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Assignment

SUMMARY

The essence of theatre is to make the audience believe that the actions, concerns and feelings of the players(actors) are real. This is when we say a play has succeeded. But to achieve this goal the actors must first believe in the character they are to play, i.e, they are to get 'into character'. Also the director should not come into the rehearsal process with a blocked script of his own because the rehearsal is meant for the director and actor to decide on a suitable blocking to every scene. The director also must:

- ✓ Choose a good script because a bad one can never be made good even with talented actors.
- ✓ Be motivated to do the play. He must know it inside out, the more the ideas, the better the play.
- ✓ Also, he must be ready to drop any of his ideas at any point in time during the rehearsal. Else, the creative impulses of the actor will stifle, also hindering discoveries of exciting possibilities.

According to *Peter Brooks* in his book *The Empty Space*, says play development process can be divided into three stages:

- i. Director – Subject – Designer.
- ii. Actor – Subject – Director.
- iii. Actor – Subject – Audience.

Director -Subject -Designer

In this process the director make his vision of the play clear to the designers. This is done in most amateur theatre and some times in professional ones. The director chooses his stage manager, as it is a theatre tradition. He will be in charge and oversee all aspect of the performance on the performance day as the work of the director is done. He has attended most if the rehearsals than any other crew member. This process is where most of the directors duty falls under.

Actor – Subject – Director

During rehearsals while actors act the director becomes the audience so as to correct any error. Also the actor must have their lines and master the blockings also. Because this will be an advantage and create more time for corrections. The director must be willing to drop any of his ideas when the cast has a better one. The actor should believe in their role they play if not the audience will not also and nothing will be achieved.

This is the aspect where the actor has to visualize the directors effort in all areas and also the technical crew are not left out. The play must appear real and not as if it was directed.

Actor – Subject – Audience

This is when Theatre happens the director is now represented by the audience, the French words: rehearsals, performance and audience literally means repetition, representation and assistance. The rehearsal is the **repeated** performance where mistakes and corrections are allowed. The performance is the **representation** of characters by actors on stage. And the audience **assists** the actors to turn the rehearsal into a performance.

The Role of The Director

- ❖ To bring a unified vision within the finished production.
- ❖ He must make his vision clear to other crew members.
- ❖ He must analyse the play and understand it to its depth.
- ❖ He must be able to see the play in both visual and verbal form.
- ❖ He not only gives ideas but listens to others.
- ❖ He must have knowledge of all the requirements in the technical aspect.
- ❖ He must know what is required of each character before casting. Etc.

Before directing your first play, you should note these seven important tips:

1. **Casting is 90% everything** : casting is one of the most important part of a production. Give roles to actors with parallel features to the characters. For instance, to gets the best out of a romantic play the characters involved must be in love with each other.
2. **Know the script better than you know yourself** : knowing your script deeply helps you to direct the play better than just having a shallow understanding. You should be able to answer any 'German' question without having to think before you start.
3. **If you don't have a solid vision, no one will:** you are telling a story with humans. It is important you should know how to tell it and have a goal.
4. **Consider a rehearsal as a laboratory** : this is where the director experiment on the characters and the actors. This is the place to take risks and try everything. It is the most difficult, yet most rewarding experience.
5. **There is no "I" in Theatre, there is no "I" in a team:** Theatre is a collaboration, in order to succeed you need other people to help. You can't act all roles and handle technicals at the same time. Theatre is not a one man thing. Also the director should be a leader not a boss, he must be able to accept relevant ideas and reject less significant ones politely.
6. **Get off book as quickly as possible, it won't be pretty** : as soon as your actors get hold of their scripts they should begin to learn their line and after the first reading, a line run-through should be done. You can't build your actors if they are still reading.
7. **Mind the budget:** the budget of a play might be handled by someone else, so the director's needs must fit into the budget. But must first have a clear understanding of the story and characters.

Amongst the many things you will hear about a good play from the audience, you will never hear "i wish the play was longer". One thing that is common to every play that wasn't good is the feeling that is long.

