

Spolin spoke against pre-blocking as she believed it not only restricted an actor’s creativity but also their ability to deal with crises that could occur on stage. She promoted working with students through non-directional blocking, where character movement is experimented with during rehearsal process and can be amended spontaneously on stage. One of the benefits of this approach is that “the student-actor who has been trained in non-directional blocking implements the work of the director as he moves around the stage, always aware of his

place with the total picture. Non-directional blocking achieves spontaneous selection and the ability to meet all crises” (Spolin 157). The difficulty with implementing *The Explorer* approach on the high school and amateur theatre level is training actors to make spontaneous decisions for themselves. Improv-based exercises are crucial, as they develop the actor’s skill in making spontaneous decisions which can then be transitioned to the production.

Implementation Tools

***Yes, and-* Principle**

Yes, and- is a core principle in basic improv, that an actor must always run with whatever their partner says. In Mary Elisabeth’s article *Saying “Yes, and” — A principle for improv, business & life* she defines it as “the acceptance principle — when someone in a scene states something, accept it as truth. The ‘and’ part of this principle means to build on that reality that has been set”. This principle should be established during the first rehearsal and reinforced throughout the rehearsal process.

Elisabeth expands the scope of the *Yes and-* principle from improv to the common workplace, believing that “*Yes, and-* is more than just a concept to make an improv scene wonderful, it’s a philosophy healthy for business and life” (Elisabeth). Therefore the *Yes, and-* should be equally applied to the director. Teachers tend to say no to students quite regularly, but *The Explorer* should be open to the student actors’ ideas, confirm them with a yes, and look to expand or polish the idea.

Improv-based Blocking

Due to the lack of blocking assigned by *The Explorer* director, the actors will be responsible for dictating the movement and action in the piece. Student actors can be hesitant

making these decisions, and so *The Explorer* needs to facilitate the student actor forming their own relationship with the space. Improv exercises push actors to move spontaneously and instinctively, rather than relying on the director for instruction. In high school and community theatre, an actor is coming from class or from their job and may need to practice moving and creating before working on the piece.

Hodge and McLain are strong advocates for improv-based blocking, particularly when working with seasoned actors who have strong instincts and can move spontaneously. The director no longer dictates the movement ahead of time, but they are still responsible for “suggesting more or less movement, more selective movement, more or less speed on certain movements, and often the specific destination of these movements in order to indicate to the actors the next important composition” (Hodge and McLain 127-128). The question then becomes, how do I get student actors to move spontaneously? Unfortunately, the easy answer is it takes time for actors to develop these skills, which is why Hodge and McLain prefer paper blocking when working with newer actors. But if we look at this question through a pedagogical lens, when students are struggling teachers look to empower students and simplify the concept.

Let’s first look at simplifying the concept. Moving freely on stage can be a daunting task for student actors because there are so many choices. By breaking down this concept of moving for the student actor, they just have two options to choose from. Hodge and McClain explain that “there are only two directions of movement on stage: the advance and the retreat. That is, the advance or retreat of one character toward or away from another as the dramatic action is pursued” (Hodge and McLain 128). Students must be empowered to make that decision, by being reassured that it is their choice to make. The student can choose whether their character is to advance or retreat under that set of circumstances. If the student is struggling making the

choice or makes the weaker of the two choices, have the student actor explain their thought process in making that choice. It is similar to a math teacher making their students write out all the steps to solving an equation, as they are more likely to come to the right outcome if they take time and double check their steps. The student will either recognize and self-correct or in their explanation they may point out something new to the director, and the director can then apply the *Yes, and-* principal to expand and streamline the actor's empowered choice.

Use of Mime

Pantomime can be used as an exercise to help student-actors develop a relationship with the space. This is best implemented at the start of rehearsal, before the students start working with the piece. Assign the actors tactile tasks to complete through mime without the use of any objects.

Examples: setting a table for dinner, painting a picture, building a wall with bricks, etc.

This should *seem* tedious, as the actor needs to figure out how big the invisible tablecloth is before they lay it on the unseen table, then set the fictional silver ware and plates, and light the imaginary candles before dinner.

Another pantomime exercise is the *house of doors*. Actors should move through an invisible house filled with doors and rooms of radically different sizes. Using their bodies to define the space, they squeeze through a two-foot door or struggle to open a heavy twenty-foot door. Then connect this exercise with your show, by having the actor practicing opening doors and moving through spaces that will be on stage (Bridgmont 14).

To make these exercises more accessible, assign the scenarios the actors will be moving in. Labeling for the student actor how big or small the room is or what exactly needs to be set on the

table allows the actor to focus on their body and feeling out the space. As the cast members get more comfortable with the exercises, they can start creating the space or actions for themselves.

Pointing Exercise

Newer actors tend to just say lines out loud and not direct them to someone. To break this habit, have students act out their piece while having one of their index fingers pointing outward. As they run through the piece or scene, they should always be pointing their finger at whom they are directing their line or emotion. This can be to another character, the audience, or themselves. Following the exercise, have the actor reflect on their choices. Finally, perform the scene again with the actor no longer using their index finger and using more natural gestures while continuing to use intention in directing their line to an actor, the audience or themselves. This exercise forces the actor to specify their creative choices adding structure to the piece, through the student actor's choices.

Tableaus

David Kener and Michael Gonchar wrote multiple articles published in the *New York Times* about integrating working with tableaus in high school theatre. Much of their work involves students collaborating to freeze in images that evoke a concept. After being tasked with forming an image with their bodies, “students must then collaborate to decide how to represent something important in the text in the form of a tableau. They can represent people, objects or even symbols, and can create something that reproduces some aspect of the text or do a tableau that works more as a symbol” (Kener and Gonchar). This stimulates the actors to consider the image and message they want to convey to the audience.

For more blocking-based implementation, I have students create four tableaux that showcase a scene that is based on a generic topic that has nothing to do with the piece we are working on. Cooking a meal or working in the garage are simple examples. After spending time creating the four tableaux and remembering that body posture, we lay the text we are working with on top of those four tableaux. The scene now has new meaning because we have radically shifted the blocking. This creates a blocking framework which the text can be explored through. After reflection, the actors may find creative inspiration from the tableaux that can be infused into the piece.

This exercise typically works best with monologues or smaller chunks of dialogue. To help scaffold for newer actors, I tell the students what the four frames are, but they make the picture for themselves. I like to escalate each frame of the scenario, which entails increased movement and emotion in the text we are working with. For example, Tableau 1: put food in the oven; Tableau 2: get distracted with another task; Tableau 3: the oven is now on fire; Tableau 4: put out the fire.

Stanislavski and the Super-Objective

Renowned theatre theorist Constantin Stanislavski developed his own system to support actors. One concept that transitions well to high school and amateur actors is the super-objective. Stanislavski writes in *An Actor Prepares*, “in a play the whole stream of individual, minor objectives, all the imaginative thoughts, feelings and actions of an actor, should converge to carry out the super-objective of the plot. The common bond must be so strong that even the most insignificant detail, if it is not related to the super-objective, will stand out as superfluous or wrong” (Stanislavski 271).

The Stanislavski super-objective slightly differs from the objective work that will be discussed in *The Book Worm*. The super-objective is not tied to specific text evidence as it is in *The Book Worm*. The actor should discover their character's super-objective through exploration, as it should radiate from the very core of the character. A character's objective may change throughout the text, where the super-objective is a constant that is always a motivation of the character. The term "primal" helps the student understand how the super-objective is an instinct that is tied to every fiber of the character.

Actress Rachel Frawley of The Atlanta Shakespeare Company explains the concept as a simple equation that breaks down the concept for student actors. Frawley outlines that "a super-objective can be structured as 'I need _____ by/through _____'". When choosing the language of a super-objective, I always think in terms of simplifying fractions... Keep asking what is underneath until you find the most basic human desire that drives your character (acceptance, control, and safety are common examples). The second half of the equation is your character's modus operandi (the individual's method of operation). Again, choose strong, active language. 'I need control through alienation'" (Frawley).

Reflection

The benefits of exploring are limited without reflecting upon the process. Any individual exercise may have limited effect if it is not reflected upon collaboratively. The goal is to connect each activity to the text, so that every exercise helps create a piece of the show. The book, *Qualities of Quality: Understanding in Arts Education* advocates the use of reflection, specifically the topic of achieving quality, stating that "continuous reflection and discussion about what constitutes quality and how to achieve it is not only a catalyst for quality, but also a sign of quality. In other words, thinking deeply about quality- talking about it, worrying about it,

continually revisiting ideas about its characteristics and its indicators- is essential both to the pursuit of excellence in arts education and to its achievement” (Seidel et al 58).

Joan Lazarus believes reflection should not just be used as a tool to work with students, but also to stimulate introspection for the director. Specifically, when working more collaboratively with students, which maybe an unfamiliar process for some teachers. Lazarus believes the “reflective practice, the habit of considering and reconsidering what transpires in your interactions with students and others, is an important element of best practice. The practice of thinking deeply about your own work, asking tough questions, honestly looking at *what is* and pondering *what could be* brings about change in us and our work” (Lazarus 78). Whether it is self-assessment or a collaborative contemplation on an activity, reflection can be a beneficial activity for all five methodologies, but certainly a requirement for The Explorer.

