



PERFORMING ARTS

Project Guide

LEVEL 1



CANADA
4-H Alberta

The 4-H Motto

“Learn To Do By Doing”

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge:

My **head** to clearer thinking,

My **heart** to greater loyalty,

My **hands** to larger service,

My **health** to better living,

For my club, my community,

my country, and my world.

Published by 4-H Alberta for the 4-H community.

For more information or to find other helpful resources,
please visit the 4-H Alberta website at www.4hab.com.

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WHAT IS 4-H?

4-H is a youth organization for young people between the ages of 9 and 20.

4-H strives to provide members with the opportunity to:

- Acquire knowledge in the chosen project area
- Develop leadership skills
- Learn to communicate effectively
- Grow personally through increased self esteem
- Grow socially by interacting with other youth in the community, in Alberta, and in Canada

4-H administers over 30 different projects. Projects vary from the traditional agriculture orientated focus such as Beef clubs, to Craft clubs, to projects aimed at Environmental Protection to Computer and Web Design study. Performing Arts is the latest addition to the list of project opportunities.

4-H is more than just a local club. 4-H provides:

- Camp opportunities
- Inter club competitions
- Inter club personal skill development sessions
- Travel and Exchange trips
- Travel awards,
- Scholarships

Requirements of a 4-H Member

4-H requires a commitment from members. Each year all 4-H members must:

- Register as a 4-H member and pay appropriate dues
- Attend 70 percent of club functions and meetings
- Complete a record book of years activities
- Take part in an achievement day project
- Take part in a communication activity
- Take part in a club activity to benefit your community





INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the wonderful world of performing arts!

The 4-H Performing Arts Project is designed to introduce you to the skills, knowledge, and to build your confidence to a level which will allow you to perform in front of an audience.

The 4-H Performing Arts Project is multi-year project with a different performing art skill featured each year - be it the telling of the story, the writing of a play, or the presentation of a professional script. The skills which you will practice throughout this year will assist you in any type of performance and not just the activity you will be working on this year.

You will find the skills you learn will not only help you on stage but will improve the skills you need and use in every day life: communication, confidence, concentration, creativity, commitment.... and these are only the ones starting with the letter C. This project will make a huge difference in the quality of your life, and the lives of those around you.

For this to happen we need some guideposts. Like someone setting off on a road trip, we need to know some things if we are to arrive at our intended destination.

First we have to know where we are going. In the 4-H Performing Arts Project our destination can be described as:

Developing an appreciation for Performing Arts:

- Finding out what theatre and drama is all about
- Experiencing and participating in various types of presentations
- Increasing our ability to enjoy other's performances

Learning performing arts skills which include:

- Developing and improving our body and voice communication skills
- Gaining the ability to develop a story and bringing that story to life on a stage
- Learning how to create and share a character with an audience

Gaining the ability to work with others:

- Cooperatively staging a production
- Learning respect, empathy and acceptance of other's ideas and abilities
- Critiquing other's work without conflict or damaging criticism

And most importantly to increase our skills and knowledge in the areas of:

- Self image
- Self confidence
- Concentration
- Imagination
- Observation
- Organization
- Problem solving

To reach our destination we must know where we are starting from. For many members of our club this will be their first experience with any type of performance. Other members will have spent many hours on stage, singing in a choir, or speaking in public. Each year we will have new members joining our club who will not have the experience senior members of the club will have gained in past years and performances. So like a school bus picking up students at different stops, people will be joining us with a different experiences. But we are all going to end up at the same place at the end of the year.



We also need a vehicle which can accommodate our wide range of skills, abilities, and experiences to reach our destination. As a club we want to journey together. So we will all work on the same basic skills a performer needs each year. This does not mean the project will be boring for senior members however. While we will be working on the same skills, we will be practicing these skills through different games and activities. These new games will both introduce new skills to someone who has never performed before as well as build on the skills of a senior member who is a seasoned performer. Every club gathering will be new and exciting. Our vehicle is like your family car. You may have the same car for a number of years and you could go to the same place every summer for a holiday in that car. But if you drove a different road each time, the holiday would be different each year.

Finally, just as there must be rules of the road, there are rules for the 4-H Performing Arts Project to make sure we reach our destination together, safely:

1. **Participation** – You cannot build performing arts skills by just reading a book, or talking, or listening. YOU MUST DO IT. This is why most of the project is activities and games. Everyone is expected to participate.
2. **Acceptance** – Performing is a creative art form, as such, people are not wrong and should not be criticized for their work. Learn to encourage and direct a person rather than criticize.
3. **Emotional Safety** – You can seriously hurt a person with words and actions (which you may have said just to be funny). So in all games and activities use your imagination to develop new characters rather than portraying or discussing neighbors, friends or fellow members.
4. **Physical Safety Performing** is a very demanding, physical activity and as such extreme care must be taken. Do not attempt things which you physically cannot do or which you do not feel safe doing. Do not use technical equipment for lights, sound, stagecraft, or even makeup without proper training and supervision. Never use open flame, fire, or flammable materials on stage. Never use firearms, knives, swords or other dangerous objects without proper authorization, instruction and expert supervision.
5. **Behavior** – You must follow all directions of your adult leaders of the 4-H Performing Arts Program. Use respect.

So come on in, and take part in the 4-H Performing Arts Program



	SCENE 1 THEATRE	SCENE 2 MOVEMENT	SCENE 3 SCRIPTING	SCENE 4 SPEAKING	SCENE 5 CHARACTER	SCENE 6 ACTING	SCENE 7 DIRECTING	SCENE 8 TECHNICAL
SUGGESTED DATE	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
BACK STAGE BUSINESS	Organize Club Elect Officers	Business Meeting Christmas Party?	Business Meeting	Business Meeting Public Speaking	Business Meeting	Business Meeting Plan Opening Night	Business Meeting Plan Opening Night	Business Meeting Opening Night Awards?
ROLL CALL	Own Name	Favourite Actor	Favourite Nursery Rhyme	Favourite Playwright	Name of Character	Your Character's Objective	One Prop I Need	A Technical Effect Needed
WARM UP EXERCISE	Shake	Name Swat Tag	Quick Names	Tongue Twisters	Dog and Bone	Relaxation	Airport	Technical Theatre Speaker Opening Night Rehearsal
REVIEW LAST MONTHS WORK		Review Expectations	Review Members Story	Public Speaking	Discuss Research			
REHEARSAL EXERCISES	Single File Mirror Games Motion Games Charades	Bake a Cake Ways of Moving Bank Robbery	Talking Stick I Went to the Store This is a Shoe Unfortunately Slow Motion Tag	Partner Conversation Discuss Interviews My Heritage Opening Night	No You Didn't Character Statues Complaint Department Discuss Character	Trust Walk In Your House Opening Night Rehearsal	Picture Scene Tableau Opening Night Rehearsal	
REVIEW MEETING								
CURTAIN CALL ASSIGNMENT	Opening Night Plan, Favourite Actor	Write a Story Living 75 Years Ago	Interview Person About Past	Opening Night Research	Write Lines for Your Character	List of Props	Technical Effects Needed	Complete Diary
SCRIPT	Remind members each meeting to read and complete Scripts							

Public Speaking Date: _____

Opening Night Date: _____

Extra Opening Night Rehearsal Dates: _____

ACT 1: SCENE 1: THE THEATRE

What is Theatre?

To many people it is where you go to see the latest Hollywood movie. To others it is a place with a stage where actors perform a play. To university students the term theatre refers to the huge room with raked seating where hundreds of students sit and listen to a professor lecture. To all these people, theatre merely means the place they go to be entertained, amused, informed or moved.

To other people the word theatre means the same as drama, acting, play, dramatic arts, and theatre arts. It is a specific type of a performance in which actors tell a story.

To the people involved in theatre, this word means much more. To these people theatre is the ultimate art form; bringing all the other arts together. Theatre combines literature (the script), sculpting (building the set) painting (set decoration and lighting) music (sound and voice) dance (movement and acting) and other art forms in one event so actors can communicate the message of the playwright to the audience. Theatre presents art just like an artist uses a brush and canvas for their work, or a sculptor uses clay. However, the painter's art is only one person's message in the form of a two dimensional picture whereas the theatre presents a co-ordinated multidimensional message from many artists. It is this co-operative voice and multidimensional message that separates theatre from all other art forms.