Every actor will always want to linger over their lines and make a pause whether the script demands it or not. Don't have a ten seconds light out when four will do and a scene change must not be up to or more than 30 seconds.

Rather than telling your actors what to do and drawing the conclusion, be flexible about it. The aim of every director should be that his actors did most of the work and brought most of the ideas. But that doesn't mean he should not have any idea. The rehearsal room is where all the director's preparatory hard work pays off and is their opportunity to experiment with and explore the text using their skill and creativity, together with that of their actors.

Proxemics

Proxemics means the position of people in relation to each other onstage. This is used to convey meanings and relationship of characters on stage to their audience. This awareness is practically in the process known as 'blocking'.

Blocking

Blocking is the systematic arrangement and move meant of actors in stage. Traditionally the stage is divided into sections and referred to in shorthand for easy use by the actor and director, also for simple recording by stage managements. It is the jib of the director to marry the characters motivation that the actor feels is appropriate with the visual needs of the scene.

Planning a Rehearsal

The director and the actor will come together, breakdown the play to explore meanings and set a time for rehearsal of each scenes. While each actor explores their respective roles the director must retain an overview and draw them all together into a coordinated whole that will make sense to entertain the audience and themselves too.

Production meetings

This is the part where the designers, stage manager, vocal coach, movement director and other personnel required meet regularly with the director to discuss issues concerning the production and solve problems if any also to agree on deadlines for any budget the requires assessment before the production day.

Run-throughs

Three week after rehearsals has been on going the actors must have gotten their line and the play would be able to run at a stretch without cutting. But before this the director shod ensure the actors know the sequence of the scenes when to coming and when to leave. The a run-through can be done to alter or correct any action. A run-through should be done at least three times before the actual performance.

Directing

The director has the ultimate responsibility for the artistic elements of any production. He directly controls the actors and indirectly controlling all other aspect of the production. It will be useful if the director has experience in every other aspect of the production.

Selecting A Play

There are various factors to consider when choosing a play. You have to consider :

- ✓ The talent of the actors
- ✓ The potential audience.
- ✓ Number of characters in the play

It is good a director tackles all types of play, but some are comfortable with directing specific type of plays like comedy, farce and others. Its harder to even direct a comedy than a serious or thriller. Because the casts are laughing during rehearsal doesn't mean the audience will laugh, you just have to be patient.

Making changes

Do not change any script to fit your facility instead change your facility to fit the script. You can change stage directions, costumes, the staging etc. but you cannot change the lines of the script because the playwright must have conveyed meanings in the lines.

Venue

In amateur 5heatre venues are selected by society committee except the director has a special reason to perform in a specific location, other than the usually theatre. And this will cost a lot of requirements.

Cast and Crew

Once the play is chosen the director has the initial responsibility for selecting a cast and stage crew from the volunteers. While auditions are done for the characters, the technical crew will need professionals to hold it which will make it more easier for the director then try their ability one by one.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals may nit necessarily take place on the stage that will be used. But with the aid of the scenic designer the actors will be able to know where to enter and exit from also where relevant furniture would be placed. Not all cast are need to be at the rehearsals always. A schedule for scene rehearsal should be made so that when ever a scene needs to be rehearsed characters involved in that scene would be the one to be around. This help the level if focus both on the director and the casts. Also the rehearsal period should not be to long, that is, the production day should not be fixed for a later date, cause the actors will feel they have more time to learn their line and they go on reading their script in one hand and acting with the other.

Grouping

This will help project the characters relationship for instance, isolating a character from a group of cast on stage shows their remoteness or detachment from others.

Working with Props

As easy as it seems, it might be a problem to do a regular daily activity on stage. To pour a cup of tea on stage becomes problematic for a professional waiter. So rehearsals with the necessary props must be done before mounting the stage.

Director's Goal

The directors goal are to provide central interpretation to the playwright's text and to coordinate or unify all other artists' work. And his interpretation can have one of two goals; either to faithful follow the playwright's intention or to he may choose to bring his own vision(usually inspired by the writer's text) to the stage. This can be done in two ways:

- Editorial directing.
- Creative directing.