Rehearsal Schedule

On the high school level, the importance of a daily rehearsal itinerary increases. *The Explorer* needs this structure because it is easy to get stuck spending lots of time working with one exercise, so having time allocated for different stages can help control this. Spolin breaks a typical rehearsal into three distinct sections:

- 1) Warm-Ups and Relationship Building Period
- 2) Spontaneous and Creative Period
- 3) Polishing and Integrating to Production Period (Spolin 330)

For my own implementation of this technique, I added in time for reflection and assigned approximate times (for a two-hour rehearsal) that worked well with my group of students.

- 1) Warm-Ups and Relationship Building Period (approximately 15 minutes)

- 2) Reflection Upon Exercises (approximately 5 minutes)
- 3) Spontaneous and Creative Period (approximately 40 minutes)
- 4) Connecting Discoveries to the Text (approximately 10 minutes)
- 5) Polishing and Integrating to Production Period (approximately 40 minutes)
- 6) Final Reflection and Preview of Following Rehearsals Exercises (approximately 10 minutes)

Things to Keep in Mind

- 1) Times will vary depending on the cast and the exercise.
- 2) *The Explorer* does not bail on exercises if the actors are struggling. Time has been allocated to reflection to find solutions collaboratively with the cast.
- 3) The delivering of instructions may take longer for high school actors, where community theatre casts may require lengthier reflection periods. Adjust base on your specific group.
- 4) These times will shift when run-throughs begin. As full runs begin to happen, the *Spontaneous and Creative Period* will decrease in time and should be added to the *Polishing and Integrating to Production Period*.
- 5) The rehearsal stages should not be deleted or skipped because student-actors can benefit from continuing a structure throughout a creative process.

Reflection

The Explorer encases theories I enjoy as an actor. Due to this, my personal directing style echoes a lot of these theories, but I have not been able to direct solely from this perspective on the high school level, due to the needs of the student-actors. As a high school teacher, I have found a lot of acting exercises that I embrace in my own acting become reduced to just being

warm-ups and fun activities when working with younger actors. Similarly, when I've directed community theatre productions, I have found this to be a hard method for actors with minimal theatre education to grasp or even be receptive to. In my mind, this method has the most potential for actor growth. It has had amazing effects on some of my students when working with smaller scenes and monologues, but I have yet to find the same effectiveness on a full-scale show level. I thought this ten-minute play experiment would be the perfect foil to showcase these ideologies with high schoolers, but I had some of the same hit-or-miss problems I have seen in the past. Only now do I have a better understanding of where I went wrong.

First misstep and biggest misstep: I chose a play that would have benefited more from a different approach or the addition of implementation tools from other methods. *Hidden Agenda* by Patti Cassidy has a lot of great reactive-based dialogue, that is a great canvas to use this method on; however, I underestimated the difficulty my students had with the piece from an execution standpoint. Cassidy's smart comedy is about an artist who is painting something undistinguishable just for fun, while two art critics are falling in love with the painting as they both interpret it with their own self-interest in mind. Throughout the piece, the artist is drawing on stage, while the two critics react. I thought there was a lot of in-the-moment acting that could take place between the artist's actions and the critics' reaction. The comedic drawing on stage, delivering lines, and developing rhythm between the critics' reactions and the artist's drawing pace all became a multi-tasking challenge for high schoolers that I should have been better prepared for. I was able to smooth some of these issues by having the artist take a step back and show off her piece when she was done drawing. I regret authoritatively interfering in that aspect, and I should have continued with exercises and ensemble discussions to get the cast to solve this issue for themselves. In retrospect, if I had the drawings pre-drawn and the artist was just

revealing them, that may have solved some of the multi-tasking issues that would free up the actors to just listen and react.

Second misstep was my lack of flexibility when it came to the set, which made it difficult for my new actors to move in a way that was not pre-blocked. The script calls for an easel center stage, but staging issues arose as the student actors had difficulty developing movement through improv blocking and continued to turn their backs towards the audience or blocking the painting for a considerable amount time. Typical exploration blocking exercises I discussed earlier were less successful with the constraint of an artist, center stage, drawing on an easel. Upon reflection, I should have eliminated the easel and allowed the artist to walk around with the canvas or made the entire set one giant canvas that she could draw on. I discovered that *The Explorer* must be pushing creatively just as hard as the actors, finding different options and solutions that allow the actors to work collaboratively and spontaneously.

Thirdly, I mishandled the scheduling of when lines had to be memorized. I typically require students to be off book shortly after the blocking process is over, which works under *The Authoritarian* method. It was difficult for the student actor to explore blocking with creative movement while still holding a script. On the high school level, it may help students to have lines memorized before starting improv blocking.

This cast did not have the experience level to work creatively without heavy support. The students struggled with many of the exercises as they were all very tentative to make decisions. In high school theatre, the whole cast benefits from having one fearless individual who fully commits to all the exercises and encourages the rest of the cast to take risks and explore. This cast grew a lot through this process and will be far more prepared to work with an explorative approach in future shows.

By far the biggest issue was my own insecurity of feeling like I had to step in as *The Authoritarian* when students were struggling. I should have had more faith in the methodologies that have been proven on the professional level and help the student actors grow through trial & error and reflection.

Audience Data

Hidden Objective

Believability 3.6

Movement 4.2

Creative Choices 4.2

Clarity 3.8

Overall 15.8

One would assume, *The Explorer* method would facilitate a piece that receive high scores in creative choices. This play lends itself to more movement and creative choices, which is why I thought it was a good match for this method. The takeaway from believability being the lowest score should not be attributed to this method, as the theories that make up this method are proven to improve believability on the professional and college level. I predict that my newer actors may have struggled with creating believable characters regardless of the method. The piece itself did not lend itself to a high clarity score. This was one of the lowest scoring pieces, which I think reflects more on the production than the method itself. The data has only strengthened my opinion that these exploration techniques need to be implemented and trusted by actors throughout a much longer process to achieve a great result on the high school level.

Best Practices/Optimal Scenario

The Explorer lends itself to smaller, more-experienced casts, working in more intimate spaces. The experience level of the cast is key to the success in high school and community theatre. This probably is not the case when working with collegiate or professional actors, as their experience and training allows them to take ownership over portions of the artistic process. On the high school level, it is a long process of actor empowerment in order to get this method to operate smoothly. The goal is an attainable one, and the ultimate outcome is one that is worth the growing pains. High school students tend to get stuck working in the routine that their high school teacher sets up. If an actor can work in a more collaborative creative process, they may be better prepared for the variety of directorial approaches they will encounter as they move to the college and professional levels. Working with a smaller cast allows the director to work with the actors more intimately and makes exploration and reflection more practical on the high school level. Different theatre spaces or more minimal backdrops may work well with this process.

The director who chooses *The Explorer* needs to be well-versed in a variety of acting theories or exercises. The actors are going to need help with this new-found responsibility, and the director needs to be able set up opportunities for them to work through their difficulties without telling them what to do. This approach may not be best for a new director that requires help from the actors; instead the experienced director uses their wide array of tools to lead the actors toward discoveries.

A best practice tip is to start with various exercises that will naturally strengthen the actors' abilities while also creating a safe place to explore the piece. It is a process that starts with improv and exploration that then leads to discoveries that can be used to supplement the

text. This method works best with a play that can be executed through this free-flowing process. If it requires a lot of specific instruction by the director, the improv-blocking process maybe a difficult task for student actors. In this experiment, the collaborative process was the best of these five methods at creating chemistry between actors and finding genuine acting moments. Try choosing a play that gives the actors room to discover their own characters and the relationships between them. If the show is a flexible piece that can be approached in a variety of ways, a collaborative effort can help create a truly unique piece.

Optimal Scenario: Small, experienced cast, that lends itself to an organic creative process. Show examples: *Blackbird* by David Harrower, *God of Carnage* by Yazmina Reza, *Dinner with Friends* by Donald Margulies.

CHAPTER 4: *THE BOOKWORM*

In this style of directing, the emphasis is text analysis, finding a deeper understanding of the playwright and each character's intent. There is a focus on table reading and analyzing all the potential subtext and motivation before transitioning to the stage to rehearse. For *The Bookworm*, staging, tech, and on-stage chemistry cannot be achieved without a true and thorough understanding of the text. The implementation tools will focus on magnifying and executing the playwright's intention.

Research

The Bookworm utilizes methodologies from both theatre and pedagogy. The director uses the information gathered in text analysis, table reading and historical analysis as the basis for the production. *The Bookworm* expands the initial table read as a constant throughout the rehearsal process, where the production is formed based on reading and analysis. There are four main points *The Bookworm* is examining with their cast in order to gain information that will guide their piece: in text clues, subtext, historical research and character studies.

In Text Clues

Simply put, a script is an assembly of words the actor must process and figure out how to deliver. Punctuation and wording are the breadcrumbs that can lead the actor on how to deliver these lines. Former actor at The Academy of Dramatic Arts in Stockholm, Stefan Norrthon writes in *To Stage an Overlap*, that he breaks his table read down into eight-line sections of dialogue where the actors are cutting each other off. The director calls attention to every clue in the text, as the actors search for delivery hints and options. In this case, they had more success in

the second reading of the passage as “the actors demonstrably orient to the overlap that is signaled by the playwright in the script. Frida breaks her line as it is written, and Peter overlaps almost precisely at the forward slash” (Norrthon, 172). For new student actors, cutting another character off is an unfamiliar action. The playwright wrote an overlap specifically to affect the pace and the mood of the piece, which must be followed in order to execute the playwright’s vision effectively.

