

◇ DIRECTING WORKSHOP ◇

Vocabulary

These key words or phrases (underlined the first time they are used in the text) are essential to understanding the material in this chapter. You should make them part of your theatrical vocabulary and use them in your work.

contact sheet French scene dressing the stage paper tech dry tech

Introduction

Put in the Logbook chapter all your script(s), blocking notes, contact sheets, rehearsal schedules, and production notes (sound, lights, staging) as you gather them .

Refamiliarize yourself with the following information in this book:

- Floor plan symbols
- Script/interpretation scoring symbols
- Script page samples.

The student-directors will begin to learn the fundamentals of directing through various exercises and directing a short one-act (ten minute) play. This chapter is very much a “work in progress.” These exercises will be refined in class

ASSIGNMENT: PREPRODUCTION

Choosing a script

There are several reasons that directors choose a script that they would like to direct, such as:¹

- story (plot)
- language
- theme
- character
- style of play
- content
- clarity of the play, characters, etc.
- personal meaning to the director
- social meaning to the director
- humor
- age of characters
- character objectives
- provides good levels

Production Concept

In directing, the second most important thing is the rehearsal process. The *first* is preparing the script for production. And the first step in this preparation is determining the concept of the show. The concept should be able to be explain in only one sentence. Of course, all concepts are correct. But, DON'T DIRECT BY INCHES.² This technique must be given up. Find the motivation and objective of the character's and the playwright; a director's job is not to make “pretty” pictures (or picturization). “Don't look at HOW. Look at WHY.” -Kenneth Banagh in his screenplay *A Midwinter's Tale*.

Also keep in mind that being a director is not just having an opinion.

ASSIGNMENT: A DIRECTOR'S CHECKLIST

¹ These criteria can be found in *Directing Plays* by Stuart Vaughn.

² Louis Fantasia, Education Director, Shakespeare Globe Centre, Western Region; Director, Teaching Shakespeare Performance Institute, London, Summer 2001.

First Reading

Read through in one sitting, with intermission (if indicated), as if you were an audience member. FIRST IMPRESSIONS? Do you see the characters in the setting in your mind? Do you see the characters move in your mind?

Second Reading

“Read with a pencil.” Divide the script into workable sections and “French” scenes. A “French” scene is a section of a scene or act which begins and ends with the entrance or exit of each named character and the number of characters in that section is constant. A “French” scene is not marked in a script. A “French” scene is so named because the entrance or exit of a character designated a new scene in classic French drama.

Since the entrances or exits change the dynamics of the scene, it is sometimes useful to break up the action for rehearsal purposes, especially blocking rehearsals, into “French” scenes.

Create a list the characters; write a brief description for each. What does each character want?

Sample Character List

Nancy: His wife of 2 years -- in her 20s -- assertive and fun-loving -- in some ways, very head-strong.

Dick: Young executive type -- constantly leaves messages with his office -- all his deals are failures.

Linda: A true romantic -- does not like Dick’s business view of life -- like Allan, a neurotic -- works as a model -- is a bit dingy.

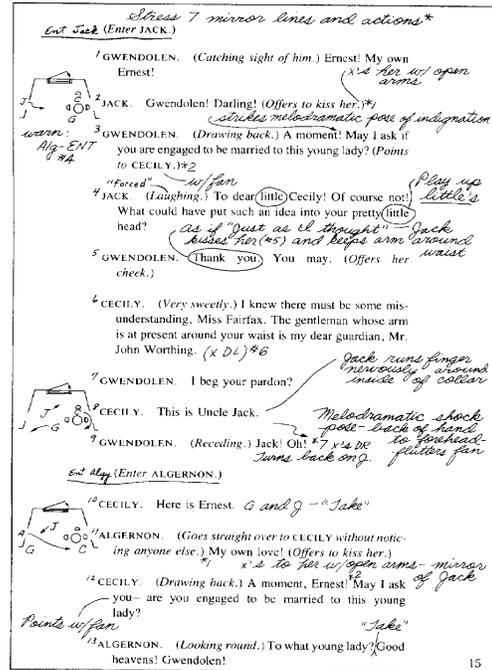
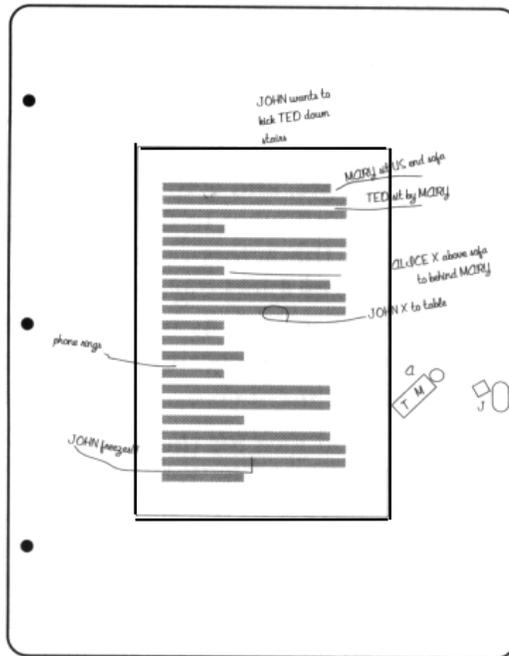
Third Reading

Read with a pencil and paper, take notes. Following is a checklist of elements to consider.

