

## Actor Production Process Guide

**Reminder:** As you complete the steps listed in this guide, record all of your work in a google document (you can make a copy of this document if that is helpful for you). On the final dress rehearsal, you will turn in your notebook for your final grade.

### Step 1: Script Analysis

- Read the script and answer the following prompts in your notebook/google doc using the following terms:

**Stasis and Intrusion/Inciting Incident-** Stasis is the status quo that has existed in the play's world up through its beginning. Intrusion is something that upsets the status quo, causing or releasing forces that compose the play's conflict and progress. When the forces no longer conflict, a new stasis is achieved and the play ends. **Example:** the stasis of Macbeth as the Thane of Glames and a brave warrior at the beginning of the play. The intrusion would be the prophecy from the Witches. If Macbeth had not heard the prophecy, would the action of the play have occurred?

- What is the stasis and intrusion/inciting incident of the play?

**Beginning Exposition-** In order to understand the story, what information do we need to know about the world of the play? This is the beginning exposition. **Example:** the beginning exposition of *Macbeth* could include: We are in Scotland and Duncan is the king. Duncan has two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain. Scotland is at war and Macbeth is a brave soldier. Banquo is Macbeth's friend and also a brave soldier. Etc.

- What is the beginning exposition of the play?

**Conflict-** A character's want is opposed by some hindrance, by some obstacle. To understand a line of dialogue, you must understand what the speaker wants and how the speaker intends the words spoken to overcome the obstacle. Dramatic conflict– want versus obstacle– can be four types. Some or all appear in every play. **Example:** From the protagonist's point of view, the types of dramatic conflict are:

1. *Me against myself:* Macbeth's inner conflict about betraying Duncan's trust and murdering him.
2. *Me against other individuals:* Macbeth vs. Macduff (a literal fight to the death).
3. *Me against society:* Macbeth becomes a cruel king and his former allies align against him.
4. *Me against fate, or the universe, or natural forces, or God or the gods:* Macbeth vs. the prophecy. Is he destined to be what the Witches promise, or is that his own doing?

- What types of conflict are found in this play? Cite specific examples from the text.

**Crisis-** The crisis is the event that leads the characters into the climax of the play. **Example:** in *Macbeth*, this could be the murder of Macduff's family, because it is the final straw that motivates Macduff to personally murder Macbeth. It could also be the visual of Birnam wood

coming to Dunsinane, because it is Macbeth’s first indication that the conditions of his downfall are beginning to be met.

- What is the crisis in this play? Why?

**Climax-** The emotional height of the play. **Example:** The climax in *Macbeth* is Macbeth and Macduff’s fight, and the realization that Macduff was born from a caesarian section so he is technically “not of woman born”.

- What is the climax of this play? Why?

**Resolution-** What is the new stasis at the end of the play? **Example:** At the end of *Macbeth*, Malcolm becomes king, and it is indicated that he will be a good ruler.

- What is the new stasis/resolution of the play?

**Forwards-** Dramatic tension requires that the audience desires to find out what is coming up. The greater the desire, the greater the audience’s involvement. Playwrights include forwards, also known as foreshadowing, to increase that anticipation. This is very heavy-handed in *Macbeth* with the prophecy. Think of it as hints of what is yet to come.

- Give three examples of forwards the playwright uses to keep the audience engaged in what is yet to come.

**Theme-** A theme is an abstract concept made concrete by a play’s action. Theme is not meaning; it is a topic of the play. Theme is a result and emerges from the script, so examine a play for theme after you are already familiar with the play’s foundation elements. **Example:** Some themes in *Macbeth* are ambition, fate, guilt, and power.

- What are some themes in this play? Why?

**Step 2: Character Analysis**

- After our in-class readthrough of the play, read the play with specific attention to the arc of your character.
- Complete the chart below using complete sentences. This is the beginning of your character analysis process. If your character is in the ensemble or is unnamed, you get to make it up (as long as it fits within the world of the play).