The Bookworm’s table-read process echoes the analysis done in higher level English classes. Teacher Melissa Noel reads and analyzes with her class, paying specific attention to Truman Capote’s punctuation choices to give them a greater understanding of tone from the book *In Cold Blood*. In her article *A Cold Manipulation of the Truth*, Noel reflected on her process, stating “students get to observe how a writer uses punctuation correctly as a tool to change the tone. After looking at the punctuation, the class can examine the diction, syntax and tone all leading to the author’s purpose for each piece of literature” (Noel, 51). The same conclusions can be made by a student actor when they examine a playwright’s words in this manner, as they gain a greater understanding of the playwright’s intention on how that line should be delivered. This process helps actors find their own clues that tell them how to deliver that line, giving their words action and purpose. *Scavenger Hunts* (Appendix D) are a common form of assessment used in history classes for students to find details in complicated texts. These can be beneficial in script analysis because it pushes student actors to infer details about their character based on the text.

Subtext

Reading plays can be difficult for student actors, because they must decipher the dialogue and pick up on the subtext. In David Lindsey Abaire’s *Rabbit Hole*, Howie and Becca keep going back and forth about whether they should keep their dog. Without the proper awareness,

these arguments can seem quite petty, but the dog belonged to their son who died, and the dog symbolizes a much greater argument -- how to grieve. New student actors often attempt to play the emotion (happy, sad, angry) but in professional theatre those terms are not consideredactable. The emphasis on subtext gives actorsactable objectives. But how can directors help reveal subtext for student actors? In his book *How to Discover the Subtext of a Script* Keaton Evans believes that questioning is the key to unlocking subtext for actors. "Subtext is vital to learn. Don't rush the process of studying your script but ask the hard questions. It'll take the time to figure out what's going on in a particular scene, it'll take a little digging" (Evans 2). This digging concept is crucial to *The Bookworm*, because when more questions are asked and more layers can be unearthed, and more answers can be formulated to be used on stage.

The question can be raised, will text analysis with student actors translate to their performance on stage? Evans believes that text analysis becomes engrained in the performance and gives a message to the actors, stating, "let your focus be on the other people in the scene and what you're doing and let go of the subtext. It'll stay with you as you practice living in the moment...The subtext, once learned, will be your foundation. Once you know the why, everything will start to piece together" (Evans 2). Analyzing the subtext can be key in the formalization of the performance on stage.

Historical research

When mounting a play, each of the five directorial methods have a different process in transitioning the play from a reading to a performance with movement, feeling and technical features. *The Authoritarian* doles out specific instruction, where *The Explorer* requires a process of discovery. *The Bookworm* gathers information to inform creative decisions. Research pertaining to the setting, the characters, the playwright, and the given circumstances thrust upon

character all form a base that creative decisions will be formed on. The director (who either has dramaturgical responsibilities or is enlisting a student dramaturg) will need to bring information that is applied to the show. The information should be presented so it is accessible to the cast and crew.

Lenora Inez Brown's *Active Dramaturgy: Using Research to inspire Creative Thought* promotes incorporating research on themes and critical theories. Using the example of *Rabbit Hole*, research on 2006 upstate New York may not offer a lot for the actors. However, arming the cast with information on the human condition will profoundly inform creative choices. Viewing the piece through the canon of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' *7 stages of Grief* may provide the actors with new textual information to inform decision making. Discussing research involved with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Brown suggests "identifying the timeless themes concerning grief, succession (be it for the throne or a corporation), and struggles for independence within the family, may direct the dramaturg to find and present more production-appropriate information that is vital and relevant to the creative team's decision-making process" (Brown, 117). Founding the creative decisions on research empowers the director, actors and design team to embark on a journey of grounding the piece in truth.

Character Analysis

Uta Hagen's *Nine Questions* (Appendix E) is a professional technique that can transition easily to high school actors. It parallels the Who, What, When, Where, and Why concepts students routinely use in English class. *The Bookworm* must create a link between the character work activities and the actor's creative choices, by constantly making connecting points between

Uta Hagen's *9 Questions* and the scene work. *The Bookworm* focuses on analysis informing performance.

In Rosemary Owen's *The Oral Interpreter and Character Analysis*, she references character analysis theories that started as methods to interpret poetry. Owens writes that Thelma Riddle's approach to examining poetry transitions logically to scene work as "the methods were: (1) What a character said about himself; (2) What he did---his actions; (3) What others said about him; (4) The effect he had on other people" (Owens 22). *The Bookworm* must transition the analysis answered on paper to the performance, continually calling back to the analytic points the actors make so it has staying power with the student actors, so they can perform the rich details they have fleshed out through the analysis process.

Implementation Tools

I used *The Bookworm* method when directing *The Phlebotomist* by Charlie Edwin Fischer, which focuses on the tension between a woman giving blood and her phlebotomist. At the end of the play, it is revealed it is the day of 9/11, which explains all the tension. My focus as the director of this piece was to ground the character's objectives in dealing with the disaster of 9/11 and establishing rich subtext throughout that would ultimately be revealed at the end. The tools of implementation I used were chosen with those intentions in mind, but they could be used with any form of subject matter and text analysis.

Table Work

Table work is the process of reading a piece sitting as a group, followed by a discussion, where the actors are beginning to raise questions and dig deeper into the text. In other directing styles, table work may only happen the first day of rehearsal and most of the rehearsal time is

spent with working with the piece on stage. But, with a text analysis approach like *The Bookworm* uses, table work should be a large feature of the rehearsal process. Director Zach Kaufer describes his approach to table work, stating, “we're sifting through things and teasing out certain aspects that we may not have thought about before. The characters are coming to life as we flesh out some of the vague elements of the story and begin to orchestrate the score” (Kaufer). I used table work to start many of the rehearsals. Any issue that would arise when the actors are working on their feet with blocking or characterization, I would follow up with a table read and an analytical conversation to find a solution. During the table read, actors should question and analyze the piece in order to make discoveries through the reading and discussion process.

Playing the Objective

The goal is to ground the character in what he or she wants, not in what he or she feels. Playing the objective ingrained in the very fabric of acting on the professional level but playing the objective and not the emotion can be a new concept to high school and amateur actors. *The Bookworm* facilitates that the objective dictates the blocking. There is no frivolous movement as it is all connected to the wants and needs of the characters.

Rachel Frawley differentiates the super-objective as being a constant want of the character that rarely changes, while objectives “change all the time. Often, an objective will carry through a scene, unless something drastic happens to change it. Strong objectives relate to the other person in the scene. ‘I want him to admit he’s wrong’ is not asactable as ‘I want to wring a confession from him’” (Frawley). The super-objective and an objective can be taught and implemented in tandem and can be used universally among the different approaches.

It was key in our production that we conveyed immediately that these characters had two opposing objectives. This was a dynamic that the actors were able to portray through blocking. Every time the phlebotomist would set up the patient to give blood, the patient would undo the work she had done.

Substitution

The actor takes their character out of the play and substitutes themselves into the given situation the characters are in. The actor is meant to determine how they would genuinely react under these circumstances and then compare that to the reactions of the character. Uta Hagen explains her process in *Respect for Acting*, stating, "I use substitution in order to 'make believe' in its literal sense- to make *me* believe...in order to send me into the moment-to-moment spontaneous action of my newly selected self on stage" (Hagen 32). This is meant for actors to take away their own personal reactions that can be used to create genuine feeling characters.

Inner Dialogue Exercise

This is an improv-based exercise that helps actors connect to the subtext in the piece. Uta Hagen promotes the use of improv to explore a character, stating that "improvisations, which serve for a better understanding of the reality of character, circumstances, time and place, emotions, and the possibilities of varied action, can be of tremendous value" (Hagen 92). As the actors are acting out their scene, they will improv what is on their character's mind as the other actor is saying their lines. This should create a constant stream of nonstop dialogue between the actors, as they are saying both the dialogue and their character's own immediate reaction to the other character's dialogue. After running the scene twice with that exercise, the actors should run the scene a third time, but now while they are delivering their lines, they are expressing the

same genuine reactions they had verbally, with their body posture, facial reaction and onstage energy. The purpose of this exercise is to flesh out the subtext between characters.

Uta Hagen's 9 Questions

Uta Hagen's book *Respect for Acting* has become a mainstay in professional theatre literature. Her 9 Questions simplify character analysis, so it is digestible for a student actor, while pushing the actor to think, deepening their knowledge of the character.

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Who am I?</i> | Character. |
| <i>What time is it?</i> | Century, year, season, day, minute. |
| <i>Where am I?</i> | Country, city, neighborhood, house, room, area of room. |
| <i>What surrounds me?</i> | Animate and inanimate objects. |
| <i>What are the given circumstances?</i> | Past, present, future, and the events. |
| <i>What is my relationship?</i> | Relation to total events, other characters, and to things. |
| <i>What do I want?</i> | Character, main and immediate objectives. |
| <i>What's in my way?</i> | Obstacles. |
| <i>What do I do to get what I want?</i> | The action: physical, verbal. |

Figure 3: 9 Questions. Uta Hagen-1973

Incorporating Research

Introducing research to guide creative decisions. This often is done early in the rehearsal process, but if the actors are struggling, more information can be introduced to help give them directions.

Due to their age, the students were struggling grasping the effect that 9/11 had on people (Appendix). Weeks into the rehearsal process I started introducing interviews of 9/11 family members and first responders, so they could get a better understanding of the pain it caused.

Climax Chart

Have students lay out the scenes of a play on a climax chart. Gustaf Freytag's *Freytag Pyramid* (Appendix F) is a simplified dramatic structure that is often utilized in English classes. This process allows the actors to see when the conflict should start to rise, when the conflict reaches its climax and when the conflict is resolved.