The Actors

Just as a painter is limited by the size of his canvas, or the fact he only paints in two dimensions, people involved in theatre have limits on what they can do. The size of the stage, acoustics in the building, and lighting equipment are examples of physical limits actors have to work with. Even bigger constraints are the actors themselves. The experiences or lack of experiences they bring to the stage, lack of imagination in the portrayal of their character, a lack of effort in presenting a character, disagreements between actors as to meaning or message they want to tell the audience, or even a lack of understanding of what the playwright meant with the words he has written will all limit the ability of an actor.

For example, it is very difficult for actors to convey a unified message to an audience if none of the actors can agree upon what the message is they want to convey. So lets start our exploration of the theatre looking at the actor. What are the skills he needs if he is to work with a group of people to tell a story and deliver a message the audience will understand and enjoy.

The actor's number one task is to convince the audience what they are watching is real. They must believe the actor is the person he is pretending to be and what he is doing and how he is reacting is real. To achieve this goal, the actor must know how to move, speak, and react just as the character he is portraying would. To do this he must know of the inner feelings of the character he is playing.

The actor must move and react in ways the audience will recognize. If they do not recognize the actions of the actor, it would be like listening to someone speaking a language they do not understand. There is no way the audience will get the message.

An actor rarely acts alone on stage, so the character he is portraying must also interact with other actor's characters. Every actor on stage must understand every character being presented, and all actors must be able to react to all the characters on stage.





The Team

Theatre is a team activity, more so than most sports. An actor must live the role he is portraying the entire time he is on his sporting ground. Even one second of falling out of character, whether by a smile when his character would not smile, or a moment of reacting as the actor would as a person instead of as the character is enough to throw off other actors on stage. Worse yet, it distracts from the message you are presenting to the audience. This believability factor is what separates truly outstanding actors from people simply playing a role on stage.

At the same time an actor must limit his performance to what is called for in the script and the production. Unlike sports, there must not be “stars” on the stage. While one character may have more lines, overplaying those lines for the purpose of getting attention distracts the audience from the reason you are on stage, which is to deliver the playwright’s message. A good actor not only tries to improve his performance, he is even more concerned with assisting other actors in their roles. You do not compete on stage but instead you complement and co-operate.

The actor carries the message from the playwright to the audience. He is like the brush of the painter, taking the picture from artist to the canvas. The wrong brush will not give the effect the painter wants just as the wrong actor in a role cannot present the intended message.

So the actor carries a huge burden in theatre. An actor must learn technical skills to portray the thoughts and emotions of another person. He must have total control over his own body so that he can move his body as the character he portrays would move his body. He must be physically fit as the stress and physical requirements of playing a character are extremely demanding.

However, the rewards to an actor are great. No so much in monetary terms, but rather mentally and emotionally. An actor who excels in his role receives a greater rush than a world class athlete winning an Olympic gold medal.

So this year we are going to focus on the actor and the skills actors need. We are going to take theatre back to its roots, that of story telling around a campfire. We will learn to be the best story tellers we can.





NOTES

Back Stage Business

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Opening Night Planning

ACT 1: SCENE 2: MOVEMENT

Ancient Greece was the birthplace of modern theatre. However, this theatre was much different from theatre as we know it. Actors primarily stood and chanted lines. There was very little movement on the ancient Greek stage. It was not until after the fall of the Greek empire, and the rise of the Roman empire that movement became commonplace in the theatre. In fact the word *play* originated from the Latin word *Ludus* which described Roman theatre and which meant “recreation,” or “to play.”

Greek theatre did not encourage movement for a number of reasons. A major reason was early Greek playwrights did not write scripts that required movement. The entire message of the playwright could be expressed just with words. Today we still have Readers Theatre in which movement is very limited and the reading of the words is the main way to communicate the message the playwright wants to share with the audience.

Stage Directions

Today most modern theatre productions requires movement. Some of the movement is so important it is included in the script as stage directions. For example, “***Don enters from outside***” or “***Joan exits to the kitchen.***” Entrances and exits leave little room for choice by the director. If the actor or director did not follow such instructions, the play would be confusing.

Script Dictates Action

The spoken lines in a script can also dictate an action. For example consider the line: “***Here, I saved this for you.***” If some action does not take place as this line is spoken that shows something was saved, the line and possibly the play would not make sense. Movement that must happen because it is included in the script is called Inherent movement.

Imposed Movement

Movement can also originate with the actor or director. This movement is called *Imposed movement*. This type of movement is not critical to the play but is added by the actor or director to enhance the performance. Without imposed movement plays would be much less interesting. Or the scripts would have been incredibly long if every possible movement was included.

Imposed movement is used to show the setting. For example, if the play takes place in a restaurant you may find the stage directions: “***the waiter takes the order.***” The director may have the character playing the waiter write down the order, instead of just listening to what is ordered. Or the director may have the waiter wipe off the table while taking the order. Or the director may have the waiter bring glasses of water to the table when he arrives to take the order. None of these actions were described in the stage directions but they all enhance the scene, and will remind the audience the setting is a restaurant.

Imposed movement can also help establish the character. If the waiter carries a towel to wipe off the table, but does not do so, it says something about the waiter. If the waiter slams the glasses of water down on the table, it gives a very different meaning to the scene than if he carefully sets the glasses of water down, and straightens the silverware. If the waiter slouches it gives a different meaning than if the waiter stands tall and erect. Without the waiter saying a word, the audience develops an opinion and a like or dislike of the character from his actions.

Movement is very valuable to break up a long dull scene. In the restaurant example, if the main action is two people talking at a table, imposing some movement can make the scene much more interesting for the audience. For example, if the script calls for one of the characters to leave the table for a moment, then having the waiter serve a soup or salad will prevent the audience having to watch one person sitting alone on stage. This action will also give a sense of life and the passing of time to the scene. The character





seated at the table does not need to eat the soup, or salads, or even acknowledge the waiter's actions. The business of the waiter will simply provide interest for the audience. The waiter's exit will focus attention on the lone actor, and will strengthen the return of the character who left the table.

Moving an actor to a different place on the stage draws the attention of the audience to the place the actor moves to. In the example, if the waiter walks from the kitchen entrance to the restaurant door with menus, it will draw the attention of the audience away from other characters on stage, and will have them wondering who is about to enter. While the stage directions may only indicate someone enters, the entrance of new customers can be made stronger or weaker with the added movement from the waiter.

Imposed movement is often required to prevent crowding on one part of the stage or to balance the stage. Since stage sizes vary widely it is difficult for a playwright to write a script that will have exactly the same movements and positions of actors on all stages. For this reason a director or the actor must initiate a movement so people or objects on stage are not hidden. If a new character is about to enter, sometimes movement must occur to make sure the entrance is clear. These technical reasons for movement are largely dependant on the stage you are working on.

To Move or not to Move?

While there are many reasons for movement, there are also reasons not to include movement. First, movement on stage always attracts attention. Movement on stage attracts much more attention than movement in daily life attracts. Movement on stage is magnified. Any movement will instantly attract the audience's attention. This can take away from what is being said or done by the characters you want the focus of the audience's attention to be on. So only include movement that is necessary and that will enhance the scene.

Second, there must be a reason for the movement. In theatre this is called *Motivation*. Not only must the actor have a reason, but the reason must be one that the audience understands and accepts. In our example of the restaurant, people often enter and leave a restaurant. If a new character enters, sits at another table, then immediately gets up and leaves before doing any other action (such as looking at a menu) or with no contact with any other actor including the waiter, it will do nothing to enhance the scene. It will distract the audience and confuse them. They will not understand why this person entered the scene and did not do what is expected in a restaurant, such looking at the menu, or ordering something to eat or drink.

Movement is very important to keep a production interesting. However, overdoing movement will distract and damage the show. Make sure every movement has a reason that both the actors and audience understand.



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Opening Night Planning

ACT 1: SCENE 3: THE SCRIPT

While the actor on stage gets the applause and credit from the audience for a good performance, actors merely present a story to the audience. Someone had to first write the story. In theatre the writer is known as the *playwright*.

