**Preparing to Perform** by Kira Jacobs Rutter

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate an understanding of actor preparation towards performance by participating in a series of short activities culminating in entering the stage.

**Class Level:** Beginning; meant to introduce students to the idea of getting on stage and performing or applying these principles to a formal scripted performance

**Main Concepts:** honest acting, learning how to rehearse, how to act on stage

**1994 National Standards**: STANDARD 2: Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions.

**Lesson Plans**

Lesson 1: Honest & Thoughtful vs. Overacting

Students will identify aspects of performance that affect an actor’s “Over acting” or ability to act and react honestly through displaying both possible performance styles in the performance of small actions and reactions.

Lesson 2: Polishing Rehearsals

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the purpose of “polishing” rehearsals by giving and receiving feedback in trust centered friendly peer reviews.

Lesson 3: Tech Rehearsals

Students will be able to use light to either give or take attention on stage, use props to further plot and character, and consider costumes in relation to characterization through application of these skills through improvisation.

Lesson 4: Adapting and Performing in the Moment

Students will demonstrate an ability to adapt to new situations by participating in a improvised scene affected by changing circumstances.

Lesson 5: Work Day

Students will work actively at applying unit performance preparation activities through practical application towards their characters demonstrated through previews with the instructor.

Lesson 6: Preparing to go Onstage

Students will demonstrate an understanding of actor preparation towards performance by participating in a series of short activities culminating in entering the stage.

**Lesson 1: Honest & Thoughtful vs. Overacting**

**Objective**

Students will identify aspects of performance that affect an actor’s “Over acting” or ability to act and react honestly through displaying both possible performance styles in the performance of small actions and reactions.

**Materials Needed**

“Dear \_\_\_\_\_” Situation Slips (Appendix)

**Related Documents**

* "Dear....."Situation Slips

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: Warm up –**Gather the students in a common area and have them form a large circle.  Within this circle instruct students that we are creating an “Energy Ball”.  Have students begin by forming the circle, and rubbing their hands together, gathering energy.  On the count of three have students spread their hands to create a pantomimed ball of energy involving the entire group.  Within this circle, guide students to compact the ball as a group. Instruct students to be aware of the entire group, focused on the ball, and to work to make it as small as they can within the group.  As the ball becomes too small for the group to compact as a whole, instruct students to take a piece of the ball for themselves with some other members of the group, have them continue in this manner until everyone is in a partnership of two.  Once they have reached their partnership, have students release the ball of energy on the count of three.

**Instruction**

**Step 2:  Partner Focus --** Action reaction (Pass the ball? Slow Motion and Reaction)

**Step 3: Discussion—Engage students in a discussion about the warm up and focus activities.**

·         What was accomplished through this activity?  (Concentration of Attention)

·         What could we use from this activity in performance?

·         Why is it important to focus on our partners?

**Step 4: Instruction/ Model**

·         Why is focus important to performance?

**Step 5: Instruction/Model-** Overacting vs. Honest & Thoughtful

·         Overacting?

o   Often insincere

o   What is a situation in which overacting works best?

o   What is a situation in which overacting does not work?

Ask for 6 volunteers.  Instruct volunteers that they are whatever the class instructs them to be.  Ask the class to give three ways in which Overacting can be used well. Assign those three ways to three students

o   Slapstick

o   Children’s Shows

o   In Mockery

Have the audience give the other three people three ways in which overacting does not work as well.

o   Tragedy

o   Drama

Have students attempt to improvise an attempt to overact in each context.  Allow students to respond with what they notice, or their reactions to those attempts.

·         Honest/Thoughtful?

o   What is a situation in which honesty & Thought works best?

o   What is a situation in which Honesty & Thought does not work as well?

**Step 6: Workshop activity-**Have students sit opposite a partner, knee to knee. Have partners designate one of them as partner A and the other as partner B.  Begin by assigning partner A to ACT and the other, partner B, to REACT.  (“Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_, etc.)  Ask students to have partner A pick up one of the situation slips.  They are to say the line, and then, partner B will respond by saying the second portion of the sentence in the form of a question.

Example:

·         Partner A:  “Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_, you've been named prom queen!”

·         Partner B:  “I’ve been named prom queen?”