My new student actress could play her character when there was little dramatic action and high emotional moments, but initially struggled with letting her emotion build throughout the piece. It is not uncommon for new actors to be able to convey high levels of emotions but struggle with the nuances of dialing back. The climax chart was extremely beneficial to her process, because she charted out the emotional arc of her character.

Reflection

The majority of Charlie Edwin Fischer's *The Phlebotomist* is spent with this woman who keeps arguing and squirming while giving blood to a phlebotomist who has no time to deal with a fickle patient. At the very end of the piece, it is revealed through dialogue that it is the day of 9/11, and that explains all the turmoil going on at what seems to be an ordinary trip to drawing blood. The subject matter and the characters' subtext are the strengths of this piece. The analysis process was crucial because I was working with student actors and a student audience who were largely born after 09/11/2001.

Going into using this method, I thought of *The Bookworm* as using analysis and research techniques to help the actors make decisions, but I found I had my own directorial difficulties making decisions based upon the text. The production team, the actors, and I, all struggled in deciding the level of foreshadowing we wanted to include leading up to the last line revealing the scene happens on 9/11. Do we want the audience to understand the circumstances or do we want to surprise the audience in one of those shocking, plot-twisty ten-minute plays? Under *The Authoritarian* method, I would make this decision relatively easily, but using *The Bookworm* method, I needed to figure out what the playwright's intent was with the reveal at the end. After close examination of the in-text clues, the cast and I decided to make sure the audience knew immediately that the characters had some extraordinary baggage, and then subtly add hints through design mediums to make it less of a shock or a twist and more of an answer to the audience questions.

The text analysis approach greatly influenced my technical design. I wanted certain context clues and foreshadowing hints to be brought in by technical elements. I used the set and technical elements to establish subtext. We added a radio on stage that the phlebotomist would turn up and down as it played news clips of an accident. We kept them vague but certainly pointed the audience in the direction that a tragic event of some magnitude had happened.

I had two actresses who varied greatly in experience level and age working on this play, so I had two very different reactions to working heavily in script analysis. For my more seasoned, dual-enrollment class senior, using these techniques were revolutionary for her development as an actress. This method really helped ground her acting in truth. The opposite can be said for my sophomore who was acting for the first time. For her, this process was asking her to run before she could walk. She did well with the techniques, but when working on the

stage, she really struggled with the basics, like projection and stage comfortability. Looking back on the show, I wish I had done individual rehearsals with the new actor who was struggling, so I could help her improve as an actress in a general sense with basic theatre conventions, before I worked her in a specific sense.

Audience Data

The Phlebotomist:

Believability 3.9

Movement 4.1

Creative Choices 4.2

Clarity 3.8

Overall 16

This data was extremely inconsistent. There were many audience members who gave this piece their highest score and some who gave this show their lowest score. This may be a testament to this method, because the scores were extremely high among audience members who picked up on the subtext. The scores were very low for those audience members we couldn't lure to be invested in the mood and tone we created through text analysis. The high scores can be correlated to the strong emphasis we put on storytelling while the low scores can be attributed to our shortcomings in execution. There were not any visually interesting movement choices in this piece, but there was a lot of stage business as we tried our best to accurately mimic a phlebotomist's job on stage. The piece scored high for movement, and our audience seemed to appreciate the realistic look we were going for. My initial assumption that *The Bookworm* should lead to a high clarity score was incorrect according to the audience. We spent much of our rehearsal process on trying to clearly understand and articulate the playwright's choices. The low clarity score could be attributed to the major plot twist at the end. Seeing the show and some

of the high scores, I felt we handled the twist well, but a twist at the end can be divisive among an audience which may explain the range in the scores.

Best Practices/Optimal Scenario

When examining the practical application of *The Bookworm*, the analysis methodology that comprises it can be used in any production and is perhaps underutilized in high schools and community theatres. This method is highly recommended for directors who have a very strong background in text analysis. A history teacher or English teacher who has transitioned to teaching theatre would be wise to produce plays from this perspective, using their own personal background as a strength. A director's deep understanding and personal connection to the text or subject matter is crucial, because most of the rehearsal process will revolve around the piece itself. It also helps if there is a specific topic or theory separate from the script through which you can analyze it. This approach may work well for pieces that are based on historical events or are literature adaptations.

It is hard to determine if the experience level of the cast has any bearing on the effect of this method. Some new actors may struggle through with process because less time is being spent with them getting comfortable on stage. On the flip side, new actors may find comfort in having a full understanding of their character and the scene before they start acting. The same is true for veteran actors, where it is hard to gauge their reaction to this process, as it really is predicated on their individual way of learning a piece. This method may work poorly with a junior version of a production or a piece that is designed for students, because there may be lack of textual evidence to sift through. Choose a professional level script that allows for analysis of the human condition of the characters, historical relevance of the setting and the intention of the playwright are pithy enough to construct a show on.

Optimal Scenario- A variety of cast sizes and experiences with a play that has a lot of layers to be sifted through and analyzed, such as *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, *Frost/Nixon* by Peter Morgan, and *Two Trains Running* by August Wilson.

CHAPTER 5: *THE ARCHITECT*

In this instance, the director's strengths are rooted in design. The director creates a very detailed set and costume plot but gives the actors room to explore within the space the director has created for them. Tech elements need to be given to the actors as quickly as possible. The actors should be able to find their characters themselves in the artistic situation the director has provided for them. The costumes, sets and props lead the actors to help develop their characters. In this approach, the director has strong visual artistry and technical theatre experience but a lack of knowledge on acting theories. The director is sticking to their strengths and focuses on an artistic design that informs the actor's creative decisions.

Research

The Architect operates under the principal that the set, costumes and props all act as aids to an actor. Many production schedules start introducing technical elements in the last two weeks of the process. High schools and community theatres have kept with this same trend. *The Architect* director provides costumes, props and set designs for the first rehearsal, giving student actors immediate access to design elements that can now be formative in the actor's creative process. In this approach, the director can double as the scenic designer or they can opt to use a student scenic design.

In many ways, *The Architect* acts as a mid-way point for the actors between drastic power dynamic differences of *The Authoritarian* and *The Explorer*. *The Architect* director has strong creative authority but executes it through the technical elements, allowing the student actors to operate freely but inside the framework that the set and costumes provide.

Operationally, there is typically a difference between professional and high school productions in the number of people working on a production on the technical and design side. Purchasing materials, production design, scale of the set, building the set, tools being used, the acquisition of costumes and props are all technical aspects that the theatre teacher/director is responsible for. *The Architect* director sees this as an advantage, because they may have more control over when and how technical elements are incorporated with the direction of the actors. This allows *The Architect* to change the dynamics of fusing technical and artistic elements, as now the technical elements can be introduced earlier and effect or determine the acting and blocking decisions.

Scenic theorist Adolphe Appia was highly critical of the limits that stage conventions put on art, believing that theatre was weakened by the lack of synthesis between playwright, actor, scenic designer and director. He felt that playwrights did not truly understand how to harmonize their words with the stage, so they became “enslaved” by the conventions of the stage, because they did not view it as a part of the art. Appia poses the question, “should not the dramatist himself have suggested the principals of our stage decoration from the very beginning?” (Appia 150). *The Architect* does start to narrow that divide, as the director can operate with more artistic freedom when it comes to scenic design, as the importance and the process of design and build is now at the forefront.

Appia was concerned that the actor’s body conveyed individuality which fought against the unification of artistry that he worked so hard to convey with his scenic designs. Appia’s concern with the individuality of the actors effecting his artistic vision maybe lessened within the framework *The Architect*. Appia offers that “it is the characteristic of theatre reform that all serious effort is instinctively directed toward the mise-en-scène (elements of the scenery)”,

which is the first and primary focus of *The Architect* (Appia 153). The actor's individuality is not suppressed in this approach, and it could be increased due to the lack of authoritarian control, but the actor now can only operate in the artistic world that the scene design provides. The actor's decisions are now based on the mise-en-scène provided, closing the gap between the actor and the scenic designer.

Taking Appia's theory a step further was actor, designer and director Edward Gordon Craig. Craig emphasized working with light, shadow, music and shape to create a three-dimensional spectacle and mood. As a theorist, Craig contended that "art arrives only by design. Therefore, in order to make any work of art it is clear we may only work in materials which we can calculate. Man is not one of those materials" (Craig, 89). *The Architect's* approach operates under this principal but diverts from Craig in its application. Craig believed the actor was not an artist, and coined the term Über-Marionette, or an actor that could be under complete control, that would not distract or stray from his artistic design. *The Architect* director gives the actor freedom to make decisions, as they set the stage and the rules that all creative decisions are bound to. Appia and Craig's theories shaped scenic design on the professional level. But when looking to apply their ideologies to directing high theatre, the emphasis on scenic design is aimed to support the actor rather than to control them.

One of a set designer's aims is to tell the story that the text presents, by communicating underlying themes, metaphors and conflicts to the audience. A strong design can assist the student actor in gaining a greater understanding of the story. Scenographer Delores Ringer uses technical and design elements to fortify and emphasize key aspects of main characters. Ringer states, "I used patchwork as a metaphor for Arlene's life in *Getting Out*, both on the set and on the costumes... Arlene's fragmented self, which she eventually begins to pull together, was

illustrated in my scenic design by various pictures of women painted on cloth” (Ringer 472).