Editorial directing: this is type of directing that the director seeks essentially to make his work invisible, just like an editor works with a novel before it us published.

Creative directing : directing a play creatively implies that the director directs with his own interpretation and understanding of the play not aiming at the playwright vision through the play but might end in the same way. The director's interpretation is often called **production concept**. It is an analysis of the text that will determine how the play will be brought to life.

The director fulfils his second goal by communicating the production concept to other artists and using the concept in directing and approving other artists' work

Director's tools

A director's tools are the **text** and **other artists**. The director's interpretation of the text will be embodied by actors translating into sight and sounds and movement by the designers. In **creating a production concept** the director uses several intellectual and practical tools: literal and theatrical text analysis, knowledge of the Theatre space, designers styles, actors' strengths, and intended audience. As well as his own experience of performance style. Then to **carry out the production concept**, the director uses essentially the same tools. A director who has knowledge of other production aspect will fill it helpful to make decisions to coordinate all the elements. The director spends the majority of his time working with actors in rehearsal, therefore extensive experience as an actor or working with actors is essential. The director must be able to communicate ideas about the text in terms that the actor can translate into stage action and thus communicate to the audience.

Director's Process

The director's process starts from the selection of a play to the production night. He works closely with all members of the artistic staffs and some of the theatrical administrative staffs. He spends a lot of time with the actors on rehearsal and the second largest time is on analysing the script which may call for extensive research. A director and play may be brought together in a number of ways: if the director is a member of a theatre's artistic staff then he may select a play himself or in consultation with the governing artistic and financial bodies of the theatre; he may be hired by a company to direct a play chosen by that company; or, he may select a play and then seek producers to fund the production or an existing company to sponsor his work. No matter how she has been hired, the director's next step is to **work with the text**. This analysis and imagining will lead the director to a production concept.

The **first production meeting** is where the director meets with all the production staffs to communicate his production concept. A more collaborative director will seek feedbacks, clarification, and revision from his designers on his ideas.

At an early meeting, the production staff must establish a **production schedule**, which sets deadlines for design approval, deadlines for set and costume construction, dates on which the lighting crew works in the theatre, press release deadlines, program copy deadlines, and dates of technical and dress rehearsals.

At **subsequent production meetings**, designers will present sketches of their design and the director then makes amend if necessary so that the production can cohere. These meetings are usually held weekly. Then the casting process, the director can cast in various ways either setting up an audition for roles or the production company could have actors for major roles already.

In professional Theatre, the volunteers are asked to present a monologue of their own at the initial audition then a call back for those who the director feels he might cast. At call-backs actors read from the texts, either **cold-reading** (not prepared) or **prepared reading** (there are given time to prepare their characters).

Once the play has been cast, it enters rehearsal. It is the duty of the director for scheduling and structuring each rehearsal. A typical progression is from reading, to blocking, to character building, to refining, to technical, to dress rehearsals, and finally to previews and opening night.

At **reading**, the actors may simply read the text or analyse as they read. In **blocking rehearsal** the director sets where the actors will move on stage. By this time the director has an over view of how the set will look like and doors, furniture and other props will be. In **character rehearsal**, actors work on their self to build the character they are play. The director clarifies points of characters and ensure that they fulfil their purposes within the text.

Once the whole play has been blocked the director changes his focus to shaping and moment of the overall play. He pays attention to little moments and specific details of the text. In **refining rehearsal**, he may work on pacing, comic timing, scene transition and so on. Since it comes later in rehearsals when the play is rehearsed of book with a run-through the director puts himself in the shoes of the audience to see how it will go.

In the **technical rehearsal** the work of the actor is finally put together with the work of the designers. The **cue-to-cue** tech rehearsals usually come first then the scenes with the lights and sounds etc. The **dress rehearsal** is often the last and final one, the director's job here is to make such that each character's costume blends with the other and suits the role they are playing. The stage manager marks when sound, lights and set cues should come in and how long it should last in his prompt book. This is called **paper tech**.