- Style: Realism, Selective Realism, Stylization, Symbolism, Formalism, etc.
 - Establish mood and atmosphere.
 - Reveal character.
 - Planning the action.
 - Plan the Blocking
 - Blocking Creates Clarity
 - Blocking Creates Focus
 - Focus intrinsic to the script
 - Focus intrinsic to the staging
 - To Preblock or Not to Preblock?³
 - Pre-rehearsal blocking Methods
 - Blocking with chess board and chess men
 - Blocking on the model
 - Blocking using floor plans. Photocopy floor plan, do blocking patterns. use colored markers to differentiate characters. Use proper stage symbols.
- KEY: COLOR CHARACTER
- Stage Composition / Balance
 - Planes and levels
 - Movement, emphasis, balance
 - Variety, placement, focus
 - Check body positions -- open, closed upstaged, covered
 - Dressing the stage
 - groupings
 - isolations
 - establishes character relationships
 - SET FLOOR PLAN
 - Sketch possible floor plans. Establishes entrances and exits, sight lines, movement and traffic patterns (lines and patterns of movement).
 - Set, furniture, props placement

³ see p. 145, Frerer

- Architectural logic
- Axis of set
- Symmetrical balance, Asymmetrical balance
- PREPARE PROMPT BOOK



Illustrations: The sample layouts of a page of a typical Prompt Book.

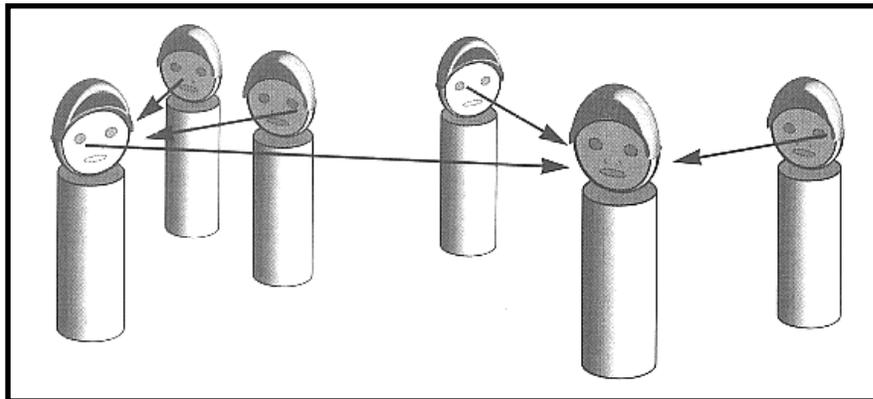


Illustration: Following the Actor's Line of Sight. Actor's eye contact (focus) leads to the "strongest" character. Other things being equal, Americans eyes tend to begin scanning the stage from the "top left-hand corner" or stage right.

Stage Right LOOKS Stronger. Alexander Dean, in his legendary text *Fundamentals of Directing*, argues that in general, and other things being equal, **stage right is stronger than stage left**. Why? The obvious reason is that in most of the Western World we are naturally inclined to look from left to right in reading and that we carry this to all phases of observation. Asians read from right to left and, interestingly enough, in their theatre the more important position is stage left. For example, stage left in the Chinese Theatre is where chairs are placed for the royalty and other important people. In a scene between a hero and villain, the Chinese convention is to always have the hero on the right and the villain on the left.

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>1</p> <p>1ST REHEARSAL Read through play.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Block opening scene. (After school) Meet with director to discuss props.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>NO REHEARSAL Work on lines from opening scene. Make props list. Find an assistant.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Block second scene. Decide what props need to be built. Make building plans with assistant.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Block final scene. Post prop list. Ask class for possible sources for locating props.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>NO REHEARSAL Begin building needed props. Schedule future prop gathering activities.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Do opening scene with lines memorized. (Evening) Make phone calls seeking lenders of props.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>NO REHEARSAL Work on lines. More building of props.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Rehearse second and third scenes. If a school truck is needed to pick up any props, schedule these pick-ups.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Rehearsal: scenes to be announced. Work on lines. Find and clean up area for safe storage of props.</p>
<p>15</p> <p>REHEARSAL: Scenes to be announced. Plan makeup design. (Evening) Arrange for pick-up of props.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>REHEARSAL DEADLINE FOR ALL LINES TO BE MEMORIZED. (Evening) Pick up props.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Run through first half of play with props. (After school) Meet with director. Any new needs? Any problems?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Run through second half of play with props. Design prop table layout.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Costume parade. Run through part of play. Set up prop table. Store props after rehearsal.</p>
<p>22</p> <p>(In class) Experiment with makeup. (Evening) Dress Rehearsal</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Polish scenes that need work. (Evening) Dress rehearsal</p>	<p>24</p> <p>PERFORMANCE at assembly (10:00) Set up props in advance. Store props after performance.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Help strike set and clean up backstage. Return props to fellow actors.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Phone: Thank patrons for lending props. (After school) Return props.</p>
<p>Name: <u>Sarah Bernhardt</u></p> <p>Class: <u>7th period</u></p>		<p>Primary role: <u>Mrs. Bouncer</u></p> <p>Secondary role: <u>Properties</u></p>		

 **WORKSHEET: A DIRECTOR'S SCHEDULE**

REHEARSALS (Including: Initial Rehearsal Calendar, Final Rehearsal Calendar)

Establish the ratio of rehearsal time. How much time do you have? How much do you have to do?

READ THROUGH(S)

Date: _____ Time: _____

BLOCKING REHEARSALS

Notes on running an effective rehearsal— go by beats first, then progress to scenes and acts.

Begin and end all rehearsals on time. Only the characters that appear in the scenes to be worked for a certain period of time need to be there.