Then:

·         First have students to “Over Act” their reactions

·         Then have students try to react with “Thought and honesty”

**Step 7: Discussion-**

In order to approach acting “Thoughtfully & Honestly” What were some things you thought you needed to do?

o   Focus: on emotion, words and partner

o   Does the content necessarily need to be serious to be honest?

In recognizing Overacting” what did you notice?

·         What is the actor focused on?

·         What kind of content does it fit?

**Assessment**

**Step 8: Practical Application-**Allow students the duration of the class period to apply this focus to their characters that they are preparing for the “One Act Festival” (or any other performance you want to do).  Check and sign off each student for participation points during the course of the class period to affirm their active work to apply concepts during the allotted time.

**Lesson 2: Polishing Rehearsals**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the purpose of “polishing” rehearsals by giving and receiving feedback in trust centered friendly peer reviews.

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: “Hook”-**Introduce the activity “Pendulum” to the students.   In this activity have students divide into groups of 8 or less.  Within these groups have them form a circle, touching shoulder to shoulder, and instruct students to breathe in and out as a group.  Ask for a volunteer from each circle to step to the middle of the circle, close their eyes, and to keep breathing along with the group.  Instruct students forming the circle that they are forming a circle of trust for the person who volunteered to go to the middle.  When the person in the middle feels comfortable they will allow themselves to sway, supported by the surrounding group.  Do this with as many class members as you can, asking them to trust each other.

**Instruction**

**Step 2: Discussion-**Engage students in a discussion about what this activity can teach us about approaching the upcoming weeks of rehearsal.

·         What did this activity require?

·         Was it hard?  Was it easy?  Why?

·         Why would trust be important to these last weeks of rehearsal?

**Step 3: Instruction-**Help students recognize what they have accomplished as well as what they have left to do.

o   What should be done by now?

§  Memorization

§  Blocking

§  Run-throughs

o   What is there left to do?

§  Polishing Rehearsals: Solidifying your choices and eliminating those that you are unsure about.

·         Unity of Cast, of scenes, of show

o   Going into P= Gain trust, the ability to give feedback

·         Make Up Your Mind

·         Timing Your Silences

·         Creating Moments

o   Timing & Tempo, Characterization

o   How to do it?

§  Be kind- Keep it Fun- It is easy for it to become grumpy

§  Be encouraging

§  Be prepared

§  Be flexible

§  “I would like to try…” work ahead of time

§  Don’t interrupt unless necessary

§  Prioritize

·         Everything will be good to a point but nothing will be exceptional if you don’t focus

**Step 4:  Practicing Application:**  Ask for 2 volunteers.  Give these volunteers a short content-less scene; give them time to look over the lines.  Instruct the rest of the class that they have it memorized (Suspend Disbelief), they are blocked and they’ve done a run-through previously.  Ask the class to give the two volunteers the situation and characters after the full run-through.  Instruct the class that they are the directors and they need to polish this scene.  Have students consider genre, situation, characters and comedic timing as well as dramatic timing as they seek to improve the scene as they polish it for “performance”.

**Step 5: Question & Answer Discussion:**Open up the class to open discussion for them to answer each other’s questions, and to address specific concerns that have come up during “One Act” rehearsals.

**Assessment**

**Step 6: Peer Review Practical Application-**Pair students to view each other’s performances.  Have students help each other polish certain moments that have been hard or felt awkward.  Each student must write notes on the other students performance and have that sheet of paper checked and recorded by the instructor before the end of the class period and then give those notes to the fellow student.

**Lesson 3: Tech Rehearsals**

**Objective**

Students will be able to use light to either give or take attention on stage, use props to further plot and character, and consider costumes in relation to characterization through application of these skills through improvisation.

**Materials Needed**

·         Student performers with monologues

·         Props or Pieces of Paper with props listed

·         Costume Pieces

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: “Hook” –**Begin the class with either a guest performer or skilled student actor performing a monologue.  Design lighting, use props, and costume the actor for maximum production of the monologue performance.

**Instruction**

**Step 2: Discussion-**Engage students in a discussion of the performance.

·         What did you experience in watching this performance?

·         What is unique about this performance than any we’ve worked on so far?

·         How can technical elements of theatre strengthen overall performance?

Today we will be discussing the benefits of lighting, props and costume as well as how to prepare for the upcoming technical rehearsals.

