

Thoughts on Leading Drama Workshops

THTR 452: Secondary Theatre Techniques

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Leading Drama Workshops: Secondary Level- some thoughts for class 452

I. Qualifications of Leaders

- Leaders must be prepared to both guide professionally and “go with the group” as the situation determines
- Must leave time for processing, especially if doing devised work. Also do not underestimate need for processing scripted work as well.
- Need calm, directive style, supportive, sense of humor a must, and above all the ability and willingness to be flexible- to change directions instantly if necessary
- Maintain a low-level (as much as possible) of fear and distaste about confrontation, conflict, intensity and witnessing pain

II. What good facilitation looks like (from *Hope is Vital*). A good facilitator:

- Is **energized** and **enthusiastic** about the process. You are the bridge for them to move from spectator to actor
- Is a good **listener**. The group **MUST** know you care about their thoughts and responses
- Is **non-judgmental**. You are not in charge to change the scene to the direction you think it should go because of your own opinions. *You* work for *them*.
- Always **moves things forward**. Always consider options, angles and situations in new ways through sharing observations (not introducing new things or changing it to fit an agenda).
- Is **confident** in their role as **tone-setter** and guide.
- Is **aware of the dynamics** of the room. This is why you work in teams.
- **Understands** that there will sometimes be people in the room who don't want to be there. Make sure it isn't you.
- **Asks every question truly wanting to hear the answer**. Never ask a question expecting an answer with your next move hinging on that response.

III. V.O.T.E and devised/improvised work

(V.O.T.E is a format acronym developed originally for acting improv performance classes led by Robert Cohen)

- V is for Victory:** what does your character really want? (objective hierarchy) “Victory” is preferred because it carries higher stakes. Should be stated in a simple, declarative sentence: “I *want...*”
- O is for Obstacle:** What stands in the way of your character getting what he/she wants? May be internal (“I’m afraid to try”) or external (“My mom won’t let me”). In the best scenes, students will realize that one character’s Victory is another’s Obstacle. (conflict)
- T is for Tactics:** What can your character do to overcome the obstacle? This is usually where a number of variations and potential endings are explored in an improv setting to arrive at final choice for performance. Tactics are great for associations between behaviors and consequences- so explore as many as you can.
- E is for Emotions:** What feelings are stimulated by the character’s use of various Tactics to overcome Obstacles to achieve Victory? The emotions explorations can reveal that one feeling (anger) is often a mask for a deeper emotion (hurt).

IV. Self-Disclosure and Confidentiality

- Theatre is **POWERFUL** and can evoke personal disclosures

- Assure confidentiality: you MUST state expectations about confidentiality from the very beginning- what's said in rehearsal process does not leave the process- only that which winds up in *agreed upon* performance
- Control depth of scene: You are NOT a psychotherapist, drama therapist or any other kind of pist. Keep the scenes general, which allows for greater creative freedom with anything involving personal material.
- Identify and discuss resources early on: where to look for help.

IV. Role of the Leader and Professional Boundaries

- Participate at your own discretion based upon your comfort level and abilities
- Leaders should NOT participate, except as guides/facilitators, in the creation of and initial parts of devised work. Experienced leaders may participate if there is a shortage or someone is missing, but you are not ready for that and need to back each other as leaders- This will help avoid situations of “good cop/bad cop” among you and the students
- This is NOT a personal therapy session for you, nor an outlet for your own issues. It is indeed a creative outlet and a chance to hone directorial skills- *but the most important of those is the ability to direct from the root without making it about you.*

V: The Program Itself

- Establish realistic goals
- Keep a list of needed items/props from the very beginning- as scenes, etc. develop- to avoid the horrid realization that you've WAY overdone it and must cut something vital
- Get there early and set up the space- or get it ready for arriving ritual*
- Time needed: think carefully about how much time will be allotted for each portion of rehearsal time (warm-ups, check-in, scene work, processing, etc.) and STICK TO IT as much as you can. DO NOT plan on any period less than 45 minutes (bare minimum)
- You as the leaders have ultimate authority over what is included in the final product and what isn't- don't get so caught up in the democracy approach that you sacrifice artistic integrity- which will mean a LOT more to the students in the long run.
- Processing MUST BE a part of each meeting- even if it is a simple five-minute discussion on what was done that day.