EVERYONE MUST TAKE DOWN BLOCKING NOTES!

DEVELOPING REHEARSALS

OFF-BOOK REHEARSALS

Actors Off Script

Date: _____

POLISHING REHEARSALS

RUN THROUGH REHEARSALS

WORKING (REHEARSAL) PROPS

WORKING (REHEARSAL) COSTUMES

PAPER TECH

Date: _____ Time: _____

DRY TECH

Date: _____ Time: _____

TECHNICAL REHEARSALS

Date: _____ Time: _____

DRESS REHEARSALS (first, second)

Date: _____ Time: _____

PREVIEWS

Date: _____ Time: _____

EXERCISE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS— THE CONCEPT

Introduction

What is the concept of the show? It should be able to be explain in just one sentence. All concepts are correct.

Instructions

The student-directors will demonstrate their ability to develop and understand a “concept” of a script by breaking down an assigned script (of 2-3 page). Using a single script with which all student-directors are familiar, list all of the class’s concept suggestions on the board and have the student-directors defend them, keep the ones that have a good basis.

EXERCISE: SCRIPT CONCEPT— VISUALIZATIONS

Introduction

This process of “illustrating” the production concept using other art forms (poems, photographs, art work, music, architecture, dance, etc.) is called “Viz.” It aids in the interpretation of a script. It must always be done in a different medium than the original.

You will be shown examples of production visualization concepts (slides, poems, pictures of a variety of subjects, music, architecture). The instructor will prepare a short Viz slide presentation to be shown to the class that goes along with a piece of music or a reading of some sort. All the lights will be off and the music playing as you enter the room.

Example

Reading the poem by Walt Whitman called “I Hear American Singing,” and show pictures of a variety of American citizens. Play Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* and show slides of large, magnificent buildings from all over the world.

Instructions

You will then demonstrate your understanding of visualizations by providing a “Viz” for a 2-3 page scene. The student-directors will also be assigned the job of providing a Viz that will accompany their final project scene.

EXERCISE: CASTING

Instructions

The class will be split into groups. Each group will be given a short scene which they will cast with famous actors. Each group will stand and explain why they cast the scene the way they did.

Criteria will be discussed: Character vs. personality actors, ability to carry a play, looks, intelligence, vocal clarity, etc.

EXERCISE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS— SCRIPT BEATS

Instructions

Taking your knowledge of “beats” of a script, French scenes, etc., go to the above script and break it into beats with the entire class.

EXERCISE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS— OBJECTIVES

Instructions

What are the Super Objectives of each character? Use the script from the day before and apply objectives and tactics to the already broken-up beats.

EXERCISE: STORYTELLING THROUGH MOVEMENT

Instructions

The Instructor will provide several pre-written short situations with a clear and definite beginning and ending. The class will be split into groups by assigning a number to each student as they enter the room. The short pre-written situation will be given each group. The student-directors will demonstrate their understanding of one of the common blocking principles, movement, by blocking this “silent” 2-3 page scene. Act out the situations without words, using movement only.

What more could each have done to more clearly tell the story? Do it again incorporating what was discussed.

Example

You go to the grocery store to buy a pop but don't have enough money to get it so you leave.

EXERCISE: BLOCKING— THE BODY

Instructions

Student-directors will demonstrate a knowledge of their bodies by playing, “Move it like this.” Student-directors will name as many **movable body parts** they can think of. A volunteer at the board will write these down. Can anyone think of any others that are not on the list? A one-minute monologue will be passed out. You are to pick at least 10 different movable parts and use them during the course of the monologue. You will have time to go through the monologue and make choices. You will perform your monologue and discuss what is observed.

EXERCISE: BLOCKING A MONOLOGUE— MOVEMENT

Instructions

Student-directors will demonstrate the knowledge of body movement by performing a monologue. We will discuss and brainstorm what **strong body positions** and **strong body movements** might be.

Draw a stage floor plan on the board. Student-directors will give their ideas on where the strongest places on stage are (mark these with an ‘x’) and then the weakest (mark these with an ‘o’). Discuss their reasons for their choices.

Discuss the strongest entrance choices and the effects they have on the audience. Example: movement coming from up center going straight towards the audience creates dramatic question - Strongest movement, or entrance from stage left creates conflict vs. stage right which feels natural or non-confrontational.

A volunteers will come to the front of the space and demonstrate these positions and movements. Student-directors will add more movements as they think of them (keeping them appropriate).

Student-directors get into groups of three. Using the monologue from previous exercise you will give movement to the monologue and then have one from each group perform it. Discuss what they observed. What is strong and weak? Discuss the stronger positions vs. the weaker. What positions are natural vs. unnatural?

EXERCISE: BLOCKING & THE SETTING— FURNITURE

Instructions

All of the rehearsal furniture (chairs, stools, benches, cubes, small tables, other rehearsal furniture) is spread out all over the front of the room. Two volunteers come up and make a set to use for a scene. They are not told what the scene is or where it might take place, be creative.

Discuss what the student-directors did with the pieces. What did they like, dislike?

Repeat the exercise with two different volunteers, this time tell them where the scene takes place and what happens.

Discuss what happened differently the second time when the student-directors knew more about the scene. What did they observe, what is working? What isn't?

Discuss the influence the set has on the blocking.

EXERCISE: BLOCKING & SETTING— LEVELS

Instructions



Illustration:
Contrasts in Level

Student-directors will demonstrate the ability to understand levels in blocking a scene. Discuss the need for different levels in blocking.