Ancient Greece, where modern theatre started, had many great playwrights. One was named Thespis. From his name the word *Thespian* has evolved. According to Webster's dictionary Thespian means: "having to do with drama, or actor."

Probably the playwright most people have heard of is William Shakespeare. He lived from 1564 - 1616. His plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* are still studied in schools, and performed regularly on stages around the world. Some theatre groups only perform works of Shakespeare.

There are many famous modern playwrights as well. You may have heard of George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, Anton Chekhov, and Noel Coward to name just a few.

All playwrights, from the ancient Greeks to living playwrights of today like Canadian Norm Foster, wrote plays because they had a story they wanted to share. They wrote scripts so actors could deliver their message to an audience. It is with the playwright all productions begin.

Exercise: Do you have a favourite playwright? Find out all you can about this playwright. If you do not have a favourite, choose any playwright and find out all you can about the person. What did he write? When did he write? Why did he write what he did?

Nursery Rhymes

Many of the important lessons we learned when we were young came from stories told to us by our parents. Even in later life we find family histories and heritage is shared more often by word of mouth than through books. In many cases we no longer even know who first told the story. But these stories have important messages and we want to share this story with others so we continue to pass these stories on to family and friends. All of you can remember nursery rhymes. You probably even remember having your parents read, or tell you nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes were fun to listen to and we learned from them about right and wrong, morals, and other lessons. This type of message is called *oral tradition*. Oral Tradition refers to a story that was passed from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Exercise: What was your favourite nursery rhyme? Write it out.





Curtain Call

As you see from this scene, script writing is a lot of work. We must decide on the message we want to tell and then do lots of research to make sure the message we are sharing is correct. There are lots of interesting stories we could and should tell so future generations will know of us and our lives. Let's see if we can find some stories we could tell!

For your curtain call assignment this month you are going interview someone. Interviewing is one method playwrights use to research a topic he wants to write a play about. So let's review proper interview techniques.

- Find someone to interview who has the information you are seeking. Do not interview someone who knows someone this happened to.
- Call for permission to interview the person. Do not just start asking questions and writing down answers. Make sure they agree to answer your questions.
- **Respect peoples privacy. Most people do not want their names to appear in a play. Explain you are looking for the stories and not to use their names in your research or in a play. You are only trying to find real stories to base a fictional play upon.**
- Explain who you are and why you would like to ask them questions.
- Make an appointment when you can interview them. Just because they gave you permission to interview them, does not mean they have time right now to talk to you. Find out when they will have time.
- Prepare your questions for the interview ahead of time. Decide what you want to find out and what questions you can ask to receive the answers you are looking for.
- Remember the 5 Ws when writing out questions. Who, What, Where, When, Why (& How)
- Arrive on time for the interview. When you arrive, ask again if the person has time to speak with you, and how much time that may be.
- Don't just ask the questions you have written down. Listen carefully, and if the person says something you want more information about, ask.
- If the person you are interviewing gets tired even though you have not asked all your questions, thank them, ask if they have anything else they would like to say then leave.





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Back Stage Business

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Opening Night Planning

ACT 1: SCENE 4: VOICE

One of the most exciting things you can experience in life is standing on stage and delivering lines to a theatre full of people. But for this to be a rewarding experience there are some vocal qualities an actor must achieve.

Be Heard

You must be loud! Even if your character is supposed to be whispering to another actor on stage, you must be loud enough for the old man with 2 hearing aids in the very back row of the theatre to hear you. The most common complaint heard about performances by young people or newcomers to the stage is audience members cannot hear without straining. Actors must learn how much volume they need to speak to someone standing in the very back corner of the theatre. This is the minimum volume they can use. If they are to whisper, then this is the whisper volume. If they are to shout, then they must be much louder than this volume.

Listen

The second mistake new actors make is not listening to what others on stage are saying. Too often they have memorized their lines completely and just stand and wait for the last word of the line that comes before their line. If an actor on stage is to be believed by the audience it should appear the actor has never heard the conversation before. When you are talking with friends you actively listen to hear what they are going to say next. You react to each sentence, phase, and maybe to each word your friend says. This is what you must do on stage. You must listen to what other actors say and react just as if the character was hearing the words for the very first time. This is harder to do than it sounds. This skill is what sets good actors apart from persons just standing on stage and saying lines.

A dead giveaway that actors are not listening to each other is when you see an actor on stage reacting to another actor before the second actor has completed giving the information needed for the reaction. This is called *anticipation*. Often you see a novice actor looking toward a character before they start to speak because the actor knows that character has the next line. In real life, which is what the stage is trying to create, we normally do not look at the next speaker until they begin speaking (unless a question is asked of that person).

Take Your Time

Another mistake novice actors and performers make is speaking too fast. Nervousness makes us want to hurry up. Our nervous mind tells us the faster we say the line, the sooner we can get off stage. While this may be true for the actor, for an audience the faster the line is said the harder it is for the audience members to understand it. They will have less time to react to the line. As a result, a line that should elicit laughter from the audience may get no reaction at all because a few people will not understand what is being said, others will not get the humor of the line before the next line is said, and some will not laugh for fear of missing the next line. While the Valley Girl style of speaking may be popular with some people, it only works if all participants are proficient at it. Theatre audiences (as a general rule) are not!

Make Them Laugh

Audience laughter is very important to a theatre production if the audience is laughing at the character or the line. Hopefully laughter is the response the actor was seeking from the audience at that point in the play. If the audience is laughing at points the actor and director have pinpointed as funny then the audience is rewarding the work on stage with their laughter. Accept their response gracefully by letting them laugh. Do not attempt to say the next line while the audience is laughing or people may miss the next line because of the laughter around them. Since the audience does not want to miss the next line, after a couple of times of not hearing lines because of laughter you will have trained the audience not to laugh. While they may smile, they will not laugh loudly. You will not get the response you expect and all the actors will begin to question their work on stage thereby increasing the nervousness.





Waiting for the laughter does not mean waiting for every snicker and giggle to die away. It means waiting until the audience is ready to receive the next line and you are able to deliver the next line without having to complete with the noise of the audience. This timing can only be learned by experience on stage.

Silence is Golden

Pausing for laughter is only one reason actors on stage do not speak constantly. In normal conversation we do not speak continually. We pause for varying lengths of time for a number of reasons. Pausing in conversation is probably the most effective way a speaker has to enhance a speech. Everyone has a normal rhythm of speaking. Between sentences there is a period of time longer than between the words making up the sentences. Between thoughts the length of time a speaker pauses is longer than between sentences.

One reason an actor or a speaker pauses is to draw attention to the last few words spoken or to increase the importance of the next words to be uttered. Listeners will either have time to consider what was just said, or they will eagerly await what is about to be said. In either case they will pay more attention to the words because of the pause. Therefore, those words will carry more weight.

A pause can also change the feelings of an audience. If an actor on stage pauses, it indicates the character is thinking about what is being said. To the audience this may mean the actor is considering changing their view of what is happening in which case the audience will change the way they see the character and the action.

Not speaking is probably the hardest skill to learn about speaking. The stillness and emptiness when nothing is being said on stage does not seem natural. It gives our nerves time to work and our minds and bodies want to fill the stillness with anything; the same way as nature detests a vacuum as we are told in science classes. The fact pausing is so hard to do is what makes it so valuable. So as a curtain call assignment this month concentrate on using pauses in your speech. When talking with your friends try to listen for their pauses. Add pauses in your speaking. Watch interviews of politicians and excellent speakers on TV. You might note top notch speakers rarely answer the moment a question is asked. Instead the speaker will pause for a brief moment to reflect on the question before answering. This short time is enough for polished speakers to think about their response, to word it correctly, and to deliver it strongly. Even more important is the fact this pause gives the impression to the person asking the question that the question is very important; and the person being interviewed is giving the question very serious consideration. (Note: if the person being interviewed pauses too long however, it appears he does not know the answer and is try to make something up.)

Warm Up Your Voice

The last error to be discussed in this scene is a problem which not only people new to the stage make but nearly everyone makes unless they are professional actors, singers or speakers. Most people do not warm up their voice.

