Drama/Adv Drama

Mrs. Di Filippo

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Everything About Theatre

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Chapter 14 – Directing For the Stage

What does a director do? Everything! The director guides every aspect of a production: actors, scenery, costumes, lighting – you name it. The director is responsible for defining and achieving the specific artistic goal of the production.

Although the director may not build or paint any scenery or sew any costumes or hang any lights, he or she is responsible for coordinating the activities of all those who do. While the director may not go on-stage and perform for the audience, he or she is responsible for planning and rehearsing the actions of those who do. In short, the director is the unifying force behind a play production, the one who makes sure that all the pieces fit.

Becoming a good director is a lifelong process. It involves knowing as much as possible about as many things as you can – not only things theatrical but thing in general. The more you know about everything, the more you bring to the challenging and rewarding task of directing a play. History, music, psychology, literature, science, philosophy, art, math, woodworking, dance – knowledge in all these areas and others will add to your effectiveness as a director. As a matter of fact, such knowledge will help you in almost anything you do in life: the more you know about people, the world, and the universe, the more possibilities you will be able to see.

Because this book is intended for students of theatre, we’ll confine our discussion o the specifics of the process of working with actors: interpreting the script, planning the action and conducting rehearsals. Understanding these three topics will get you started as a director.

**Interpreting the Script**

1. Understand the script
   1. Read through three times
      1. First read – get the basic idea of characters, plot, mood
      2. Second read – get an understanding of each scene by dialog and movement
      3. Third read – take notes, underline key lines, draw diagrams
   2. List characters with a brief description and motivation
   3. List special requirements for staging – entrances and exits, furniture needed, lighting and sound.
   4. Sketch a ground plan of the set
2. Planning the action
   1. Composition
      1. Balance – arrangement of actors and set pieces are even
   2. Picturization
      1. Plan action so audience understands story without lines
      2. Create pictures to show character intent
      3. Pictures become patterns (i.e. direct confrontation, returned confrontation, several different approaches by one character, more than two characters that are taking sides)
   3. Psychology
      1. Character motivation allows for approach or retreat
   4. Emphasis
      1. Movement – audience eyes are drawn to movement, use movement or stillness to emphasize lines
      2. Height – use levels to direct audience eyes
      3. Body position – full front will gain most attention
      4. Location – Center is strongest followed by DR and DL
      5. Sound – Audience will follow sound
      6. Line of sight – Audience will “read” L to R, see faces first and follow focus from one actor to another.
   5. Contrast
      1. Audience will pay more attention to something that is different – size, color, movement, light, etc.

Using the last scene you were in, follow the steps for directing. Draw diagrams for each “French scene” (anytime someone enters or exits) and explain your choices.