Part 1: Student-directors come to the front of the room and try to create as many different levels as they can on a set already created, using chairs, stools, benches, blocks (cubes), small tables, other rehearsal furniture. They can not move any of the set pieces.

Part 2: A volunteer comes up and shows the class the three strongest body positions on stage and then discusses how their relative strength changes with the incorporation of levels.

Part 3: Student-directors pair off and block the scene selected using as many different levels as they can (at least one per beat), using chairs, stools, benches, blocks (cubes), small tables, other rehearsal furniture. You have ten minutes to practice the scene. Each team perform their scene. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses.

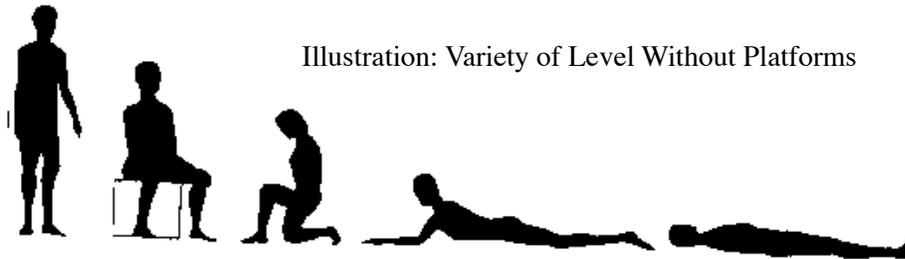


Illustration: Variety of Level Without Platforms

EXERCISE: BLOCKING— PROPS

Instructions

The student-directors will demonstrate their ability to use stage props and an improvised set effectively by incorporating props and set pieces into a short scene or ten-minute play.

Various props (fruits and vegetables of various sizes and shapes, pieces of paper, a container, two bed sheets, a hat, a piece of rope) and set pieces (chairs, tables, cubes, et cetera) will be randomly handed out to each student-director/cast. You will have five minutes to improvise a two to five minute scene using all of the materials.

First, brain-storm -- “How many different things could they use one of the sheets for?”

You are all going to perform short scenes for the entire class and you must each somehow incorporate the materials you are given into the scene.

- You can not eat or destroy the fruit or vegetable.
- It can be anything except for what it is in real life. In other words, you can't use an orange as an orange.
- You must incorporate at least two of the fruits or vegetables into their scene.

Evaluate the student-directors. What did they find hard about it? Did it make some parts of their scene easier? Were they able to incorporate other characteristics to another object? (Such as making a banana a phone.) Ask them how this could be helpful in acting. How can props both help and hinder a scene? Discuss briefly.

EXERCISE: BLOCKING— NATURAL VS. UNNATURAL

Instructions

Student-directors will demonstrate an understanding of internalizing movement and making it natural by performing a short scene.

What makes movement natural? Brainstorm and write down all the ideas on the board. Bring the focus down to the objectives being physicalized.

Student-directors get into pairs. Each team as it comes up, draws a situation out of the hat (situations for improv, short two person scene). Each team is to do an improv of the situation striving for very realistic, natural movement. Other student-directors should be taking notes on what they observe. Discuss internalizing movements that are given and finding inner motivation for their character to perform the given blocking.

Extended exercise

Give everyone the same script and the same blocking and have the groups come up and perform. Ask the student-directors what they observed. What did they like, not like, and why?

