

Director 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 to write in if that is helpful for you). On the final dress rehearsal, you will turn in your notebook for your final grade.

Step 0: Notes about the role of the Director-

You wear many hats-

- **Visionary:** The director's vision is the unifying factor that ties all production elements together.
- **Collaborator:** Working with a diverse team including actors, designers, and technicians.
- **Problem Solver:** Directors often face challenges and must find creative solutions.
- **Storyteller:** Ultimately, a director tells a story to the audience with their choices.

Write a short paragraph in your notebook/google document answering the following prompt:

- What are my strengths as a leader and what can I work on throughout this process?

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: The Director's Vision

- A director's vision refers to the director's unique perspective and creative interpretation of a production. The director's artistic vision shapes the production's story, character development, and overall aesthetic.

Questions to Ask Yourself when creating your vision presentation (you do not need to answer all of these questions, but use as many as stick out to you to describe your ideas for the production. Organize them in a google slideshow):

1. What is the subject of this play?
 - a. Describe the play in one paragraph, five sentences, one sentence.

2. What is the genre of the play?
 - a. Must the piece be staged in this specific theatre genre? Why or why not?
3. Where does the play take place?
 - a. Can the location be changed? Why or why not?
4. When is the play set? Is there a specific period?
 - a. Can you change the time period? Why or why not?
5. Who is the audience for your play? How will your audience affect your vision?
6. What is the one word, line of dialogue, image, or action that leaps out at me?
7. What is the dominant theme for this play?
 - a. Why is this theme important?
 - b. What visual comes to mind when I think of this theme?
8. What is the dominant metaphor for this play?
9. What piece of art represents this play?
10. What type of architecture represents this play?
11. What type of music represents this play?
12. What song represents the main character?
13. What is the primary shape for each main character?
 - a. How do these shapes illuminate the main theme?
14. What is the primary colour for each main character?
 - a. How do these colours coordinate or clash with the main theme?
15. Describe this play using the five senses. What is the primary sight, sound, texture, taste and smell?
16. What emotion describes this play the best?
 - a. Does the primary emotion change from the beginning to the end of the play?
17. Is this play heavy or light?
18. Is this play fast or slow?
19. Is this play tense or free?
20. Is this play iconic? Will an audience have an expectation when they come see the play?
21. What do you want the audience to experience while watching the play?
22. What do you want the audience to take away with them after seeing this play?

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.

Here are some additional guidelines while creating blocking:

Relation to the audience–

Full Front - Body/Feet facing the audience, parallel to the front of stage.

Full Back - Body/Feet facing face back of stage.

Profile - Body/Feet facing the left or right, perpendicular to front of stage. This is actually the weakest of all positions.

$\frac{3}{4}$ turned - Body/Feet Angled away from audience – between profile and full back.

$\frac{1}{4}$ turned - Body/Feet Angled towards audience – between Profile and full front. When in doubt, always stand at the $\frac{1}{4}$. . $\frac{1}{4}$ **best allows you to relate to other actors and audience at the same time.**

Use the other positions above to accent a purpose/message.

Vertical Levels - Choosing a variety of positions helps keep the stage pictures interesting. Look for ways Standing, Leaning, Sitting, Kneeling, Sitting on floor, and Lying on floor change the way characters relate to each other.

Focus - Be aware of the most important thing happening on stage (THE PRIMARY FOCUS) and then give all focus to that person or thing. This most often is the person talking. When in doubt throw all focus to that person or thing. If you are talking about a person or thing, you are creating a SECONDARY FOCUS. It is your job to bring focus to that person or thing. You may also create scene with a SHARED FOCUS (two people or items coming together), DUAL FOCUS (Two separate items or characters split focus equally.)

Moving Onstage - All stage movements are a series of crosses and counter crosses. The ultimate goal is to achieve a visual balance (or to be out of balance on purpose- symmetrical versus asymmetrical). If an actor crosses the stage, the other actor counter-crosses to balance the picture. Want to cross stage without upstaging yourself? Take a large step upstage and cross slightly down. Using “S” and “C” patterns can create some interesting results.

These are guidelines not hard fast rules. Breaking the rules can provide visual stress and discomfort to the audience. Sometimes the Director may want that!