Athletes never go out into a game or practice without doing exercises to warm up the muscles. Yet very few people who are about to make a speech, sing a song, or say a line on stage takes the time to warm up their voice. As a result, audiences are often presented with voices that break. Audiences have to put up with need less croaking, clearing or throats, coughing, or in the worst case loss of the voice either during the performance or in future performances.

To warm up the voice you must begin with the body, as the voice originates not in the mouth, but in the chest and abdomen. Any exercises that relaxes the body will improve the voice. Make sure you use breathing exercises that encourage you to use the entire lung capacity while relaxing the body.

Look for exercises that allow you to relax and loosen all moveable parts of the body used to produce sounds. Pay special attention to exercising the jaw, the tongue, the lips, the sinuses, and the face to limber up the resonators (the structures that amplify the voice).



There are a number of words and sayings that can be used to limber the voice and to improve your articulation before a performance. These cannot be adequately explained in text. If possible, find someone who is an accomplished singer or who has had vocal training and find out what vocal exercises they do before a performance. Learn how to properly say the warm-up. Write out the warm-up in this script. Practice this vocalization and share it with other club members at the next meeting. If you do not know anyone who uses vocal warm-ups, check with your library if they have audio tapes that have these warm-ups. As a last resort, find a good drama text book or voice book and attempt the warm-up exercises outlined. Most important, always do some voice warm-ups before using your voice even if the exercises are as simple as tongue twisters or repeating the alphabet, carefully enunciating every letter.

A warm-up should work on volume too. Start by quietly whispering words, phrases, or even a favorite nursery rhyme so only you can hear. Increase to table conversation level. Now repeat the saying at a small room level. Speak to fill a large room. Speak at a level needed for your theatre. Now speak at a level for outside. You might do this exercise with a partner, gradually moving apart for each distance.

Always protect your voice. Do not strain your voice reaching for pitches or volumes you cannot sustain or which are unpleasant to you. Do not eat dry, sharp materials like popcorn before a performance. Do not drink colas, hot coffee, or other abrasive liquids while performing. Sips of water or warm teas are much better for your voice. Rest your voice after a performance. Rest your voice if you have a cold or illness. Your voice is an asset as a performer you must protect.





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Back Stage Business

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ACT 1: SCENE 5: CHARACTER

What is a character? What does the term character mean? According to the Webster's New World Dictionary 1996 edition, character means: "1 any letter, figure, or symbol used in writing and printing 2 a distinctive trait 3 kind or sort 4 behavior typical of a person or group 5 moral strength 6 reputation 7 status position 8 a person in a play, novel, etc. 9 an eccentric person."

So which of these definitions of the word character is what we mean when the term is used in the theatre? Most people would automatically say definition number 8. While this answer is correct if you were the person watching the performance or reading the book, to an experienced actor on stage the word character means much more. In fact, except for definition number 1, a character on stage is defined by every one of these definitions and not just one of them.

For clues to what the word character means to actors, we need to look in a thesaurus rather than a dictionary. Webster's New World Thesaurus 1996 edition provides the following words under the heading "character": "1 (the dominant quality) temper, temperament, attitude, nature, sense, complex, mood, streak, attribute, badge, tone, style, aspect, complexion, spirit, genius, humor, frame, grain, vein 2 (The sum of a person's characteristics) personality, reputation, constitution, repute, individuality, estimation, record, caliber, standing, type, shape, quality, habit, appearance. 3 (a symbol especially in writing) sign, figure, emblem 4 (a queer or striking person) personality, figure, personage, original, eccentric, crank, nut, oddball, weirdo freak, psycho. -in character consistent, usual, predictable -out of character inconsistent, unpredictable, unusual."

Except for number 3, all of these other terms define character as an actor uses the word.

Walk the Walk and Talk the Talk

When a person acts on stage for the first time they typically rely totally on the script and never look beyond the script for information about the person they are playing. They walk on stage, repeat the lines in the script and walk off. While this demonstrates they have a wonderful memory it provides little interest for an audience. All the audience is allowed to see is John or Jane Doe reciting lines. The performance these actors are giving is even less than most people present in real life. If you know a policeman, is the way he walks and talks when he is in uniform on the street the same way as he is in his home? Does an undercover policeman look, talk and act the same way as a policeman in uniform? Do ministers, lawyers, teachers, and politicians all walk and talk and act the same way in their own homes as they do in their jobs? No! These public jobs have a stereotype and the people doing these jobs conform to the stereotype in order for people to understand and respect them. So if you are playing a policeman on stage, you cannot walk on stage as yourself, say a policeman's lines and expect the audience to believe you are a policeman. You have to walk and talk like a policeman does.

Appearance

A higher level of acting occurs when an actor is willing to take on the appearance of the stereotype of the character he is playing. He chooses a costume that will add to the character. He walks like the character. Hopefully he has the physical features of the character he is trying to play.

For the most part we are limited physically in the character we can play. We are limited by the shape of our body and the sounds of our voice. An actor who is fit, and limber can play a wider range of characters than someone is heavy and flexible. Makeup can add years to a young person's facial features easier than it can remove years, so a younger actor can play a wider range of ages.





Actions

Character includes the way that the actor walks and moves on stage. If the role calls for a limp, most actors can walk with a limp with a little practice. In the example of a policeman, actors will wear a uniform. They will stand tall and walk and talk with authority. Most actors who play the role of a policeman will be physically fit. An unfit person playing a policeman's role will give the audience an entirely different opinion of the policeman. This is the level of acting found in many community theaters. The actor thinks he knows how the audience expects the character should physically appear so he will present that appearance when he is on stage.

This presentation is much more interesting for an audience but some problems can arise. A trap actors can fall into is instead of presenting a character to the audience they present a charactiture. Have you ever had your portrait drawn at a carnival, fair or trade show by the artists who draw the large head, and tiny body? This is a charactiture. It is a cartoon figure that looks like you but that has none of your true characteristics. Actors on stage who are only concerned with the appearance of the character never inform the audience of who they are or why they are in the situation they are in. This is frustrating for an audience.

Second, it is very easy for an actor to fall out of character if they are only concerned with the physical appearance of the person they are playing on stage. Our minds have a difficult time doing two things at once. If we are trying to remember lines as John or Jane Doe, but trying to present those lines looking and sounding like the character we are playing, our mind has to jump back and forth between the actor and the character. It is likely at some point in the play we will act and talk like ourselves, the actor, instead of the character. And it is much more likely we will forget lines.

The third problem is we all bring our personal traits to the stage. That includes the way we speak and move. Remember, the stage magnifies any faults we have in the way we walk and talk. Unless we know how we move and speak we will bring these faults to the character. We may have drooping shoulders and not even realize it if we do not study the way we normally appear to others. While we can and do watch how others move, rarely do we look at ourselves. In fact the toughest role we would ever be asked to play would be to look at ourselves through the eyes of another person, and then as the other person play ourselves. So this is your curtain call assignment for this month. Critically look at yourself, and list your characteristics.

Look Inside

So far we have only talked of physical features of the character. There are also internal features that affect how the character moves, talks, reacts to the environment, and responds to other actors. These internal traits are critical to the highest level of characterization. This is where an actor brings the full personality of the role to the audience. The actor has taken the time to learn why the character is saying his lines, how the actor will react to any lines spoken to him or about him, what the actor is hoping to achieve every time he is on stage, and how and why that character will attempt to get what he wants given what is happening in the play at that moment. When actors can achieve the level of "being the character" while on stage is when theatre becomes great. When the actor IS the character, then the play becomes real in the minds of the audience and will be a delightful experience for both the actor and the audience.

These internal traits, which great actors must discover about a character before they can play the role, include how the character thinks. How would the character feel under these circumstances? What does the character like and dislike? How will he react given the situation his is facing in the play? Who does the character love, hate, and what are the feelings of the character for every other person on the stage? In other words, the actor must determine what is going on in the character's mind before, during, and after every scene.

Study Your Character

In order to discover what an actor is thinking, one first has to find out the background of the character. We need to know his name, age, occupation, family, friends, religion, education, nationality, social status, politics, life story, diet, goals, temper, sense of self, sense of humor, memories, habits, intellect, strengths, weaknesses, dreams, failures, and wants to name just a few. A script does not tell us all these things, so we must discover them if we want to truly portray this character on stage.