🏰 **EXERCISE: STAGE PICTURES**

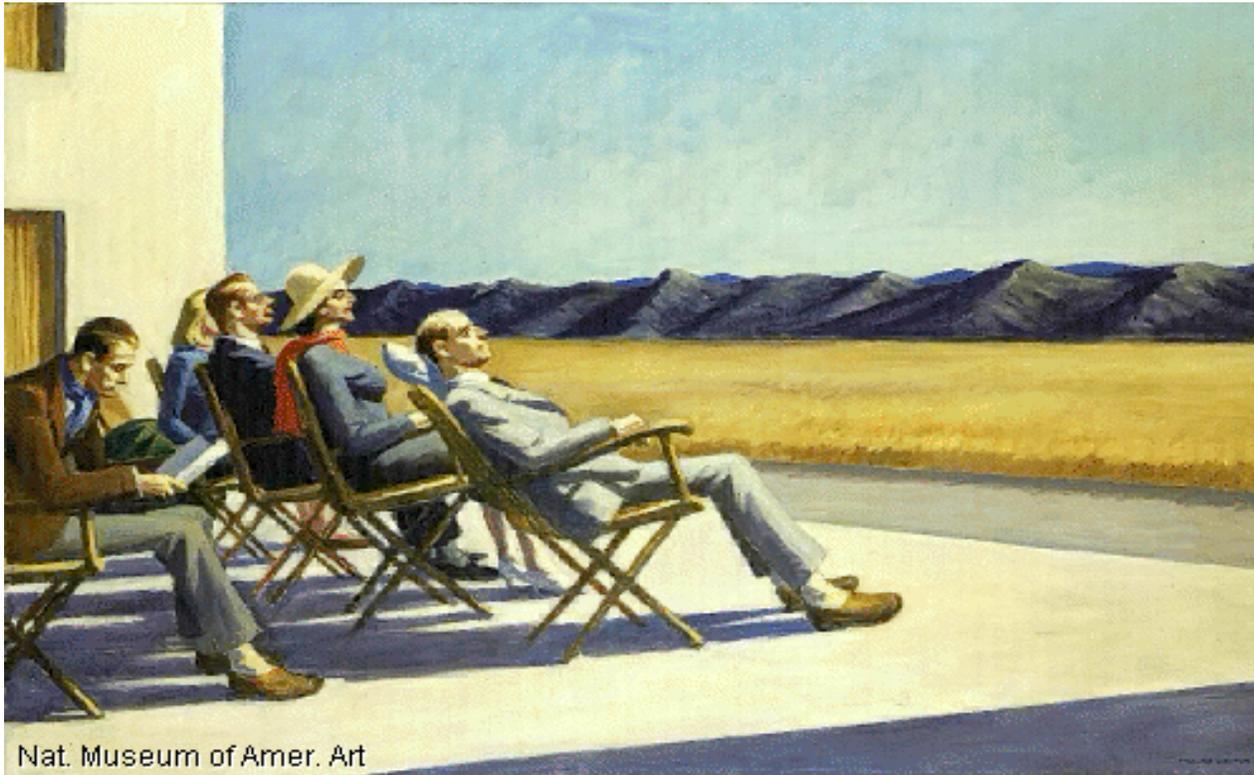
Instructions

Using an assigned scene or section of a scene the student-directors will demonstrate their knowledge of creating and presenting “stage pictures.”

Step 1: Look at a number of examples of “stage pictures” in classical art works, such as: Michelangelo’s *The Last Supper*, Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*, et cetera. Especially the works of Bruegel “the Elder,” Jan Vermeer, Dürer, Hogarth, Goya, Daumier, Marsh and Hopper. You should look for what are called ‘Genre pictures.’ These are pictures in which the painters deliberately cultivated a certain branch or kind of subject, particularly scenes from daily life.

Have a group of students recreate these “stage pictures” for the class. There is extensive information on the types of pictures to use for this exercise in the exercise “Playing Pictures” in The Contentless Scene chapter.

Step 2: Using an assigned scene create and present a series of “stage pictures” in the scene. Establish a “stage picture” every 20 lines or so, and create the blocking that moves the characters out of and in to these pictures.



Nat. Museum of Amer. Art

Edward Hopper (American, 1882-1967) *People in the sun*



Honorè Daumier (French 1808-1879) *The Country Visitor's Pleasure*

 **EXERCISE: DIRECTING THE “OPEN” SCENE**

Introduction

Student-directors will demonstrate the understanding of directing and blocking fundamentals by drawing a random scene and blocking it for a performance.

Instructions

Fill in the following information on the **DIRECTING THE OPEN SCENE WORKSHEET** as instructed. Use a pencil, print clearly. Record EXTERNALS on left of dialogue, record INTERNALS on right. Plot out all thought (subtext) and action, including movement patterns, COMPLETELY. See the following pages for a sample description of this scene.

Given Circumstance (created by the director):

Objectives: CHARACTER ONE: ACTOR: _____
 Objectives: CHARACTER TWO: ACTOR: _____

		EXTERNALS (including Beats)	INTERNALS Thought Patterns (subtext)
ONE:	Oh.		
TWO:	Yes.		
ONE:	Why are you doing this?		
TWO:	It's the best thing.		
ONE:	You can't mean it.		
TWO:	No, I'm serious.		
ONE:	Please.		
TWO:	What?		
ONE:	What does this mean?		
TWO:	Nothing.		

ONE: Listen.
 TWO: No.
 ONE: So different.
 TWO: Not really.
 ONE: Oh.
 TWO: You're good.
 ONE: Forget it.
 TWO: What.
 ONE: Go on.
 TWO: I will.

A sample description of this scene

SCENE TITLE: *Time to Let Go*. The CHARACTERS: One is Wife. Two is Husband. The couple lost their only child before the baby reached the age of three. Since the couple had only one child late in their marriage, they were unable to have any more. The tragic death occurred about six months ago. The wife has often been found sobbing hysterically over the child's box of toys. The day has come when the husband is determined to get rid of the toys, because of the way they continue to haunt him and his wife.⁴

#	ACTIVITY	SUBTEXT
1	She enters bedroom	to find something to distract herself
2	She finds and opens hook	to grab first available diversion
3	She sits on bed	to calm herself
4	She pages through book	to occupy her mind
5	She hears noise: starts; recovers	to suppress her fears
6	She crosses to door	to somehow stop what she expects
7	He enters with basket	to make her understand his plan
8	She says, "Oh."	to get him to stop
9	He says, "Yes."	to make her understand he will not back down
10	She touches the toys	to somehow touch her child as well
11	She asks, "Why are you doing this?"	to cause him to change his mind
12	He says, "It's the best thing."	to persuade her that he is doing this because they need it
13	She takes the basket	to stay close to the toys
14	She says, "You can't mean it."	to intimidate him
15	She kneels. puts toys on the floor	to keep them near her
16	He moves to put a hand on her shoulder	to comfort her
17	He says, "No, I'm serious."	to get her to comprehend that he will not be dissuaded
18	She picks up a doll from the basket	to cling to it
19	She says, "Please."	to get him to back off
20	He says, "What?"	to force her to at least speak of it
21	She holds the doll like a baby	to bring back the feeling of comforting
22	She says, "What does this mean?"	to arouse his grief
23	He says, "Nothing."	to maintain control
24	He turns away	to find a less devastating sight
25	She picks out music box	to find a more powerful weapon
26	She plays it	to pull him into her perspective
27	She says, "Listen."	to remind him of better times
28	He says, "No."	to fight the music's effect
29	He crosses to other side of room	to regain firmness and purpose
30	She rises and faces him	to confront him combatively
31	She says, "So different."	to accuse him of insensitivity
32	He turns to face her	to stop the charge
33	He says, "Not really."	to accept his own vulnerability
34	She says, "Oh."	to acknowledge his feelings
35	She goes to him	to make peace
36	She embraces him	to apologize and comfort
37	They hold each other	to gain strength

⁴ This particular open scene was created by Wandalie Henshaw who has the distinction of being the inventor of the "open scene." She developed this exercise in the late '60s. See Wandalie Henshaw. "The 'Open Scene' as a Directing Exercise." *Educational Theatre Journal* 21, (October 1969): 275-284.