Great actors and directors use visual stress and release the way a musician will use Dissonance (basically two or more notes creating clash of sound) for climatic effect before harmonious resolution. Think of your favorite action movie. The fight scenes are intense with fast moving pictures. But eventually, there is always a calm or release.

Many comedy sequences resemble a roller coaster with ups, downs, loops, twists and turns before finally returning to the station.

Talking Heads– There is nothing more boring than watching two actors talk for three minutes.

“TALKING HEADS” when actors do a scene and incorporate none of the above techniques. Making physical choice are always stronger than dialogue. People (and audiences) register movement more than sounds. That being said, if you have something important to say, stop and say it. FRAME your moments.

Step 4: Text rehearsals

- Before the rehearsal, read through the scene on your own and prepare “big ideas” or “take-aways” for the actors to focus on.
- Lead a read through the scene/s for the day.
- This is the time to ask questions, make observations, and take notes. If there is a word or concept you are unfamiliar with, let the dramaturg know and they will look it up for you. Pay close attention and be prepared to answer actor questions. It can often be a useful strategy to respond to actor questions with another question to get them thinking.
 - Positive Example:
Actor- “I just don’t understand why I’m suddenly so mad at him. Why does she go from 0 to 100 so quickly?”
Helpful Director: “Well, how do you think your physical circumstances impact your short fuse? Are you starving? Are you freezing? What external factors could be at play?”
- Find times to reference the key themes of your vision when relevant.
- Use this time to brainstorm blocking. You can even close your eyes while the actors read through and use your imagination to see how the scene could physically play out.

Step 5: Blocking rehearsals

- Rehearsals begin with a vocal and physical warm-up. The director or assistant director can lead it.
- Review the blocking notation below. Your script should not be clean. You should prepare blocking prior to the rehearsal rather than coming up with it on the spot, even if you end up changing it later.
- Use what you learned in **Step 3** to build strong stage pictures. How are you using the space to define character relationships? Is there variety? Are all of the actors visible? Ask yourself these questions while planning.

- Hold actors accountable to write down their blocking.

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

Step 6: Communicating with technicians

- Throughout the rehearsal process, you will communicate with your designers and technicians.
- Check in with them consistently to make sure they are all on the same page and building a cohesive world. Listen to their ideas, but don't be afraid to redirect them.
- **Costume Parade**- This is the time to check in with your costumers and see all of the costumes on the actors onstage. Take detailed notes
- **Director's Note**- edit what you wrote for your Director's Vision into a short paragraph or blurb for the program. Share it with the Marketing department when you are finished. [Read this article](#) for advice in crafting your Director's note.

Step 7: Cleaning rehearsals & giving actors notes

- At this point, lines should be memorized and they should be focused on characterization.
- Use this time to help actors develop their physicality and vocalization to embody their characters. How do they stand, how do they walk, how do they speak?

Phrasing Guide: Steer away from phrases like "I want you to do this" or "Do this". Do your best to phrase notes as questions or prompts rather than demands.

- "Can we try _____?"
- "What if _____?"
- For Projection- "Can we add more vocal energy/volume?"
- For more energy- "Can we see more physical energy & raise the stakes of this moment?"
- For characterization- "Right now, this moment is reading as _____. What would happen if we thought about _____?"

- When you give a note, all the actors have to say is “thank you” without excuses or over-explaining. If an actor does this, come tell your teacher. Be ready to explain your notes if an actor asks clarifying questions after rehearsal.

Step 9: Tech Rehearsals

Etiquette Notes-

- Respect your technicians. If something isn’t working, approach the conversation with respect. Remember that everyone’s job is to help the production look its best.
 - Positive example of Director to Costumer communication: “Hey, I know we talked about this dress for Mina, but onstage it looks a little too modern. Do we have anything we can replace it with? What support do you need from me to make that happen?”
 - Negative example of Director to Costumer communication: “Hey, Mina’s dress looks really bad onstage. You need to find something else.”
- Be patient and try your best to stay calm. Your energy influences the energy of the cast and crew. Problem solve when needed, and stay positive!

Step 10: Sit back and relax!

- Once the curtain goes up, your job is done! Watch the show and feel proud of the art you made!
- Turn in your notebook/google document with your work from the semester. It should include your script analysis work, your responses to questions and Directorial Vision, your blocking notes, and your self-reflection.

Step 11: Strike/Clean-Up

Everyone is 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.