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ACT 1: SCENE 6: ACTING



The task of an actor is to communicate the playwright's message to the people. An actor is like the paint brush of the painter. He is the tool that creates the image for the audience. If an actor is to present the playwright's message correctly he must understand every speech, action, and the meaning behind every word and phrase in the script. Everything he does on stage must be a true portrayal of the character he is presenting. If he does something on stage that does not fit with the character the audience will not believe the character and therefore not believe the playwright's message. So to make the audience believe an actor must make sure:

- Emotions and actions are appropriate
- Emotions and actions are accurate
- Emotions and actions are full.

In order to achieve these three goals all actors must study people. They must be observers of life. Only then will they have the experience and knowledge that they can couple with their imagination to be able to present a believable story to an audience.

Like with any activity, you do not become proficient in acting immediately. Acting takes training, experience, and years of study of people. It is very obvious when a person tries to act without making a commitment to training, experience, and observance of life. An actor can have all the training in the world, yet if he has not watched how people react to specific situations, his reactions on stage will not represent the character he is trying to play. At best his acting will be a stereotype of the role. While true in form, it will lack the personality and emotions of the character. Without training, no matter how well you can impersonate someone, it is inevitable you will block other actors, you will miss cues, and you will probably overact. And acting is like everything else, the more experience you have the better you can do the activity.

Five Levels of Acting

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) is often considered the father of modern acting techniques. Stanislavski was an author, teacher, actor, and director of theatre in Moscow. He identified 5 levels of acting. Knowledge of these five levels allow us to look at how we are acting, and will serve as an incentive to become better actors.

1. The lowest form of acting, according to Stanislavski is **Exploitative Acting**. This type of acting happens when a person is cast into a role because of a physical characteristic the actor possess. The exploitative characteristic most often sought is beauty. The beauty may be facial or it may be body shape. Television and movies are huge culprits of exploitative acting. Much more attention is paid by this media in the look of the actor than consideration of talent, or of the character they are to play. You can see exploitative acting in many popular shows on television. A lot of TV shows attempt to attract an audience by casting attractive actors with great physiques. These actors are not representative real characters in the real world. They have been cast primarily because of the draw of their appearance.

Other personal qualities may be exploited to sell a show too. The sound of one's voice may be the primary reason someone is cast. Or their personality may be the reason they are cast. Television often seeks a certain sound or personality to act as newscasters for example.

Television and film rely on exploitative acting because the cameras and microphones can focus on and draw the viewer's attention to the attractive features thus freeing an actor from the need of building a complete character.

Exploitative acting is not just the fault of TV casting directors. This style of acting can be found on stage as well. Often on stage it stems from the actor themselves. It is very difficult, if you are an attractive person, not to portray that beauty to an admiring audience. Since you are beautiful and the audience appreciates your beauty you want to show it. This is why it is so hard and sometimes impossible for a very attractive person to play a slob on stage. The ego of an attractive actor may prevent that person from playing someone whose look will repulse an audience.

Acting is much more than physical features so try to avoid the temptation to exploit your physical qualities.



2. Stanislavski's second level is ***Amateur Overacting***. The usual cause of this type of acting is inexperience. The overactor will do the first thing that comes to mind when playing a character. If a man is to make a marriage proposal, an overactor will go down on one knee and take the woman's hand without even considering if that is what his character would do. An overactor may place their hand over their heart shows love. They show anger by gritting their teeth and fear by wide open eyes and hands over an open mouth. These clichés show the general emotion but may or may not be representative of that character at that time and place in the play. These reactions are often found in community theatre and will be tolerated by an unsophisticated audience. They may even provide great laughs in a melodrama, or be enjoyed by an audience watching a comedy. But overacting usually results in a very amateurish performance. Very little of the playwright's message will go home with an audience if the play has been badly overacted.
3. ***Mechanical Acting*** grows out of experience. As an actor gains experience he will begin to realize not all clichés work in all situations. Experienced actors will begin to build a mental file of various movements, actions, and reactions for each emotion that they can recall. When they are cast in a role, they will make an honest attempt to study the character to find out what the character is feeling at the moment. The actor will then search for the appropriate response in his mental file. Instead of just taking another character's hands if he is trying to express sympathy, the actor may consider putting his arm around the shoulder of the other character instead. He will add tears and maybe even a break in his voice. Or he may feel the character he is playing would not display a typical reaction but instead would retreat or perhaps get angry. Whatever it is he decides his character will do, he knows how to present that reaction and will carry it out. Unfortunately, a mechanical actor will simply present the action he has stored in his mind. He will not be able to convince an audience that he is personally feeling any appropriate emotion. While this type of acting is better than overacting, it still has little conviction. While it is entertaining, it still may not yet carry the message of the playwright.
4. ***Representational Acting*** calls for an actor to completely know the character they are going to be playing. A Representational actor will study every line, movement, and thought of the character he is to play. He will know how the character thinks, moves, and talks. From this basis he will begin to build a character from scratch. He will start his character from nothing and with each line develop a deeper understanding. If an actor is to play a plumber, a representational actor may replace the coveralls suggested in the script with dirty sweat pants. The pants then lead to a wife beater tee-shirt that leads to a tattoo on the biceps and a tool belt worn low on the waist holding a toilet plunger. The toilet plunger may serve as an ashtray for a short chewed cigar the character keeps in his mouth. Each addition leads to another discovery. The representation actor keeps building and adding until the creation of the character takes precedence over the story. To the representational actor, no investment in time is too much in building the perfect character.

When the actor has completed the character the representational actor typically steps back. His objective in building a character has been met. His artistic goals have been accomplished. When he is to perform on stage he will get into character as if the character is simply a very elaborate costume. He will wear the character instead of being the character. The feelings and emotions he uncovered when building the character will be just be presented rather than felt by the actor on stage. The audience will be awed by all the work that went in to the character, but may feel the conviction of the character just isn't all there.
5. The greatest type of acting according to Stanislavski is ***living the part***. The actor that is able to live the part brings to stage everything the representational actor does plus one more thing. The actor who lives the part actually feels the character's emotions. If the actor is happy or sad the actor is also feeling happy or sad at that moment. The actor will not be feeling happy or sad because of what is happening on stage, but will have stored feelings of happiness or sadness in their minds and are able to recreate these emotions and actually feel happy or sad on queue.



The actor who is living the part is not only recreating the visual character developed by the playwright; but the emotional and mental character as well. This character will be totally believable to the audience and will have tremendous power in conveying the message of the playwright. The audience will be moved by the performance, and may even commit to some action in response to the message they have just received.

While the ultimate acting is living the part and this is the type of acting everyone in theatre attempts attain, this does not mean if you have the ability to live the part all the acting you do will be outstanding. It is very easy for even the best actor living the part to suddenly realize how good he may look in that costume on stage and fall to the ranks of the exploitative actor. Occasionally the rank amateur may suddenly find himself actually feeling the character's emotion on stage triggered by some long forgotten memory. The point is a performance will be a mixture of all these types of acting every time you go on stage.

This is a huge simplification of work of Stanislavski. His teachings have been and are still being studied and his *Method* is still used in the teaching of most actors today.





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ACT 1: SCENE 7: DIRECTING

Directors are a relatively recent addition to the world of theatre. There is very little information available from ancient Greece and Rome that would indicate anyone filled the role of director as we know it today. It is assumed the playwright probably oversaw the production in theater's infancy.

The resurrection of theatre in Europe by the church resulted in a priest or church official overseeing the production. While they controlled the content they likely had little input into the presentation.

Theater's fall from grace from the church left the actors and playwrights on their own to put a performance together. As a result, over the next few centuries we saw the rise of the star performer. The lead actor took on the responsibility for the show. He often wrote the show as well. The primary goal of the lead was to maintain his prominence on the stage. This meant he would take great pains to develop and portray his character. Supporting actors were rarely part of the process and they were expected to develop their characters on their own. They were expected to be characters who simply provided the lines for which a response from the star was required. Especially important, they were expected to play characters that did nothing to distract or diminish the role of the star. The biggest presumption of this era was all these bits that were created independently could somehow meet on a stage and work together. Unfortunately, this was seldom the case.