38	He looks at her	to check if she is ready
39	He holds onto her, says, "You're good."	to assure her that she has the strength to give the toys up
40	She slowly returns the toys	to say good-bye to the child
41	She stand up, looks away	to end her attachment
42	She says to herself, "Forget it."	to discipline herself
43	She picks up basket	to test herself
44	She hands basket to him	to free herself from any temptation to change her mind
45	He says, "What?"	to get a verbal commitment from her
46	She quietly says, "Go on."	to encourage him to do it quickly before he weakens
47	He says, "I will"	to accept the offer firmly and close the discussion
48	He exits with toys	to accomplish his task
49	She listens to music box fading as it gets farther away	to linger an instant longer in the past
50	She sits on the bed	to support herself
51	She lies down and curls up on the bed	to comfort herself and help her resolve

 **WORKSHEET: DIRECTING THE “OPEN” SCENE**

Instructions

Fill in the following information as instructed. Use a pencil, print clearly.
 On the script on the next page record EXTERNALS on left of dialogue, record INTERNALS on right. Plot out all thought (subtext) and action, including movement patterns, COMPLETELY.
 For a sample description of this scene see the Directing Chapter.

Given Circumstance/Plot (created by the director): _____

Objectives: CHARACTER ONE: ACTOR: _____

Objectives: CHARACTER TWO: ACTOR: _____

ALWAYS MAKE SPECIFIC CHOICES!

EXTERNALS INTERNALS
(including Beats) Thought Patterns (subtext)

- ONE: Oh.
- TWO: Yes.
- ONE: Why are you doing this?
- TWO: It's the best thing.
- ONE: You can't mean it.
- TWO: No, I'm serious.
- ONE: Please.
- TWO: What?
- ONE: What does this mean?
- TWO: Nothing.
- ONE: Listen.
- TWO: No.
- ONE: So different.
- TWO: Not really.
- ONE: Oh.
- TWO: You're good.
- ONE: Forget it.
- TWO: What.
- ONE: Go on.

TWO: I will.

 **EXERCISE: BEGINNING JUSTIFIED MOVEMENT** ⁵

Instructions

Working with three actors and the ground plan below, create four different short scenes with a definite beginning, middle, and end based on the following:

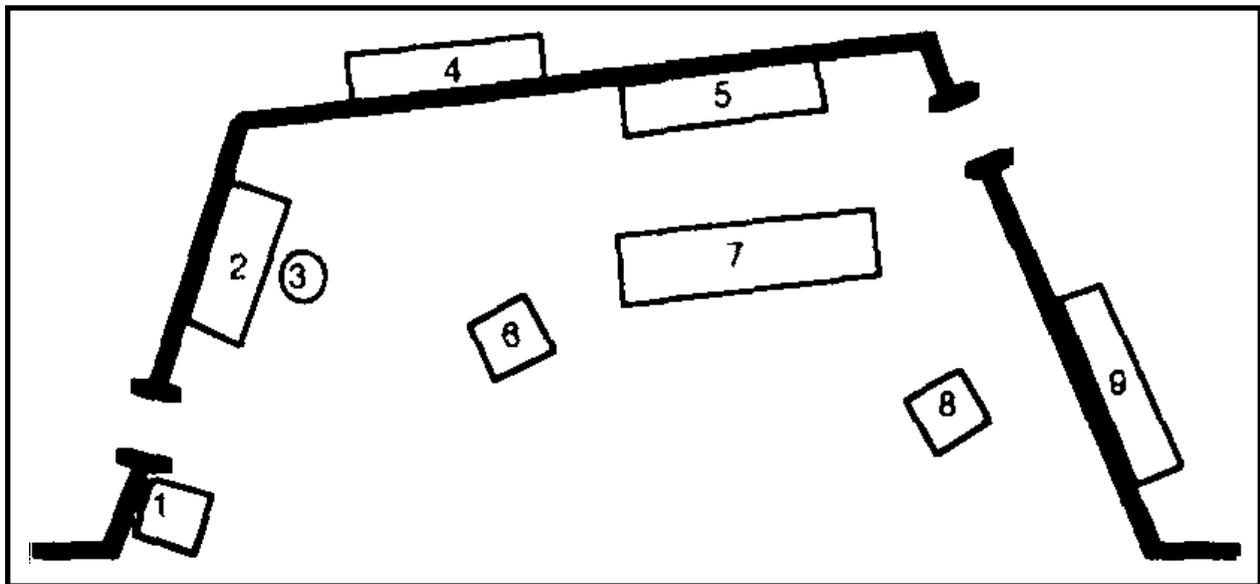
- **Scene A:** Justify the fact that at all times, every stage picture has to include a standing, *kneeling*, and sitting character. This means that if a kneeling character decides to stand up, one of the other two characters must fill the void and assume some sort of kneeling position.
- **Scene B:** Justify the fact that at all times, every stage picture has to have a character in the *upstage*, *midstage*, and *downstage* planes. Should one of them move out of the plane he or she is in, then one of the other two must shift to the unoccupied plane.
- **Scene C:** Justify the fact that at all times, each stage picture has to have a character in *a quarter, profile*, and *three-quarter* body position. When one character switches to a different body position then one of the other two must compensate for the change.