Student actors can struggle with conveying conflicts and themes that underscore their characters, so *The Architect* utilizes design as an aid to the actor in the expression of their character.

Implementation Tools

This approach had a massive creative impact on Dunnellon High School’s production of *Spice* by David Susman. In our interpretation, the two main characters were the dolls Barbie and Ken. This concept was not a part of the script, so technical elements became a crucial aspect of our version of the piece.

What story are we telling?

This is one of the first questions, Rebecca Taichman poses when directing a piece; “truly every choice I make is led by: what is the story I’m telling? And the hope in there is, of course, that I’m telling a story that I believe will move people or open them, will spark meaningful dialogue, will create empathy in unique ways. When you’re really a vessel for telling a story, the story is in the driver’s seat” (Rothstein). Technical elements can be used to emphasize an aspect of the story, positioning the piece in a new light for the audience. At the New York City Public Theatre, the director utilized scenic design and current affairs to enhance the contemporary and political elements of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. Claire Shaffer writes that “on election night in November, the theater’s art director, Oskar Eustis, chose to adapt the classic Shakespeare tragedy for the annual *Shakespeare in the Park* festival. He conceived the title character as a Trump-like figure, complete with wispy blond wig and oversize red tie. Like the real Julius Caesar, Shakespeare’s fictional Roman emperor is betrayed and brutally stabbed by his right-hand man, Brutus, and two other senators” (Shaffer). Through scenic design, Eustis was able to update a Shakespearian classic increasing its political relevance with today’s audience.

Conversely, Rebecca Taichman looks to utilize scenic design to underscore themes in the text, rather than introducing a new concept. In an interview about her process during her acclaimed direction of Paula Vogel's *Indecent*, Taichman states, "if I'm in a design meeting and a designer says, 'Oh this will be cool, nobody's ever done this before,' that's not an interesting goal. But if it's, 'Here's how we can release this moment in the story in a deeply moving, provocative way,' that charges me up" (Rothstein).

Budget Limitations

There is a limit to the amount of money, tools, labor and stage accessibility which teachers are very cognizant of. It can be difficult to focus on creativity and practicality at the same time. When designing, *The Architect* can break the design process down to two stages. In the creative stage of the design process, there are no bad ideas and every concept has merit. Once the design team has creatively pushed the concept as far as they can, practicality can become the focus in the second stage. *The Architect* may review the design and give the student designer realistic options on how to execute each element of the set design under financial restraints. Stray away from deleting elements from their design but try finding a compromise between the creative design and the logistical limitations your program may have.

Devised theatre and movement theatre designer Tina Bicat advises to set aside some money from the budget to have some flexibility to make alterations later in the rehearsal process. "The unalterable facts are that unexpected expenses will occur, plans will change, and the money never seems enough. The way you use your budget must allow for these changes. The safest way is to set aside a contingency sum of at least a quarter" (Bicat 87-88). This advice can be applied to any directorial method, but it may be particularly useful with *The Architect*, because more objects may need to be introduced to help assist the actors.

Blocking through Objects

Similarly, to *The Explorer*, blocking can be determined by the actor, but only through the art that the director/scenic designer has created. For example, if there is not enough movement in a scene, I may place a coffee maker down stage right and give the actor a coffee cup. The actor now can go make coffee down stage right, adding movement and purpose. The scene is not pre-blocked, so the actor has the freedom to make the cup of coffee at any time and can match emotion and an objective from the scene to that action. Props should be introduced early in the rehearsal process, but more can be continually added throughout to assist the actors.

Viola Spolin believes it is the responsibility of the actor to make the props and setting have life. Non-directional blocking requires the actor to improvise with props creating a spontaneity and purpose in movement. “Learning to use sets, costumes, lights, etc. with no more time for planning than the actors have for structuring their scenes is simply a way of stirring up action in another area of the theatre – another road to the intuitive” (Spolin 32). Several of Spolin’s exercises support blocking with objects, with *Where with Set Pieces* being the smoothest to implement on the high school level.

Viola Spolin’s *Where with Set Pieces* Exercise

- Students are given a list of set pieces and props. Players perform an improvised scene based upon the items they are given.
- The point of concentration is to let the objects create the scene.
- Evaluate how they determined the scenario around the objects. How did they use the objects to tell the story?

- If students imposed a scene upon the audience instead of letting the objects determine the scenes, then they need continual work on letting the where determine the scene (Spolin 141)

Actors and Costumes

The importance of costume choices is magnified under this method. That does not mean the costumes have to be elaborate, but every aspect must have a purpose behind it. The actor is not getting a lot of character direction, so *The Architect* uses costumes to help support students. In her process, Tina Bicât brings a variety of different costumes and props for the actors to explore possibilities with. She gives them the opportunity to improvise with the various costumes, to see what ideas come from that process, that she may not have thought about had she just started her design on paper. “The designer will see ideas outside the combinations of colour and shape that have been tried and tested and may find new inspiration in the wild improbability of the sights she sees. She will also see the way the actors wear the odd costumes, and how a certain cut or colour of cloth or pair of spectacles lends an air and a posture to a particular performer” (Tina Bicât 23). Student actors can struggle with developing a posture and walk for their character that is different from their own. Costumes can aid in this, particularly when they are introduced early.

Exploring Straight Plays through Music

Many of Adolphe Appia’s scene designs were for Richard Wagner’s operas, as they both had profound respect for the artistic powers of music. Appia stated that “the art of staging can only be art if it derives to music” (Rogers 468). Continuing to look at the high school and community theatre through Appia’s prism, music can be underutilized in straight plays. Whether

to enhance a scene or transition between scenes, in some cases, music and sound is not used as prevalently in high schools as it is in college and professional theatre. My guess is that there is a fear that newer actors cannot project over music. That is a legitimate concern, but one that can be minimized in *The Architect* approach. Student actors will be working with music much earlier in the rehearsal process, allowing them to have more time to harmonize with the music. Students can interpret music faster than they can interpret a script, so using music during the rehearsal processes can aid them in their process of understanding the text.

Reflection

The Architect method was used to direct *Spice* by David Susman. When going over the plays with my student production team, a student came up with the concept that this could be Barbie and Ken trying to spice up their relationship. I felt that if I introduced costumes and props early, the more experienced student actors would be able to find the movement in the piece from there.

For the first rehearsal, I had a wig, a coffee table I had painted pink, and two toddler-sized chairs. The actors worked with the furniture that was miniature sized and plastic, so they looked like giant-sized Barbie and Ken. I had two strong senior actors, so over-directing them would have been a detriment to them. The student designer and I shared our artistic vision for the piece with them and we worked on establishing a rigid posture and hands so they could move as if they were plastic, and they picked it up quickly. After the first rehearsal, I mainly just observed them and brought in any props or items they needed. They worked together on all the blocking and characterization, with minimal intervention by me.

By the end of the first week, I had all the props and costume pieces in place, and they were rehearsing in full dress rehearsal mode. You could see a change in the actors'

comfortability moving like Ken and Barbie once they were wearing their costumes. Bringing in the costumes and set pieces early and giving the actors extra time to work in this Barbie world, seemed more beneficial to them than if I had used a lot of pre-blocking and text analysis techniques. For this method, I allowed the student actors to have the creative authority over the acting, and I was able to focus on the technical aspects. Whenever the rehearsals started getting a little stale, my scenic designer added another prop we could give to the actors to improv and explore with. I found this method made the actors more appreciative of all the costumes and props I provided. Since I wasn't giving them a lot of direction, I was able to focus more on the little details, making sure the technical aspects were well-executed. Between budget limitations and only having a week in our performance space, our sets are typically simplistic. An elaborate and expensive set is not a requirement when using *The Architect*. Even though we did not build a huge set, the props we did supply the actors were purposeful and beneficial to their process.

This was the audience's favorite piece. By giving the actors more of a free reign, they were able to make references and creative choices that resonated with a wide audience. If I pre-blocked the piece, I may not have reached the same creative choices, that our actors found through improv. Although there was a great response to the visual look of the play and the actors got lots of laughs, there were some moments that got a little messy with the blocking and pacing. Had I exerted more authority over the acting decisions, it may have been a cleaner piece; however, it may not have captured the same fun tone my actors found through improv-blocking. The first performance was better than the second performance. Night two they were a little off, but it was still a hit with the audience. The actors took complete ownership for night two being a little sloppy. Giving the student actors a lot of creative freedom may have led to them being more accountable.

Audience Data

Spice

Believability 4.4

Movement 4.7

Creative Choices 4.7

Clarity 4.6

Overall 18.4

This was by far the highest score, and it was clear from the first couple rehearsals the piece would be an audience-pleaser. The high creative choice score can largely be attributed to those actors. Had I minimized those actors' creative freedom; the score may have suffered. I was able to push creatively on design elements while my actors pushed themselves, creating a strong piece. This high movement score may not have a lot of relevancy on how effective this method is at creating strong stage movement. I happened to have cast two actors who move great on stage, thus leading to a high score, but I could have easily picked actors who were uncomfortable moving on stage which may have led to a low score.