Experimentation by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen with a theatre group in Berlin in the late 1800's proved coordination by one person of all ensemble actors and individuals involved in a production would result in a better show. The playwright's message would be clearer and the cast would work without conflict in presenting this message. The success of the system the Duke pioneered resulted in the addition of a new job description in theatre: the "regisseur" or "director" as the role is known today.

The Director's Responsibilities

The duties of the director are largely unchanged over the past century. The director's duty is to coordinate all aspects of a production. He must combine the script, the actors, the set, lights, sound, etc. in order the playwright's message is presented as a single strong voice. An excellent director is a literary scholar, acting coach, councilor, designer, production manager, audience member and critic all rolled into one.

A director's duties can be grouped into three main job functions in modern theatre.

- He must understand the message the playwright wants to tell. This means he must be able to analyze a script.
- He must be able to re-create this message on stage. In other words he must be able to translate written word into language of the stage.
- He must be the ideal rehearsal audience. He must react as an audience would and at the same time be a teacher, coach, and critic. To be able to do the job of director a person must be understanding, have a great imagination, and be knowledgeable of all aspects of the theatre.

Knowledge of the theatre is essential before a director can direct. The director is like the captain of a ship. He does not do the actual physical work in making the ship go, but he knows what makes the ship run and he provides the orders to those who actually operate the ship's controls. The director may have studied theatre at a recognized school or may have experienced theatre as a cast and crew member. Ideally a director will have both formal training and practical experience. This helps a director to understand the people and process of theatre.





First Things First

The first production step a director faces is selection of the script. In many community theaters and youth productions, a script will be chosen by the group or group leader based on number of characters or style of writing. Then a director is sought from within the group to stage that play. There are two problems with this approach. First, the play is not selected for the playwright's message or on the merit of the work. In fact, the message may not have even been identified. This is like buying a car without looking to see if it has an engine under the hood.

The second problem is equally risky. A director must be highly motivated in order to undertake a production. Stanislavski, the Russian director and the founder of the method most actors are trained in for stage work today, felt the work of a director is ten times that of the actor. According to author Nikolai Gorchakov in the book *Stanislavski Directs*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1954, Stanislavski stated: "He must be ten times as thorough and ten times as disciplined, because he must teach not only himself but the actors." Most people understand the work an actor does to prepare for a role. Few realize the work of the director starts well before an actor ever sees the script, and continues at a higher level than any other cast or crew member until the play reaches the stage.

The Reward is a Job Well Done

To commit to this much work a director must receive some sort of reward. In professional theatre this may be money or a career move. But in both professional and amateur theatre the best motivation for a director is when the director develops a deep personal connection with the script. The director is so moved by the message of the playwright that he believes this message must be shared with the audience. This director will have a firm commitment, even to the point of an obsession, to stage this play. As an artist, this director wants to present the play in such a way it will maximize the impact on the audience. The point is, unless you have an understanding of the play and a deep commitment to the show, it is doubtful you can do a good job in directing it.

All Other Duties as Required . . .

To a large degree the success of the production will depend on the relationship the director establishes with the actors. He must have their complete trust and confidence in his ability. If the director understands the play completely and can explain to the actors why he wants to play each scene the way he asks, the actors will be much more willing to deliver the performance he is seeking. If the director does not explain things, or worse yet if he is unsure of what he wants, then very quickly cast members will begin questioning his approach.

Inexperienced actors need the director to provide moral support. The first few times on stage are a very frightening experience for most people. Constant reassurance of their work will build an actor's confidence. If they think they are doing a good job, it will reflect in their work and they will do a good job.

As well as being a friend and confidant to the actors, a director also has to be the authority figure. He must set out rules of discipline and enforce those rules. There can be no stars on stage if a performance is to run smoothly. Everyone must contribute to the work at hand.

The director must insist actors be on time for rehearsals. Actors must be ready and waiting for their entrances. A director cannot create a seamless performance if he is continually having to stop a performance and wait for an actor. If actors who are not in a scene are laughing and joking just off stage it makes concentration by actors on stage extremely difficult. If an actor is back stage, he should have only one thing on his mind: the production. Conversations should be limited to the production when you are on stage, or back stage waiting for your entrance.

A problem every director will face at one time or another is an actor who is struggling with lines long after everyone else has their lines memorized. There is very little that can be done in rehearsals if an actor is still carrying a script. The actor who does not know his lines not only hurts his own character but he hurts every

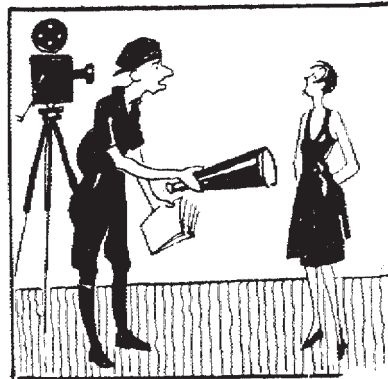


other actor trying to take their cues from him. As well, there is very little the directing that can be done with respect to props or actions if one actor is still carrying a book. A director cannot force an actor to learn lines! Replacing an actor who has not learned his lines on time might be a possibility but now you have a new person in your group and this person will be carrying a script for a long time. A situation where an actor does not learn lines on time is a no-win situation for everyone involved.

All directors will experience other frustrations too. A good director will deal with problems and disappointments with a positive attitude. Criticism that tears an actor down does little good. A director should try to always make criticism positive. Instead of saying: "That's bad, I don't like it" try saying something else like: "Good try, but I am still missing what you are trying to bring to the stage, what else could you do in this situation" or "Have you considered trying...?"

Bring Out the Best

Actors and directors are creative people. Everyone in theatre wants to bring their best performance to the audience. Acting is a lot of work so many directors never ask enough of their cast members. They are afraid of asking too much of the cast. However, if an actor is not challenged a production can quickly become boring for them. Actors will not be satisfied if they are not pressed to do their best. Unless the director asks a lot of an actor he will never receive what the actor is capable of. The director will cheat himself, the actor and the audience of what the show could have been. So a director must always encourage the cast to do their very best. This means a director must bring his best effort forward too. He must start working long before the actors audition. He must work harder than any actor right up to the opening night. During the performance run, when most directors consider their work to be completed, a good director will monitor the show and return if the stage manager requires direction or help in motivating the cast or correcting staging problems that often develop during a long run. Finally, a director must evaluate their work and the performance before their work can be considered completed.





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ACT 1: SCENE 8: TECHNICAL

The first thing an audience sees of a theatre performance is the scenery. Scenery refers to anything on stage that is not moved during the performance. Scenery is also known as the set. Often the set is visible to the audience before the actual performance begins. If the set is hidden from audience's view by a curtain, the set will be the first thing that captures the audience's attention when the curtain opens simply because of the physical size of a set. This dominance makes the design and construction of the set the second most important decision a director makes. Only the director's casting decisions carries more importance in getting the playwright's message to the audience.

While the responsibility for the scenery is ultimately the director's, in large theaters the set designer, stage carpenter and scene painters play major roles in creating a set that is functional and practical. Practical means the set can actually be built on the stage. Functional means the set will accomplish three things:

1. First, a set must add to the action. In other words, a set in modern theatre must provide exits and entrances for the actors. It must provide the furnishings the actors need to recreate the place the playwright had in mind when he wrote the play. The set must also accommodate all the hand props the actor requires.
2. The set is used to provide information to the audience. A well-designed set can provide information as to where the play is happening, when it is happening, who the characters are, and what the atmosphere or mood might be like. For example: Suppose the curtain opens and reveals the interior of an old log building with well-worn snowshoes hanging on the wall, old skis in the corner, lit only by an oil lamp. We might get a feeling this is the far north and it is dark probably evening and probably winter. If there was a gun or pelts in the room we might deduct this is a trapper's cabin. If there was a horse harness on the wall and a clothesline we might get the feeling it was a pioneer cabin. If an easel was placed in the center of the room the audience might think this is an artist's retreat. If the cabin was neat, a picture of family, and maybe a kettle we would get a warm and friendly feeling. If the room was dark, not much there, and what was there was strewn about we would get a foreboding feeling.
3. The set must also provide a pleasing background to look at. If you are asking the audience to look at the same set for a couple of hours, it must have an attractive quality. An audience would not appreciate looking at a revolting sight for two hours. Yet a great scene designer can take a location which most of would consider disgusting and turn it into something pleasing and interesting to the eye. For example: the setting for Andrew Lloyd Web's musical CATS is a junkyard or dump. Few places would be less appealing to stage a play, yet the design of the stage for CATS was interesting and fun.