Given Circumstances (Who am I?)	
Objective (What do I want?)	
Super-objective (Why do I want it?)	
Tactics (What do I do to get what I want?)	
Obstacles (What’s in my way?)	
Relationships (Who do I know?)	
3-word description	

**Step 3:** Learn about blocking

- Read the following article: [Theatre Blocking 101](#)
- In your notebook/google document, define the following terms:
  - **Upstaging**
  - **Focal Point**
  - **Stage Picture**
  - **Levels**
  - **Cheating out**
- Answer the following questions in your notebook/google document:
  - Is upstaging good or bad? Why?
  - How can blocking be used to demonstrate character relationships?
  - What makes a strong stage picture?

**Activity-** Sit, Stand, Lean (led by the Director and Assistant Director)

- In this game three actors take the stage. At all times one actor must be standing, one leaning, and one sitting. Give the actors a scenario. They must act out the scenario. If one actor changes position, the other two must adjust as well. Encourage the actors to make it look natural. (This game forces you to pay attention to what is happening on stage as well as your body positions on stage- oh, and you have to act!) It may take a few tries to master the game.

**Step 4:** Text rehearsals

- Read through the scene/s for the day out loud with your scene partner/s, the director, the stage manager, and the dramaturge.
- This is the time to ask questions, make observations, and take notes about your character. If there is a word or concept you are unfamiliar with, let the dramaturg know and they will look it up for you. If you're confused about your relationship with another character, talk to your scene partner and the director, they may have ideas.
- The director will guide you through these rehearsals. This is the building block of the rest of your rehearsal process.
- Use this time to familiarize yourself with your lines so you can get off book quickly and focus on your characterization.

**Step 5:** Blocking rehearsals

- Rehearsals begin with a vocal and physical warm-up led by the director or assistant director.
- Review the blocking notation below. Your script should not be clean. Write down your blocking in pencil in your script as the director gives it to you. Once your blocking has been given to you, it is your responsibility to remember it and execute it consistently.

- Remember what you learned at **Step 2**, cheat out! Don't upstage yourself! Be conscious of the stage picture at all times.

ent = enter		↯ = speak	
ex = exit		⌞ = stand	
fr = from		⊥ = stop	
G→ = give		⌋ = take	
⌋ = kneel		2 = to	
// = lean		∞ = turn	
⌘ = lie down		w/ = with	
<hr/>			
⌌ = bed	↗ = door	st = step	⊞ = window
h = chair	⌒ = sofa	⌒ = table	

### Step 6: Memorization

- As a general rule, you should have each scene memorized by the second time you rehearse it. Memorizing your lines should not be an afterthought. If you are not memorized, it is a huge disrespect to your scene partner and the director. The rehearsal process hinges on your preparation!
- Memorization Strategies:
- Read this article- [17 Ways to Memorize Your Lines](#), below are some of my favorite strategies:
  - Record your scene partner's lines on your phone leaving space for you to say your lines.
  - Study your lines before you go to bed.
  - Set consistent scene/page goals and hold yourself accountable.
  - Use cue lines- memorize the last word or phrase that inspires your next line. This is the most effective in the long term because you're connecting your line to *why* you're saying that line.
  - Make flash cards or a quizlet with your cue line on one side and your line on the other and put them in chronological order to quiz yourself.
- In your notebook/google document, write a short paragraph about which memorization strategies you are employing as a part of your actor's process. Are they effective?

### Step 7: Character Analysis Part 2

- Now that you are more familiar with the script and your character, answer the following nine questions about your character. Some of them are extensions of your first part of character analysis, feel free to repeat your initial responses and expand upon them. These questions are known as the "Uta Hagen 9" after theatre practitioner, Uta Hagen.