**Step 3:  Light Instruction/Modeling-**Ask certain students prior to class, either from prior classes, or from a higher level course, to perform a monologue for the purposes of instruction, utilizing the light in different ways**.**

Utilizing the Light

o   How do we use light?

o   Be careful

o   Get hot

o   Get Blinded

o   Don’t look to Iris

Different light options

·         In dark

·         Out of light

·         Edge of Light

·         “Iris” of Light

Meaning of Light

o   What do the colors feel like?

o   What do the shadows say?

**Step 4: Discussion-**Following each performance of a monologue, with different lighting options, ask students to consider their initial reactions and conclusions as a result of light.

·         What is the use of light and how does it affect performance quality?

·         What did this lighting with this performance make you feel?  Think?

**Step 5: Guided Practice-**For students to be able to experience what is being discussed about lighting.  Have the entire class gather on stage and turn the lights of and then on so they can experience the light.  Next have students line up on either side of the stage and each walk through light finding the Edge, the Iris and looking at the light, a partner onstage and the audience.

**Step 6: Prop Instruction—**Review with students what qualifies as a prop, as well as what uses they have as well as the importance of practicing with props.

PROPS:

·         What are Props?

·         Why do we use props?

·         When in the rehearsal process do you begin using props?

**Step 7: Prop Practice-**Choose volunteers from the class to participate in an improvised scene.  Ask the students to provide a situation and character description for each student improvising. Situation/Characters.  Instruct students that on the floor are pieces of paper, each with the name of a prop written on it.  When the instructor says prop a student must grab a “prop” and use it in the scene.  When the instructor says “Switch” the student must slap the hand of a student sitting in the audience and switch places.

**Step 8: Costuming Instruction/Modeling:**Talk Through the benefits of costumes as well as some of the limitations or considerations.

Benefits:

·         Further Character, Establish Context, Interesting to work with

Limitation/Consideration:

·         Actor Mobility, What does it say about your character?

**Assessment**

**Step 9: Going into Polishing/Tech Rehearsals**

·         Purpose

o   Techies opportunity to rehearse their cues

·         What to expect?

o   Standing around

o   Waiting

·         What to do?

o   Focus

o   Do something productive- work on character voice, walk, or run lines.

o   Be patient

o   Be grateful to Techies

**Lesson 4: Adapting and Performing in the Moment**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate an ability to adapt to new situations by participating in a improvised scene affected by changing circumstances.

**Materials Needed**

·         Mini “Letters”-- Letters: 20 comedic 20 dramatic

·         Match up sheet to lines

·         Objectives

**Related Documents**

* Try To....Ideas

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: “Hook”-**Engage students in the activity telephone mime. In this activity, divide the class in half and have them form two lines.  The front member of each line will be told a word, or phrase, they will then try to act out that word or phrase to the next person down the line.  As they go they need to do their best to convey their understanding of the action to the next person, sometimes needing to adapt the motion not merely replicate.  At the end of the line ask the student to say what they believe was being conveyed.

o   What was difficult or easy about this activity?

o   What skills did it require?

o   How do these skills tie to performance?

**Instruction**

**Step 2: Instruction/Discussion:**Instruct students regarding the importance of flexibility and focus on stage so they can adapt, as a character as well as an actor

o   How can we change in order to accomplish something? Objective, tactic,

As a character:

·         Another character says something you don’t expect

·         Something surprising happens in the script

As an Actor:

·         Someone forgets a line on stage

**Step 3:** **Exploration Activity-** Students will be instructed to say the line, “Honey I love you but I just can’t smile” while simultaneously reading the “letters” used in the lesson on honesty vs. overacting and reacting to them.  The purpose of this activity is to require students to remain in character while adapting to new information or outside influences.

·         Subtext:  6-8 different notes, deliver line while reading the note (Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, etc.)

·         Adapt to situation while remaining the character

**Step 4: Discussion-**Engage students in a discussion about the previous activity.

o   What did we learn about adapting?

o   Was it easy?  Hard?  Was the style of adaptation influential on the difficulty?

**Step 5: Guided Practice-** Gibber Adaptations- **“Affect the Player”—**Have the players divide into pairs. Each player is directed to elicit a speciﬁc feeling or set of feelings from his or her partner, but neither player is aware of the objective of the other (e.g., Player A makes Partner B feel confused, Player B makes Partner A feel elated). Players may be directed to elicit two different emotions from their partner. This exercise is most often done without talking, although actions, sounds, or gibberish may be used. The players are instructed to strongly and actively pursue their objective, while allowing themselves to be affected by the actions of their partner.  Have them do this then in character and then within a scene.