Best Practices/Optimal Scenario

The best practice for any new director is coming from a place of strength, setting up the actors for success, and minimizing potential pitfalls. *The Architect* lends itself nicely to new directors, because it allows them to design the tech side, which influenced the acting side without being questioned by actors. *The Architect* is not required to build a fancy set or spend a lot of money. The focus is devising a set, costumes and props that guide the actors to executing your own vision. Having functional set pieces and props are more important than having fancy and expensive set pieces and props. The set is less about aesthetics and more about function, as it needs to promote strong acting choices. When scenes get stale, it is often because there is no

action. Adding items like notebooks to write in or read, glasses to drink from, clothing to take on and off, chairs to sit in and platforms to stand on can bring purpose and action to a scene. Getting costumes and props to actors as quickly as possible, and quickly getting set pieces together, can make a huge difference in helping newer actors. Providing physical items early in the process allows student actors to find their own voice in the space that the director has provided for them.

Optimal Scenario: Experienced cast of any size with a play where the setting and costumes play a pivotal role in the story telling, such as *The Imaginary Invalid* by Moliere, *Far Away* by Caryl Churchill, and *Red* by John Logan.

CHAPTER 6: *THE DELEGATOR*

This method focuses on the high school teacher delegating and shifting power to a student director or a student production team. This directing style is about striking the balance between having control as a teacher and creative director while giving students opportunities to make the creative decisions. *The Delegator* should delegate roles as they see fit for their program. In some programs or shows, the addition of a student director is not appropriate. This approach is less about defining positions to delegate to and focuses more on the transference of responsibility to students in a creative medium. This could be applicable to scenarios in community theatre, when an assistant director or intern is being groomed to direct future productions.

Research

The Delegator's success is not predicated on the end production. The goal of *The Delegator* is to empower student creators and form an environment where the students have control over the art. Due to an objective that is student growth-based, the principles that make up *The Delegator* are mainly from pedagogy. If we re-examine *The Authoritarian* through a pedagogical lens, the learning process is happening through teacher-centered instruction, as the teacher/director is the formal authority. Just as there has been a movement in the theatre community to break away from the Theatre-Triangle towards a more holistic expression of creative decisions, there is a push in the school system to use less teacher-centered instruction and more student-centered instruction. *The Delegator* operates under the principal that student-centered instruction, promoting students to take ownership of their own learning, leads to greater student growth, which is weighted more than the success of a singular production.

The distribution of authority to students should be scaffolded, where the process starts with a lot of teacher involvement and slowly transitions to the teacher becoming an overseer as the student is now making the decisions. In her presentation *The Process of Differentiating Instruction: I do, We do, You do*, P.H.D. Corinne Eisenhart breaks down the concept of scaffolding into four steps. Eisenhart practices her approach as reading coach. The reading coach has a similar goal as *The Delegator*, where they need to help a student who is bound to have difficulty while aiming towards them being able to overcome the obstacle independently. Eisenhart breaks scaffolding into four steps in her gradual responsibility model (Figure 4).

Scaffolding Learning

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

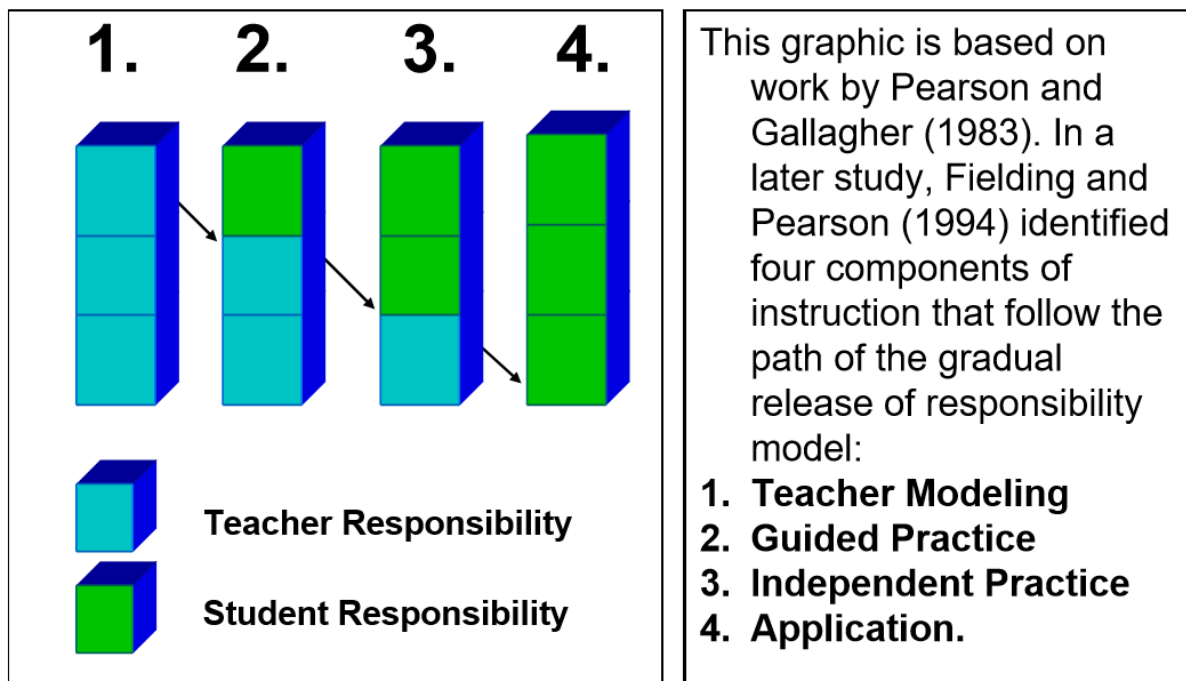


Figure 4: Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. Corrine Eisenhart-2005

A student stage manager receives a lot of delegated responsibility. A teacher can step in if need be to help a director with the rehearsal process, but a stage manager typically works

independently running the show backstage. Eisenhart's model will serve as the framework for how one could teach a new stage manager how to call a show, signaling the lights, sound and movement of set pieces.

- **Teacher Modeling:** I develop the call sheet for one of the ten-minute plays. I show the Stage Manager all the technical equipment like the light and sound board. I demonstrate my personal method of calling a show, while the Stage Manager takes notes.
- **Guided Practice:** We go through a second ten-minute play together developing a call sheet. I give the Stage Manager verbal directions, but the student physically sets up the boards. My Stage Manager goes over my method of the show. I prepare the student for when a cue is coming up, but the Stage Manager calls the show.
- **Independent Practice:** My Stage Manager develops the call sheet for the third ten-minute play. I operate the boards while the student calls the show.
- **Application:** Student Stage Manager develops the final two call sheets. The Stage Manager teaches another student how to operate the boards. I encourage the Stage Manager to create a personal work style and method for calling a show that works best for the student and her team. The Stage Manager calls the show.

For a full-scale production this process would work equally well with practicing each step with different scenes rather than separate productions. Eisenhart's model could be used in any instance where the goal is getting students to work independently.

Teacher Regie Routman details her own process of scaffolding, where teachers must "build on the student's strengths" (Routman 93). The student director should have some quality that would make them a good fit to direct. If a student is reliable, dedicated, organized and has a

connection to the piece, then *The Delegator* can build the theatre conventions and directorial process off their intangibles. The student director may struggle in conceptualizing their ideas, so they are applicable to a production. Routman's work stems from her time teaching elementary students with language deficiencies. Her strategy is to let students learn for themselves while supporting them is to "extend what the child is attempting to do" (Routman 93). This concept transitions nicely to high school theatre, because the student director most likely will have strong ideas that need to be extended and supported.

There is some risk in promoting students to leadership positions. When examining professional theatre, any issues that arise are often dealt with by Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the professional union for actors and stage managers. AEA requires casts to hold a vote for who will be deputy. The deputy is the representative of the cast who will look to solve issues in conjunction with the stage manager as well as serving as a direct line from the cast to the union. The role of a cast deputy should be employed by *The Delegator*, but this role could be formed regardless of the directing ideology being used. The responsibility of keeping a safe environment is now shared between the teacher and the cast. The implementation of a deputy allows issues to be resolved as a cast while also creating open communication between the teacher and the cast members.

Implementation Tools

Ultimately, the implementation tools used by *The Delegator* are not universal. The tools that work best at my school may not transfer to others. The process of transferring authority to students will differ based on those students. An implementation tool being successful with one production, does not mean it will be equally successful in the next production. These are the tools I used at a Title One school, that I am constantly adjusting.

Production Team

I typically work with a student production team. I instill experimental learning practices when working with a production team. Experimental learning “is a method of teaching and learning that is controlled by the student for the purpose of achieving personal growth and development” (Crumly et al 144). The student production team assists in the design and execution process of the show. In my case, the production team naturally forms from students that are interested in theatre but are not comfortable being on stage. We work collaboratively, positively, and with the common goal of mounting creative productions. “Experiential learning focuses on addressing students’ personal confidence levels, feelings of fulfillment, and sense of purpose, while implicitly enabling learning methods to be matched to each student’s preferred learning style and other natural preferences” (Crumly et al 144). I find their strengths as individuals, and they each are given a specific task they oversee, while learning the other aspects of production. They help me with the details that fall through the cracks, like creating a functioning backstage, transitioning between the plays, marketing, programs, ushering etc. I also had a student-director, who was hand-picked, trained, and operated separately from the production team, as she focused on one specific ten-minute play. There is not a specific format to follow when forming a production team, as the goal is student growth and ownership, so each production may require a different specialized set up for that group.