Creating the Set

To make any set design appealing a director or set designer must follow the same rules as a graphic designer. They must be concerned with line, form, mass and color. Bright warm colors gives the audience the impression the mood of the play will be happy. Bright cold colors on the other hand gives an audience an impression of insincerity. Dark warm colors imply a serious mood, while dark cold colors gives a feeling of dread and danger. The director or the designer has to be aware of the effect anything placed on the stage will have on the audience.





Limitations

Space

One of the biggest constraints a director or a designer face in building a set is lack of space. We are trying to portray life on a very small stage. Just like the actor who must build a complete character with a few lines, somebody language, and relationships with other characters, a set will seldom be the real life size. If we were doing a play about Repunzel, there is no way we could construct a full size castle tower on stage. So the designer must find some way to present the idea this is a huge castle.

Time

Likely there will be some stone work. But the stone work will probably not be real stone because we do not have the time to build and remove stone work from a stage.

Cost

As well, the cost of building with real mortar and stone would be prohibitive. So somehow the designer has to find materials that will give the appearance of a massive stone wall, yet be cheap and easy and fast to construct and tear down.

Steps

1. The process used in set construction always starts with the director. He studies the script and determines what is needed. If he has a set designer, stage carpenter, or stage manager he will probably seek their ideas of what the set should look like. However, the final decision is the directors.
2. He will give a rough layout to the designer, or if no designer is available he will sketch out the set himself. Doors and windows will be included. Major furnishings will be on the sketch. The director will draw everything to scale. This is important as he has to be sure he has room on the set for the movement of actors.
3. Often a scale model is then made from the sketch. This model provides a three dimensional view of the set and provides a better opportunity for the director to see how everything fits together.
4. If the model works, the sketch and model are turned over to the carpenters to create the working drawings and to build the set.

The actual construction of a set is nothing short of magic. The stage crew will use a minimum of materials to construct very light weight set components. After these components are put together on stage the set will appear real to an audience sitting just a few feet away.

Constructing Sets

Walls

The walls on a typical box set are often no more than a one inch by two inch wood frame covered with canvas, muslin, or 1/8 inch plywood. Even a castle wall is made from this same light weight material. A great stage crew will give this canvas covered frame the appearance of a solid rock wall just with paint. The massive doors you see set into the castle wall are nothing more than the lightest wooden interior door available and set into a one inch by six inch frame.

Objects

Large rocks or boulders on stage are probably chicken wire tacked onto an irregular shaped wood frame and covered with a mixture of canvas and white glue. The tree you see on stage is again canvas covered chicken wire. More than likely the side of the tree facing away from the audience is probably not even covered, and if you view that tree from the back you would see the chicken wire.



Water based paint is all that is used to change canvas covered chicken wire into rocks and trees or to give a canvas wall the appearance of either wood, rock, brick, or even wall paper. If the director wants a wall paper look the stage crew will probably use a stencil to paint a wall paper design instead of using real wall paper. This technique allows the set panel to be used over and over, without attempting to get the glue and paper off. A stenciled wall paper design presents a more pleasing appearance than real wallpaper under the bright stage lights.

Painting

Painting a set is more complex than painting a wall in your house because of the bright stage lights that highlight every fault and detail of the set. First, a seal coat is needed. If you are painting canvas, this coat is needed to seal the canvas, and shrink the canvas so it is tight on the frame. If you are painting wood, again a seal coat is needed to fill the pores in the wood, and present a smooth flat surface for the color you want.

Next the set is painted in the color desired. This is called the ground coat. Unlike painting a house where you always use brush strokes in the same direction, on a set you paint in every direction. This technique adds an appearance of depth and texture under stage lighting. If you are painting over old paint you will likely require two coats of paint to get the color you desire.

After the ground coat, at least one and probably two more coats of paint are required. These coats you do not brush on. These coats you spatter on. Ideally you want small droplets of paint, 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch in diameter spread across the wall. These small droplets will diffuse the reflection of light, and add a three dimensional appearance to the wall. The splatter coats are not the same color as the ground coat. One splatter coat will be slightly darker, and the other will be slightly lighter. Under the lights, the audience will not be able to see the paint dots, but the splatters will add a richness and depth to the set.

After the paint is completely dried, the walls might be lightly washed with a rag and dirty water. This washing will lessen the amount of light being reflected and add a more natural, lived in appearance.

Many of the modern texturing techniques which hardware stores and paint stores now promote have been used for years in theatre. Sponging, dry brushing, ragging, and stenciling were used in theatre long before becoming popular with home owners.

Multiple Sets

Shows often require more than one set. Scenic designers have overcome this problem in a number of ways. Large professional theaters usually have a fly system. This system uses ropes and pulleys to lift set pieces well above the stage out of sight of the actors. Stages with large wings may have the sets built on moveable platforms called wagons to allow the crew to wheel set pieces on or off the stage. Small stages may have a rotating floor so two sets are built back to back and the stage floor is rotated to change sets.

Set design is an art, and the results of a good designer will greatly enhance any performance.



NOTES

Back Stage Business

Rehearsal Activities

Curtain Call Assignments

Opening Night Planning

RESOURCES

There are many, many resources available if you want to supplement the material supplied in this manual. Following is a list of a few of the resources. This list has been subdivided into categories to assist you in your search.

Recommended books used in production of this manual

(These books are highly recommended. They were used as a basis for this manual, and contain additional information and exercises which could easily be adapted to a 4-H club. Both of these books are written in a style suitable for theatre novices and would be excellent additions to a club library.)

- ***Theatre Games for the Classroom***, Viola Spolin, Northwestern University Press 1986
- ***The Complete Play Production Handbook***, Carl Allensworth, Harper and Row 1982

Other books used in production of this manual

(These texts were also utilized in the writing of this manual, but the information is advanced and the writing is quite technical so they may be of limited value to a theatre novice.)

- ***Acting, An Introduction***, Bowskill, Prentice Hall, 1977
- ***Studying Drama***, Bradley Thomas Pickering, Croom Helm Ltd, 1983
- ***The Director At Work***, Robert Benedetti, Prentice Hall, 1985
- ***The Art of Directing***, Kirk & Bellas, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985

Other Resources used in production of this manual

(All of these resources were used in production of this manual and are of high value for a 4-H Performing Arts club.)

- ***All The World's A Stage***, (Ontario and Saskatchewan 4-H Theatre Project) Hamilton, Ontario Queen's Printer, 1993
- ***Theatre Arts Adventure***, (United States 4-H Theatre Arts Series) 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System. Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, 1997
- ***Speak Pack***, (available through 4-H catalogue) Hugh Phillips, Alberta Agriculture
- ***Alberta Learning Junior High and Senior High Drama Curriculum Guide***, Alberta Learning, 1987
- ***Workshops By Request Seminars***, (These are theatre workshops organized by Theatre Alberta for Community Theatres. Information is provided by theatre professionals on a topic requested by the theatre organization hosting the workshop. Information by various speakers on a number of topics presented to the Kelsey Community Society was used in this manual. Details on how to request a workshop is listed later in this resource list)

Other Recommended Books

The following books were not used in the production of this manual, however they have been evaluated by Alberta Learning and are recommended in the Alberta Learning Drama Curriculum Guide as resources for teachers in Junior High and Senior High Drama Courses.