On the play night the work of the director is done and they might want to see how the final product will look like in front of the real audience.

Historical Conventions of Directing

- ✓ The German author Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe was one of the first Theatre practitioners to take a decisive step towards directing. He extended rehearsal periods. He was the one who started blocking.
- ✓ Saxe-Meiningen built more on Goethe's innovation of composing the stage picture, he made the stage picture dynamic and extended stage action off the sides of the stage into the wings.
- ✓ He hired people from the streets to take the role of non-speaking actor in the crowd without training them, he placed a professional actor in each group of people.
- ✓ The early 20th century saw the rise of **auteur-directors**, they saw themselves as directors who were also authors.
- ✓ Many 20th century directors helped to define new styles of performance, which in turn increased the need for more directors generally.

Types of Directors

Musical Director

The musical director works with the stage director in the musical theatre productions. She works with the director's production concept. Her function is to teach music and coach singers on interpretation etc. The musical director is often responsible for hiring, rehearsing and conducting the pit orchestra.

Choreographer

The choreographer works with the director in musical theatre or other plays that involve dance or stylized movement. Some plays set in other time periods will have a **movement coach** who teaches movement appropriate to the time period that may or may not include dance. Unlike the choreographer working for a dance company, the theatre choreographer must consider the dramatic effect, the purpose of the dance within the plot, and the motivations of the characters involved when composing.

Fight Director

A final kind of director is the fight director. He is skilled and usually certified in stage combat. Like the music director and choreographer, the fight director works with the director and follows her production concept. Fight directors stage hand-to-hand combat as one might see in a western's bar

room brawl, fighting with historic weapons such as the epee which is found in the final scenes of Hamlet, and fighting with contemporary weapons as we often find in a murder mystery. Fight sequences are said to be “choreographed” and are composed and rehearsed move by move like dances.

Advice and Ideas

To summarize, there are many ways to reinvent plays with a directorial concept. Here are just a few to get your creative juices flowing:

- Use nontraditional and multiracial casting.
- Set the play in a different time or era.
- Set the play in a different place or location.
- Change the sexes or ages of characters.
- Stage the show in a unique theatrical venue (outdoors, in the round, or in an unconventional or site-specific space).

These ideas work best when you are inspired by the material you are directing. But what if you are assigned to stage a play that does not prompt a clear-cut directorial concept or simply does not speak to you? You don't necessarily have to take the job, but if you're willing to give it a try, you may want to employ one or more of the following activities to spark your imagination:

- Put together an impromptu reading, offering no direction or guidance. You'll be amazed at what actors can come up with from a simple read-through.
- Read other plays by the same author, which will give you a larger appreciation for and wider perspective on how the play fits into the writer's body of work.
- Go see a different play or movie, taking the ideas of your current project with you to the Cineplex or theatre.
- Analyze other plays by coming up with concepts for them and then see if you can apply one of those ideas to your current show.
- Envision how a famous director would stage the show, then take your cues from that style until you can adapt them and make them your own.
- Place the material in a contrasting genre; see how the script stands up to a Kabuki or film noir treatment, for example.
- Envision the show with an all-star cast, which may help you see it in a new light.
- Ask fellow directors what their takes on the material would be, which will serve as a sounding board and could lead to brainstorming ideas.
- Research what other directors have done with the material in the past, from reviews and online sources.
- Think of the craziest concept you can imagine, something you would never normally consider. If nothing else, it may lead to more-practical ideas.

As for final words of advice, Bowen offers, "Sometimes simplicity is best when it comes to concepts. I also believe that a director's concept should aid the production and make it more accessible to the audience. I try not to get in the way of what the author is trying to say." Marks agrees, reminding directors to "find a concept that serves the story and gives the actors something specific to play." Sod thinks a concept should illuminate the text: "Don't choose something just to be novel. I'm always hoping that there is logic to the conceptual choices I make -- that they come from the text and enhance the world of the play, not

distract from it." And Einhorn cautions, "If you aren't interested in the play, don't do it. If you are, use the concept to communicate what it is about the play that you love."