Theatre Etiquette and Contracts

When empowering students, it is important to establish certain rules, procedures and guidelines to follow. The establishment of etiquette helps preserve the theatre as a safe space, as you delegate authority to students. Theatre teacher Kerri Hishon believes that “it’s important for students to contribute to creating rules, because that way they can take ownership of the drama

classroom” (Hishon). My student director sat down with her cast, and they collectively came up with rules, which she then made them all sign as a contract and posted it in my classroom. It included items such as memorizing lines, being on time, cleaning up at the end of rehearsals, etc. The theatre etiquette rules can be customized to fit your casts’ individual needs. These rules were still broken occasionally, but the students were able to self-govern and keep each other accountable, without me having to interfere.

Scheduling

Student directors can struggle with time management. They may have difficulty determining how long to spend on blocking or when to start full runs of the show. When implementing this method for the first time, I assigned the student director the responsibility determining what would get done each day. It was clear a few days into the process that an implementation tool needed to be developed if the show was to be completed in time. A specified rehearsal schedule was formed and given to the student director to follow. In practice, *The Delegator* should avoid scheduling for the student director, instead provide them with an example that they can use as a model for their own.

Creating a rehearsal schedule is not a science. Typically, the easiest method is to choose your show dates, establish your tech week, and work backward from there. Kerri Hishon advises that” your first few weeks of rehearsal will be devoted to an initial read-through, cast bonding exercises, establishing blocking, developing characters and relationships... Allot time in your schedule to visit every scene at least twice: once to approach the scene and create the initial blocking and then a second time to review, adjust, and add nuances and depth” (Hishon). Because I was working on five ten-minute plays and not one full production, I had a little more flexibility than usual. I delegated the responsibility out to each cast to choose what days they

wanted to rehearse. This put more responsibility on to the students while keeping them accountable.

Cast Deputy

There needs to be careful consideration on how to establish a cast deputy. Actors' Equity Association (AEA) has all cast members vote unaffected by the director. On the high school level, it is important the right student is in this position and that they have a clear understanding of their purpose. The process on how this position is chosen should be left up to *The Delegator*. Once a deputy is implemented to one show, it becomes easier to maintain as a theatre program policy. I took the AEA deputy policy (Appendix) and adopted it for the purposes of high school implementation. It should be edited to fit the needs of your productions.

Cast Deputy Responsibilities

- The deputy is a direct link to the teacher.
- The deputy can speak on behalf of any cast member who has an issue.
- The deputy can gain extensive knowledge about how to work to deal with issues that arise in a production. This experience will benefit a student who is looking to direct or stage manage in the future.
- The deputy should form an amiable working relationship with the student stage manager to try to solve problems as they arise.
- The deputy will be proactive in solving issues for the cast.
- The job of the deputy is an important one from which the entire production can benefit.

- The deputy should never have any confrontations with the student director. Following a consult with the teacher, the deputy finds solutions to the arising issues. (Actors Equity Association)

A cast deputy was not something I was familiar with on the high school or amateur theatre level, so I established it for *The Delegator* piece. Contrary to AEA, I appointed a deputy based on who I thought was levelheaded and would not hesitate to bring issues to me. Now that I have established the role, I will have the cast choose the deputy in future productions. The deputy came to me concerned about the show getting finished on time with the student director running it. I met one-on-one with the director so I could help support her. She was struggling with blocking the show, so I gave her some techniques, and she was able to employ them without my help. Because we performed five ten-minute plays in one night, I had the deputy backstage for all performances. The deputy served as a link between the production team, me, and the actors. In many ways, she acted as a hybrid between an actress and assistant stage manager, as she helped with the transitions between shows, was a leader in the dressing rooms, and kept the cast level-headed. I will establish a cast deputy for every show I do in high school or community theatre, but I will continue to tweak the responsibilities of the role. This position should be adapted to what best serves the needs of the theatre program.

Reflection

The Story by Tyler Leeps

I was able to strike a good balance in delegating power to students, and monitoring and stepping in if they asked for help. Having written this piece, it worked well instituting a student-director so my work could be reinterpreted by a student. I chose my student director, and she chose the piece and cast. That process went very smoothly, so I gave her free reign when it came

to organizing rehearsals. I quickly realized in the first rehearsal, that I had to frontload more before I could allow them to start the rehearsal process. I needed to define the roles and expectations of the director, stage manager and actor. Without the educator being the director of the show, it seemed like the actors needed a greater understanding of what in the creative process an actor is and is not responsible for.

I have often had student directors in the past who I thought would do a good job but ended up not working out, so I had to shoulder the directing load. After testing out *The Delegator* theory, I can, in retrospect, take on a lot of the blame for those student directors' failures. It helps to have a template about what needs to be done and have them make the creative decisions in the scenarios you have set up for them. The delegating method should be crafted for your specific program and for your specific students that year. The student director felt she could operate without a costumer, so we did not use one. She went over the looks she had in mind for the production, and the students were responsible for bringing in what they had, as the costumes for this piece were modern, casual pieces.

The final production of this piece was relatively clean. There were very few objective production issues, and I was proud of the actors and production team. The acting was not great, but the actors did their roles to the best of their abilities and talent. In retrospect, my student director had the tools to direct, but she was not able to help the actors in a way that improved them as actors. Theatre teachers are part director, part acting coach and by delegating the responsibilities, I was not able to support the students who were new to acting as much as I normally could. I wish I had instituted a day a week, where I worked with the actors on developing their skills separately from the show. They missed out on learning some techniques because their director was a fellow student. This may not be necessary for schools with more

veteran talent, but it would allow the teacher to stay connected with the actors while still allowing it to be a student directed piece.

Audience Data

The Story

Believability 4.1

Movement 3.7

Creative Choices 3.8

Clarity 3.8

Overall 15.4

I am not sure how much I can take away from this data about the method. Much of my control was divided among students, and if I had delegated differently these scores may have fluctuated. The risk in the delegation method is a lot of the final product gets determined by how you divide up the responsibilities, and to whom you give the responsibilities. If I were to use those people in those roles a second time, these scores would most likely improve. The delegating method is less about dividing up the responsibilities of one person than it is about promoting others to handle those responsibilities. I can't take a lot of ownership of the successes or failures my students had in trying to complete this task, but I can take ownership over the amount of growth my student director and production team had by giving them this task.

Best Practice/Optimal Scenario

- 1) Roles should be well-defined and purposeful.

There is no benefit of having an assistant director, a dramaturg or two assistant stage managers if there is not work for them to do. Make sure the students know what tasks they are responsible for.

- 2) Have an apprentice system in place.

Students should deliver half the responsibilities on a play before they have the full measure of responsibilities. For instance: help with costumes before being costumer, call the cues for a ten-minute play before stage managing a main stage. This allows seniors to demonstrate leadership skills while underclassmen are learning the ropes.

3) Customize roles to your program.

Many high school and community theatre directors try to set up their production teams like the pros, which often leads to some students having too much responsibility and other students accomplishing nothing. My first couple of years teaching, I struggled with delegating stage manager and tech responsibilities, as those students just always seemed not as invested or as attentive as the cast. I found a lot of success in having my student director transitioning to the role of stage manager once full runs started and having a member of the cast being the assistant stage manager. This is a departure from professional theatre, as the director and the stage manager traditionally have separate and distinct roles, but it is what worked for my program.

4) It takes time.

If your program has never had a student director before, it will be a struggle as you are introducing a new role to your creative process... likewise if you are adding positions like a student dramaturg, a student technical director, a student costumer or a student publicist. Set up a culture of delegation where the previous position can teach the incoming position. It's a tedious process, but well worth it.

5) Resist temptations to take over.

Once you have delegated that responsibility, you cannot take that power back regardless of how bad that student is doing. Give the student examples, or help by scaffolding their

job, by giving them their responsibilities slowly over time. The main reason to delegate creative responsibility is so students can grow as artists. Struggle is a part of growth.

Optimal Scenario: A customized well-conceived plan with well-defined roles can be applied to any cast with any production. For one-acts and ten-minute plays the roles can be centralized with fewer students that have higher responsibilities. Bigger plays will require more delegation to a fair number of students who can help insure nothing falls through the cracks. The goal is to support the students learning, while using them as support to create a clean production.

CONCLUSION

Much of my teaching career I was often in survival mode. In many ways, this thesis process lessened the pressures I put on myself as a teacher, because I enjoyed an experimental chance to operate as an artist. Overall, I felt that this experience allowed me to grow as a director. When I first started directing, I simply directed how I liked to be directed as an actor. Going through this process has really expanded my toolbox as a director. Using all these styles with high schoolers has really broadened my opinion of how well students can adapt to professional methodologies when they are implemented properly.

I have been to countless teacher workshops, where theatre professionals have introduced us to various theories, and the response by most teachers is “that would never work with my students”. This implementation process has demonstrated that new methodologies can be introduced into the classroom. New directors in community and high school theatres can choose individual approaches or a combination of methods to help create the strongest art possible. We should continue to push artistic bounds in high schools and community theatre. As is true in teaching any subject, consistency and routine are key. As I continue to establish these approaches as daily practices in my classroom, many of the issues I encountered will be smoothed out. The shortcomings my students had; I believe will drastically improve as they continue work with these theories. Although this process was just the beginning stage of implementing professional techniques, there was a noticeable difference in the way my students conducted themselves. Once the shows were mounted, the students were able to run the

production independently from me. It was a new experience, being able to watch the show, as I knew the theories had empowered the students to create art for themselves.