The Ground Plan

Use the following ground plan to create situations for each of the three scenes. As the ground plan indicates, there is considerable leeway in interpreting the various set pieces (see the descriptive list following the ground plan).

Set pieces may be moved during the course of the action, but the scene needs to begin in its given configuration. Attempt as much as possible to bring all of the set pieces into use. Do not add any other major set pieces; props and set dressing may be included as necessary.

The challenge is to transform each of these four artificial structures into fully justified, totally convincing scenes.



Set piece #	Description possibilities
1.	small cube (end table, crate, shelf, or a pile of ?)
2.	desk and chair or ?
3.	desk chair or ?
4.	window or fireplace or built in bookcase or ?
5.	shelf or cabinet or table or ?

⁵ Terry John Converse. *Directing for the Stage*.

6. small cube (chair, end table, et cetera)
7. sofa or bed or ?
8. small cube (television or ottoman or planter or ?)
9. window or fireplace or built in bookcase or ?

Objective

Working with a single given ground plan is at first helpful because it limits the choices and keeps the work from becoming a ground plan exercise. Also the provided ground plan puts workshop directors literally on a common ground. Seeing how different directors solve the justifying problems in exactly the same space also brings an excitement to the workshop. Regardless of whatever else is brought to these basic exercises, the overall intent has to remain the same: all must be fully justified within a realistic context.

Critique

2. Was the situation (the *who*, the *what*, and the *where*) well communicated?
3. (To the director) Which of the four scenes was the hardest to motivate?
4. Was everything fully justified, or were there some motivational problems and/or stretches?
5. Was there a balance between the verbal and visual elements of the scene? Or did one tend to dominate the other?
6. Favorite moment? Least favorite moment?



EXERCISE: JUSTIFIED MOVEMENT – PICK UP SIX

Instructions

Teams of three -- one director and two actors. A bag of “cards” is prepared from the blocking diagrams provided in the Worksheet Chapter. Each actor draws six cards (i.e., a total of 12 cards will be used). The challenge is to create characters and a situation that fully integrate the selected movements. Two important ground rules are:

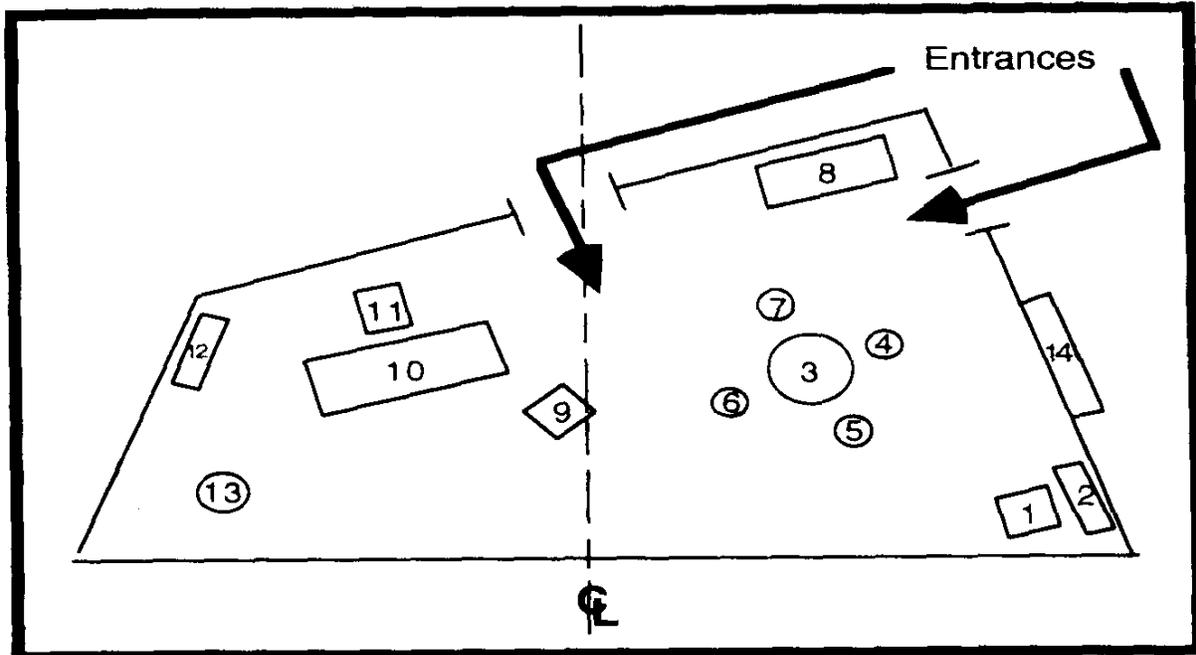
- 1) Each character must do all of the selected movements, exactly as depicted, but they may be done in any order, and
- 2) if needed, up to 6 transitional movements per actor may be created.

Suggestions

- Run through the movements, searching for movements that flow together with other movements. One or more of these links may provide the “seed” for your basic situation. With the situation in mind, it will be fairly easy to create whatever transitional movements are needed to connect all the movements fully.
- Another approach is to create the specific order of movements before deciding upon a situation. Begin by finding all the possible links and creating whatever transitory movements are needed to use *all* of the selected movements. Then run through the movements several times until someone gets an interesting idea to try. If the idea seems to “catch,” continue to refine it, improvising dialogue suitable for the situation.
- Remember, this is not a playwriting exercise. Strive to create simple lines which can easily be memorized by your actors.