1. **Who Am I?**- Who is your character? Identify all the details: name/age, physical traits, relatives, education, personal opinions, likes, dislikes, hobbies, fears, ethics, and beliefs.
2. **What time is it?**- The year, the season, the day, the minute. What is the significance of time?
3. **Where am I?**- Identify the country, the city/town, the neighborhood, the building, the room, the specific area of the room. Build the world.
4. **What surrounds me?**- What is happening in the environment around you? Weather, landscape, people, animate/inanimate objects.
5. **What are the given circumstances?**- Identify events in the past, present, and future. What has happened, what is happening, what is going to happen?
6. **What are my relationships?**- This is more than your relationships to other people. Think about your relationship to objects, characters, and events.
7. **What do I want?**- What do you want immediately? What does the character want overall?
8. **What is in my way?**- What are the obstacles to getting what you want?
9. **What do I do to get what I want?**- What actions do you take (both physically and verbally)? What are your tactics?
  - Reflect on using these nine questions as a part of your character development in your notebook/google document. Which is the most important question? What question was the easiest to answer? Which was the hardest? Why? How can answering these questions impact your acting?

#### **Step 8:** Cleaning rehearsals

- At this point, your lines should be memorized and you should be focused on your characterization.
- Use this time to develop your physicality and vocalization to embody your character. How do they stand, how do they walk, how do they speak?
- Listen to your director and do your best to apply their notes, even if you disagree at first \*unless their note makes you uncomfortable, in which case, come find the teacher.
- When you receive a note, all you have to say is “thank you”. Don’t make excuses or explain yourself. The director’s job is to make you look good onstage. Trust them and find them privately after rehearsal if you have a question or need further clarification about a note.
- **It is not appropriate to give other actors notes, even if they ask you.** If you are having an issue with your scene partner, go to the director or stage manager. Do not correct other actors on blocking or feed them lines.

#### **Step 9:** Tech Rehearsals

Etiquette Notes-

- Respect your technicians. If you have an issue with a costume or prop, approach the conversation with respect. Remember that everyone’s job is to help the production look its best.
  - Positive example of Actor to Costumer communication: “Hey, I think the button on my shirt is coming off, could I please give it to you at the end of rehearsal today to fix?”
  - Negative example of Actor to Costumer communication: “Hey, so I really don’t think my character would wear blue in this scene. Can you find something else?”
- Be patient with lighting and sound. If they call “hold” while you are onstage to fix a lighting or sound cue, stay where you are and don’t talk. They may need to adjust levels or add a spotlight on you, so moving will interfere with their job.
- Listen to your Stage Managers backstage. Do not use your phone or chat with friends in the wings. If a Stage Manager asks you to be quiet, listen to them.
- Do not touch props or costumes that are not yours, and do not touch props that are yours until immediately before you go onstage to use them. It is your responsibility to check that your props and costumes are where they need to be at the beginning of the show.

### **Step 10: Perform!**

A note on stage fright- It is completely normal to feel anxious before you go onstage! Here are some strategies to reduce stage fright:

1. Visualize yourself how you want to be onstage before you go to sleep. Play through your whole character’s track in your head.
2. Power poses and affirmations- Before you go onstage, use the 4-7-8 breathing technique and affirm for yourself that you are prepared and awesome!!
3. Remember that because of the lighting, you will not be able to see the audience while you are onstage. Immerse yourself in the world of the play and trust that the work you put in will carry you through the performance. Many performers account that they hardly even remember what happens when they’re onstage because they’re so “in it”.
4. Start early– from the beginning of the rehearsal process, get exposure performing for others. Run lines with a family member or friend to gain experience performing for new people.
5. Read this article for more ideas: [Habits to solve stage fright](#).

Write a short paragraph in your notebook/google document about your experience with stage fright in this production. Did you use any of these strategies? Were they effective?

Turn in your notebook/google document with your work from the semester. It should include your script analysis work, your responses to questions on the guide, your character analysis, and your self-reflection.

### **Step 11: Strike/Clean-Up**

Actors are responsible for helping technicians clean up or “strike” the show when it is complete. Be an active participant in this process as a sign of respect to the technicians.