**Step 6: Transition/Discussion-**Discuss with students the difficulties of conveying meaning, of adapting to communicate with those not finely tuned to understand you.  This is why it is important to be on the same page as fellow actors, to know how to adapt effectively to each other.  Tell the students that the following activity is designed to provide opportunities to adapt and improvise solutions.

**Assessment**

**Step 7:** **Assessment-** Have students divide into pairs.  Within these pairs, the entire class is given a situation and stock characters with which to improvise a situation and create a working relationship.  Give students 5 minutes to improvise the scene in different ways and become used to each other’s style. Once students are comfortable, have students return to their seats. Ask a pair of students to demonstrate their improvisation.  Following their improvisation, ask a student from another group to introduce their third character into the scene that the original actors would need to adapt to.  Continue this model with another pair or so.  Following this group model, have students return to their pairs, join with another pair and in this fashion interrupt each other’s scenes forcing the actors to adapt.

**Step 8:  Closure-** Ask students to reflect with their partners the difficulties their encountered in the final work activity.  Ask them to consider difficulty, ways to prepare and its importance.

**Lesson 5: Work Day**

**Objective**

Students will work actively at applying unit performance preparation activities through practical application towards their characters demonstrated through previews with the instructor.

**Materials Needed**

·         Work Day Evaluation Rubric (not included – needs to be created by teacher or together by the class members)

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: “Hook”-**Warm up the students through activities that warm up the body, the voice, and their energy.

·         Body: Have students close their eyes

o   Instruct students to reach up high towards the ceiling stretching their arms and fingers as well as their feet and toes.  Then have students bend to touch their toes, have them isolate and begin to tap their toes, then isolate their knees, then their knees, then their torso then have them take 30 seconds to stretch and wakeup all the different parts of their bodies.

·         Voice: this activity can be done simultaneously with that of the body.

o   Ask student to now focus the energy and ability of their body through their voice.  Ask students to begin with a low steady hum, ask them to vary the tempo and pitch of that hum, then ask students to alter their voice to an “ahhhh”  “uuhhh”, then engage students with consonants focusing on projection and diction.

·         Energy:

o   Once students have fully engaged their body and voice, have students build energy to put towards their performance work. Begin building this energy through movement actviities.  One activity possibility is to do the “Shake Countdown” Game.  Have students begin counting down for a count of 8, then 7 then 6 etc.  For each count shaking a hand then the other, then a foot than the other until you are shaking each limb for only a count of 1.

o   Following this activity, have students focus the energy by creating a group energy ball.  Have students all begin by rubbing their hands together building friction and then on the count of three have students spread their arms and hands to create a pantomimed ball of energy.  Once the ball is formed have them try to compress it as small as possible without coming into contact with each other’s hands until they feel it right to release the energy into the room.

**Instruction**

**Step 2: Question and Answer Session-**Invite students toaddress any questions, concerns or difficulties to the class, or instructor, about their One Act rehearsal process. To spark discussion:

·         Would anyone like to share an experience?

o   What rehearsals have been most effective and why?

o   What has caused rehearsals to be less effective or supportive?

o   Is there anything you feel is keeping you from succeeding?  Discouragement?  Worry?  Questions?

**Step 3: Guided Practice-**Pass out the rubrics to the class.  Have every student write their name on their rubric performing continuing forward.During each time check allotment affirm that every student is actively working on an aspect of their performance.  Per each check, preview a fourth of the class regarding spot check memorization. Each student will need to have brought their scripts.  Take their script and give the student a 2-3 line led in to their own line, check memorization on random pages spaced from the beginning middle and end.

·         **1st Check-**Affirm the work of each member of the class. Fourth of class previewed for memorization.

·         **2nd Check-** Affirm the work of each member of the class. Fourth of class previewed for memorization.

·         **3rd Check-**Affirm the work of each member of the class. Fourth of class previewed for memorization.

·         **4th Check-**Affirm the work of each member of the class. Fourth of class previewed for memorization.