The next stage of investigation should involve harmonizing these different techniques to create a custom approach designed to a specific cast and show. This process has demonstrated that these professional practices can be beneficial to high school and community theatre actors. However, the degree of success varied greatly, largely based upon whether the implementation tools supported and expanded upon previous strengths or natural talents of each group of students. The next step in my exploration would be to use implementation tools from multiple approaches that would best fit the needs and strengths of that specific cast of students. Much like a teacher determining whether the students are visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners and designing a lesson plan that caters to the way a student learns best, I believe similar tactics can be employed during a production, where a directorial approach is tailored for the needs of a specific cast.

APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES FOR STRUGGLING READERS

BEST PRACTICES FOR STRUGGLING READERS

Best Practices

Reading practices that make learning to read difficult include:

- Focusing on skills instead of comprehension;
- Drill and mastery of skills;
- Using worksheets for each skill;
- Providing students with few choices;
- Limiting reading for pleasure;
- Following teacher editions without variation;
- Encouraging reading as a contest with points; and
- Exhibiting low teacher expectations.

Reading practices that facilitate learning to read include:

- Modeling of stories;
- Providing access to high-interest materials;
- Student choice of reading materials;
- Encouraging reading for pleasure;
- Supplementing reading lessons with dialogue and discussion;
- Presenting increasingly difficult stories; and
- Providing a print-rich classroom.

(Flippo, 1998; Reutzel & Smith, 2004)

APPENDIX B: AUDIENCE FEEDBACK FORM FOR DATA COLLECTION

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK FORM FOR DATA COLLECTION

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following feedback form and comment section. Please rate each category 1-5 and add up your score for an overall score. Your honest opinion is extremely beneficial for the actors.

Piece 1: *Hidden Agenda* by Patti Cassidy

Believability

1 2 3 4 5

Movement

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Choices

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity

1 2 3 4 5

Overall: _____

Comments:

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following feedback form and comment section. Please rate each category 1-5 and add up your score for an overall score. Your honest opinion is extremely beneficial for the actors.

Piece 2: *The Story* by Tyler Leeps

Believability

1 2 3 4 5

Movement

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Choices

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity

1 2 3 4 5

Overall: _____

Comments:

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following feedback form and comment section. Please rate each category 1-5 and add up your score for an overall score. Your honest opinion is extremely beneficial for the actors.

Piece 3: *The Phlebotomist* by Charlie Edwin Fischer

Believability

1 2 3 4 5

Movement

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Choices

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity

1 2 3 4 5

Overall: _____

Comments:

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following feedback form and comment section. Please rate each category 1-5 and add up your score for an overall score. Your honest opinion is extremely beneficial for the actors.

Piece 4: *Spice* by David Susman

Believability

1 2 3 4 5

Movement

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Choices

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity

1 2 3 4 5

Overall: _____

Comments:

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following feedback form and comment section. Please rate each category 1-5 and add up your score for an overall score. Your honest opinion is extremely beneficial for the actors.

Piece 5: *Dog Park Afternoon* by Nancy Temple

Believability

1 2 3 4 5

Movement

1 2 3 4 5

Creative Choices

1 2 3 4 5

Clarity

1 2 3 4 5

Overall: _____

Comments:

APPENDIX C: FLORIDA THESPIAN'S STUDENT DIRECTED SCENE RUBRIC

FLORIDA THESPIAN'S STUDENT DIRECTED SCENE RUBRIC

 Poor
(00.00-08.99)

 Fair
(09.00-13.99)

 Good
(14.00-19.99)

 Excellent
(20.00-25.99)

 Superior
(26.00-30.00)

The overall rating arrived at from the point totals and verified by the District Chair or State Director is FINAL.

Florida State Thespian Society Theatre Performance Assessment

STUDENT DIRECTED SCENE

Name: _____ District: _____ Troupe: _____

Title: _____ Author: _____

*Circle a number (1-5) to identify the performer(s) level of success for each specified indicator.
Supply constructive comments below & on the back.*



WEAK



STRONG

Blocking (Staging):

1 2 3 4 5

Creativity (Problem Solving):

1 2 3 4 5

Concept (Theme):

1 2 3 4 5

Interpretation:

1 2 3 4 5

Presentation (Justification):

1 2 3 4 5

Prompt Book:

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENTS

APPENDIX D: SCAVENGER HUNT

SCAVENGER HUNT

Name:

Date:

Period:

Text Scavenger Hunt

Use clues from the text to answer questions about your character. Write which specific line helped you come to this conclusion. Write what page you found each line on.

- Character's 2 favorite possessions:
- Character's hobby:
- Describe the character's walk:
- Describe the character's posture:
- Describe the character's home situation:
- Describe the way this character talks:
- Relation Status: Why is he or she dating/seeing/engaged to/married to or single?
- Character's income/net worth:
- What prejudices or preconceived opinions may your character have?
- What 3 things would you like the audience to take away from the performance about this character?
- What line in the script best expresses who the character really is?
- How did this character change throughout the play?

APPENDIX E:UTA HAGAN’S 9 QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

UTA HAGAN'S 9 QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

Character Development (Uta Hagen's Nine Questions)

- You should include a minimum of 5 answers to all four of these general headings.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. WHO AM I?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, nickname, alias Age, date and place of birth Relatives, key relationships, enemies Likes, dislikes, favorites, hobbies Fears Skills, education, career Opinions, morality, ethics, beliefs, religion Origins Social influences Appearance/physical traits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> height, weight, measurements, hair color, hair length, hairstyle, eye color, jewelry, tattoos/marks, etc. Words, language, accent, style of speech <p>2. WHAT TIME IS IT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Century Season Year, Day, Minute, Significance of Time <p>3. WHERE AM I?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country City Neighborhood Home Room Area of room | <p>4. WHAT SURROUNDS ME?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animate and inanimate objects-complete details of environment <p>5. WHAT ARE THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past, present, future of <u>all</u> of the events <p>6. WHAT IS MY RELATIONSHIP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relation to total events, other characters, and to things <p>7. WHAT DO I WANT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character's wants and needs Character's motivations The immediate and main objective <p>8. WHAT IS IN MY WAY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles which prevent character from getting his/her wants and needs <p>9. WHAT DO I DO TO GET WHAT I WANT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The action(s): physical and verbal, also-action verbs <p>The "MOMENT BEFORE" Before beginning your scene, exactly what is your character doing, thinking, dreaming, hoping, wanting, etc.</p> |
|---|---|

APPENDIX F: FREYTAG'S PYRAMID WORKSHEET

FREYTAG'S PYRAMID WORKSHEET

The diagram illustrates Freytag's Pyramid, a model for the structure of a dramatic narrative. It features a central orange triangle with a white outline. The triangle is divided into five sections by white lines: a small top section labeled **CLIMAX**, a large middle section labeled **CONFLICT** (which is also the label for a circle at the base of the triangle), a large bottom section labeled **RESOLUTION**, and two side sections labeled **RISING ACTION** (left) and **FALLING ACTION** (right). The **EXPOSITION** section is located at the bottom left, below the **RISING ACTION** section. The **PLOT** section is located at the top right, above the **FALLING ACTION** section. The **PROTAGONIST vs. ANTAGONIST** section is located at the bottom right, below the **RESOLUTION** section. The **THEME:** section is located at the bottom right, below the **PROTAGONIST vs. ANTAGONIST** section. The **Point of View** section is located at the top left, above the **RISING ACTION** section. The **Setting:**, **Situation/Climate:**, and **Characters:** sections are located within the **EXPOSITION** section. The **TITLE:** and **AUTHOR:** sections are located within the **PLOT** section. Arrows indicate the flow of the story: two arrows point from the **RISING ACTION** section to the **CLIMAX** section, one arrow points from the **CLIMAX** section to the **FALLING ACTION** section, and one arrow points from the **FALLING ACTION** section to the **RESOLUTION** section. A large white arrow points from the **CONFLICT** section to the **RESOLUTION** section.

Point of View

RISING ACTION

CLIMAX

PLOT
TITLE:
AUTHOR:

FALLING ACTION

RESOLUTION

CONFLICT

EXPOSITION
Setting:
Situation/Climate:
Characters:

PROTAGONIST vs. ANTAGONIST

THEME:

APPENDIX G: ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION DEPUTY INSTRUCTIONS

ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION DEPUTY INSTRUCTIONS



Deputy Elections Instructions and Election Form

To the Equity Company:

When nominating and electing our company's Deputies, please remember that the Principal Deputy represents Principal Actors and Stage Managers, and the Chorus Deputy represents Chorus Dancers and Singers.

Please consider that:

- The Deputy is the link with the union
- The Deputy has the opportunity to gain extensive knowledge about the contract under which the Company is working
- The Deputy should form an amiable working relationship with the Stage Manager to try to solve problems as they arise
- The Deputy will have direct communication with the appropriate AEA Business Representative
- The Deputy can be instrumental in protecting all Actors' and Stage Managers' rights and working conditions by communicating directly with Actors' Equity about any possible infractions

Most Actors and Stage Managers who have become involved in union activity as either Councilors, committee members or Deputies, have discovered that the more we know about our rights and our contracts, the better protected we are and the greater control we have over our working conditions. The job of Deputy is an important one from which the entire company can benefit.

The Deputy should never have any confrontations with Management. After consulting with the Stage Manager, the Deputy need only communicate with the union to ensure action. The Deputy, once elected, should call the appropriate Equity office and ask for the Business Representative who administers the Contract to establish communication and learn of any concessions granted for this production. Ask to be sent a Deputy kit, if you have not yet received one from the Stage Manager, and ask that the pre-paid postage envelopes be sent to you for weekly reports and for any correspondence with Equity.

The Deputy may call collect.

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