- ***Interpretation: Working With Scripts***, Lundy & Booth, Academic Press, 1983
- ***The Theatre Experience***, Wilson, McGraw-Hill, 1988
- ***Living Theatre: an Introduction to Theatre History***, Wilson, McGraw-Hill, 1983
- ***Fundamentals of Voice and Diction***, Mayer, W.C. Brown, 1988
- ***Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays***, Ball, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983
- ***Scene Design, Stage Lighting, Sound, Costume & Makeup: A Scenographic Approach***, Bellman, Harper & Row 1983
- ***Improvisation: Learning Through Drama***, Booth, Academic Press, 1985





- ***A Practical Handbook for the Actor***, Bruder, Vintage Books, 1986
- ***Writing, Producing and Selling Your Play***, Catron, Prentice-Hall 1984
- ***Fundamentals of Play Directing***, Dean & Carra, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980
- ***Respect for Acting***, Hagen, Macmillan, 1973
- ***Improvisation***, Hodgson, Grove Press, 1979
- ***Stage Crafts***, Hogett, Adam & C. Black 1975
- ***A Guide to Improvisation: A Handbook for Teachers***, James & Williams, Kemble Press 1984
- ***The Stage and School***, Ommanney & Schanker, McGraw-Hill 1982
- ***Theatre Technology & Design***, Potts, International Thespian Society 1982
- ***The Actor's Image: Movement Training for Stage and Screen***, Sabatine, Prentice-Hall, 1983
- ***Improvisation for the Theatre: A Handbook Of Teaching and Directing Techniques***, Spolin, Northwestern University Press 1983
- ***Mime: Basics for Beginners***, Straub, Plays Inc, 1984
- ***Basic Drama Projects***, Tanner, Clark Publishing Co. 1987
- ***Creative Communication: Projects in Acting, Speaking, Oral Reading***, Tanner, Clark Publishing Co. 1985

Other Resources

There are a wide range of other resources available. A few you may be interested in:

- **Books:** There are a great many other books available through the Alberta Library System or through book stores which may or may not be equally good , but which have not been reviewed by Alberta Learning.
- **National Film Board:** The national film board has offices in Edmonton and Calgary. They have films and video available for loan, some of which relate to Theatre and Performing Arts.
- **Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism:** Maintains a small library of videos of musicals. Can be contacted through the Performing Arts Branch, Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Edmonton.
- **Theatre Alberta:** Maintains the largest script library in Western Canada. Must be a member of Theatre Alberta to use the library. Members also receive a newsletter about Theatre Arts in Alberta, a listing of all member theatres in Alberta and their upcoming productions. Also conducts youth drama camps during the summer. The office is in Edmonton
- **Workshops By Request:** Administered by Theatre Alberta. Theatre Alberta will provide a professional theatre person to conduct a workshop on any theatre topic, both performing and stage craft. Theatre Alberta subsidizes the cost of the workshop, picking up travelling expenses and hotel room (if necessary) for the instructor. The host of the workshop is charged a set fee depending upon the length of the workshop. Details of Workshops by Request available through Theatre Alberta Office, Edmonton.
- **Community Theatre:** Many communities have a local community theatre. Contact with community theatres may yield skilled people who will assist in your 4-H club. To find the contact person for closest community theatre call Theatre Alberta's Edmonton office.
- **Theatre Supply Stores:** There are a number of stores throughout Alberta dedicated to supplying the needs of live theatre. It would be impossible to provide a complete listing of all stores. However two stores which provide a wide range of theatre makeup, costuming and other on stage materials worth mentioning is Don's Hobby Shop, Calgary, Michael's Amusements, Spruce Grove and Shirley Potter, Edmonton.

Theatre Alberta is the best place to start your search for anything related to theatre in Alberta. They have an excellent web site, with links to other organizations as well as an online membership application. Your first step in expanding your theatre connections in Alberta should be www.theatrealberta.com



Play Catalogues

Following is a list of script catalogues and contact addresses. (from Junior High Curriculum Guide, Alberta Learning) Many of these publishing houses now have their catalogues online. A web search will provide information. Note: Exchange rates, custom charges, and shipping fees can make ordering scripts from outside Canada expensive.

- **Alberta Plays and Playwrights: An Annotated Bibliography**, Writers Guild of Alberta, 10523-100 Ave., Edmonton AB T5J 0A8
- **Baker's Plays**, 100 Chauncey St, Boston MA 02111
- **Basic Catalogue of Plays**, Samuel French, 80 Richmond St East, Toronto, ON. M5C 1P1
- **Basic Catalogue of Plays and Musicals**, Performance Publishing Co. 978 North McLean Boulevard, Elgin, IL 60120
- **Canadian Plays for Young Audiences: Pre-School through Grade 13**, Playwrights Union of Canada, 8 York Street, 6th Floor Toronto, ON. M5J 1R2
- **Catalogue**, Drama Book Specialists, 821 Broadway, New York ,NY, 10003
- **Catalogue of Plays and Musicals**, Pioneer Drama Service, PO Box 22555, 2172 South Colorado Boulevard, Denver, CO, 80222
- **Catalogue of Select Plays**, Art Craft Publishing, Box 1058, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52406
- **Contemporary Drama Service**, 7710-R, Colorado Springs, CO, 80933
- **Dramatists Play Service**, 440 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10016
- **Eldridge Church Entertainments**, PO Drawer 216 Franklin, OH, 45005
- **Music Theatre International**, 119 West 57 Street New York NY 10019
- **Plays that Capture the Audience**, The Coach House Press INC, PO Box 458 Morton Grove IL 60053
- **Plays INC**, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116
- **Plays and Musicals**, The Dramatic Publishing Company, PO Box 109, Woodstock, IL 60098
- **Plays for Young People**, Anchorage Press, PO Box 8067, New Orleans, LO, 70182
- **Plays for Youth**, Macdonald and Young, 152 The Grove, West Wickem, Kent, England, BR49VZ
- **Playwrights**, Union of Canada 8 York Street, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON. M5J 1R2
- **Reader' Theatre Script Service**, PO Box 178333 San Diego, CA 92117
- **Tams-Witmark Music Library**, Inc 560 Lexington Ave, New York NY 10022

Post Secondary Performing Arts Programs:

Most post secondary schools in Alberta offer a drama studies program. Members interested in pursuing theatre studies should check these schools for information on their programs.

These schools may also have performances which your club may be able to attend, or provide tours of their facilities for a club.

Banff School of Fine Arts.....	Box 1020 Banff, AB T0L 0C0
Mount Royal College	4825 Richard Road SW Calgary, AB T3K 6K6
University of Calgary.....	2500 University Drive NW Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
Augustana University College	4901 - 46 AVE Camrose, AB T4V 2R3
Grant MacEwan College.....	Box 1796 Edmonton, AB T5J 2P2
The Kings College.....	10766-97 St Edmonton, AB T5H 2M1
University of Alberta	3, 146 Fine Arts Building, University of Alberta, T6G 2C9
Grande Prairie College.....	10726 - 106 Ave Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4
University of Lethbridge	4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, AB T1K 3M4
Medicine Hat College.....	299 College Drive, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 3Y6
Red Deer College	Box 5005, Red Deer, AB T4N 5H5
Rosebud School of the Arts	Box 654 Rosebud, AB T0J 2T0
Keyano College.....	8115 Franklin Ave Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2H7
Concordia University College	7128 Ada Boulevard, Edmonton AB T5B 4E4



TONGUE TWISTERS

1. She sells sea shells by the sea shore
2. How much wood could the woodchuck chuck, if the woodchuck could chuck wood
3. Betty Balta bought a bit of bitter butter to make her batter better
4. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers? If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?
5. I saw Esau kissing Kate. Fact is we all three saw. I saw Esau, he saw me, and she saw I saw Esau
6. Tip of the tongue, tip of the tongue, tip of the tongue
7. The old cold scold sold a school coal scuttle
8. I saw a yacht and a yawl over yonder yesterday
9. Six silky, slithering snakes slid along, simpering and slyly sneezing, slipping sleazily from side to side
10. The sixth sheikh's sixth sheep is sick
11. Does this shop stock short socks with spots?
12. Theophilus Thistle, thistle sifter, sifted a sieve of unsifted thistles; where is the sieve of unsifted thistles Theiophilus, the thistle sifter, sifted?
13. Fine white wine vinegar with the veal
14. The skunk thunk the stump stunk but the stump thunk the skunk stunk
15. The guests drink toasts at the host's behest, 'til one insists that the host fast while he feasts and persists in his boasts.
16. A big blue bug bit a big black bear.