**Assessment**

**Step 4:  Closure-**At the end of the class period.  Instruct each student to return their rubric to the instructor, with their names written.  Impress upon the students the importance of preparing for rehearsals, class, and performance individually. Remind students to bring their scripts to class the following class period, but also let them know that next class period they will be receiving feedback on overall performance rather than merely memorization.

**Lesson 6: Preparing to go Onstage**

**Objective**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of actor preparation towards performance by participating in a series of short activities culminating in entering the stage.

**Materials Needed**

·         Work Day Participation Rubric

·         Large work space, stage lighting capabilities

·         Kiss me Kate-  "Another opening, another show"

**Lesson Directions**

**Anticipatory Set/Hook**

**Step 1: “Hook”- In the Spotlight-** House lights out, lights onstage.

Next week, you will go onstage.  You will perform for family, friends, and strangers.  Not for me, but for a full-blown audience here to see you perform.

·         How do you feel about that?

·         What needs to be done to prepare?  Technically? Individually?

Be familiar with all props, costumes, quick changes, lighting and sound effects. But…

·         What needs to be done to prepare? As a cast? Individually?

**Instruction**

**Step 2: Discussion-** Focus on the task at hand

Inform students that; today I will lead you through a series of activities that are intended to prepare you to go onstage.  These activities will be like a condensed version of the preparation you should do.  Acting requires preparation, focus and commitment to the story, the cast and to the character you portray.  Over the past few units, we’ve talked about:

·         Trust

·         Focus & Concentration

·         Commitment

·         Character

**Step 3: Build Energy-** Prepare your body to Act & React

·         Engage students in stretching, high to the ceiling, low to their toes, wiggling their fingers wiggling their body.  Do this all in one large group.

·         Once students are stretched, have them divide into two groups.  These two groups are your “Casts” and we are going to prepare to go onstage.  Explain that we will do a chant, this chant is the.  “Ooo I feel so good, Liiiiiike I knew I would” Oo I Feel Sooooo Good!”  Instruct student to begin by bouncing together to a beat, then have them say the chant as soft as they can, then medium, then loud and then even louder with each increase of volume growing more exaggerated in their bouncing.

**Step 4: Focus Energy-** Have students form into two or more groups.  Have the students close their eyes and breath in and out.  Have one student choose to have the energy of the group.  This person, when the group opens their eyes, will pass their energy to a specific member within the group.  Once that member of the group has received it, they will pass it on to another member of the group- with no speaking.  After a specified period of time, call the activity to a halt and ask:

·         Who has the energy?

**Step 5: Build Unity-**Within these same groups, have students begin to mirror each other.  Copying each other’s every move, have students try not to let any one person lead but to watch each other so closely so to be able to move together.  Thus mirroring as an entire cast.  Next ask students to pair themselves with another classmate.  Have these students begin mirroring each other, focus on moving together.  Once they are in sync, have students turn their backs to each other, not touching and try to breathe in unison with their partner, and move their arms as they feel necessary.  Do not try to predict your partner but to be aware of the energy around you and move accordingly.

**Step 6: Build Character-**Focus student energy and prepare to use it on stage by asking students to find their own space in the room.  Ask them to begin with their eyes closed.

·         Individual focus time:  Face a wall/close eyes, Breathe in, Breathe out,

·         How do you feel today?

·         How does your character feel?

·         What is your character thinking about? What is important just prior to entering that stage?

·         Where will your character be going?  What does your character think will happen today?

·         Have students open their eyes, focus on something around you (your finger, an item etc.)

·         What does your character want to do?  Do it.

·         What does your character want to say?  Say it.

·         Feel your character spread from your core, to your toes, your fingers, your body and face.  Take a walk as your character.

Go back stage and enter as your character. (Lower lights in house and lighten on stage)

**Step 7: Practical Application-** Pass out rubrics for their Work Day individual time. Explain that their work will be checked on every 10-20 min. They may work on:

·         Memorization (Make it natural)

·         Voice: Projection, Diction

·         Characterization (Walk, Talk and Thoughts)

·         Impulse and Variety

Inform students that everyone will be spot checked on memorization before the end of the class period.  Rubrics must be turned in by the end of the class period with a signature for each time segment, and a check mark for memorization.

**Assessment**

**Step 8: Closure-** Assure students of their work in class and at rehearsal.  Encourage students to work to develop their characters towards that next level of performance.