The Ground Plan

The setting is an interior with two entrances. The logic of the space and the specific designation of the set pieces depend upon your situation. For instance, #10 can either be a sofa, desk, a trunk, a shelf, or something else. Possibilities for each of the given set pieces are offered below -- feel free to make up your own.



Set piece #	Description
1 & 2	Maybe a small chair and desk, or a stool and shelf, or ?
3-7	Table with four chairs or an exercise trampoline with four pillows, or ?
8	Rectangular set piece (maybe a cabinet, bar, gun case, trunk), or ?
9	Cube or chair (maybe a television, swivel chair, bed table), or ?
10	Large platform (maybe a bed, desk, trunk, low table, rowing machine), or ?
11	Small cube or chair (maybe an end table, a wastebasket, a CD player stand), or ?
12	Vertical unit (maybe a cabinet, gun case, large screen TV), or ?
13	Circular stand (maybe a pedestal for a statue, plant, bottled water), or ?
14	Vertical unit (maybe a fireplace, window, cabinet, closet), or ?

Critique

To the director

1. Did you end up creating the flow of movements first, and then figuring out the situation, or did a particular movement provide the inspiration for the idea? In other words, what was the major stimulus in bringing about the idea for the scene? Did it come from a specific movement, or from a discovered “link” between two movements? Or did the idea come after the series of movements was completed?
2. Were there any specific movements that were especially difficult to motivate? Did you ultimately overcome the difficulty?
3. How helpful were the team members in solving this exercise?

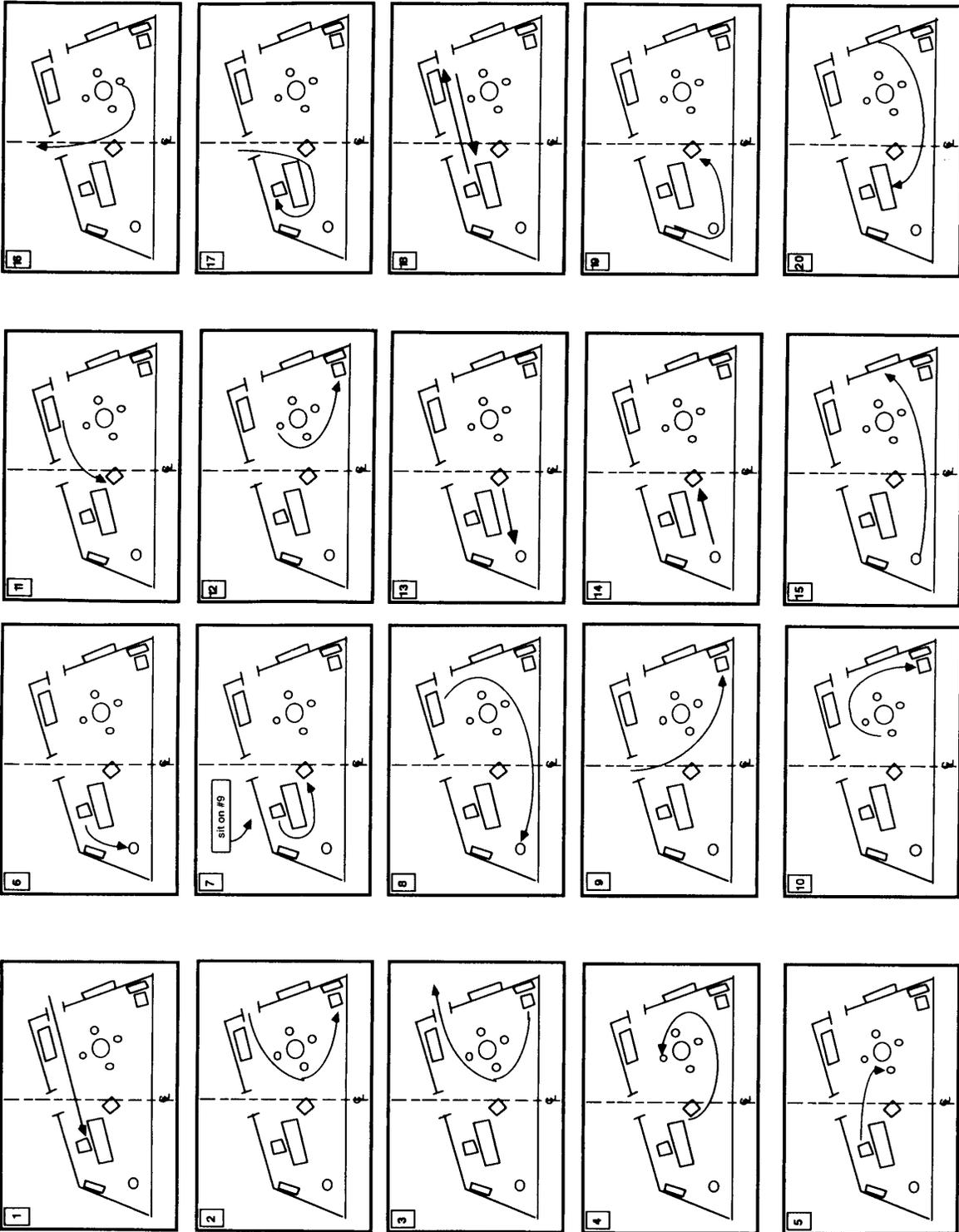
To the rest of the workshop

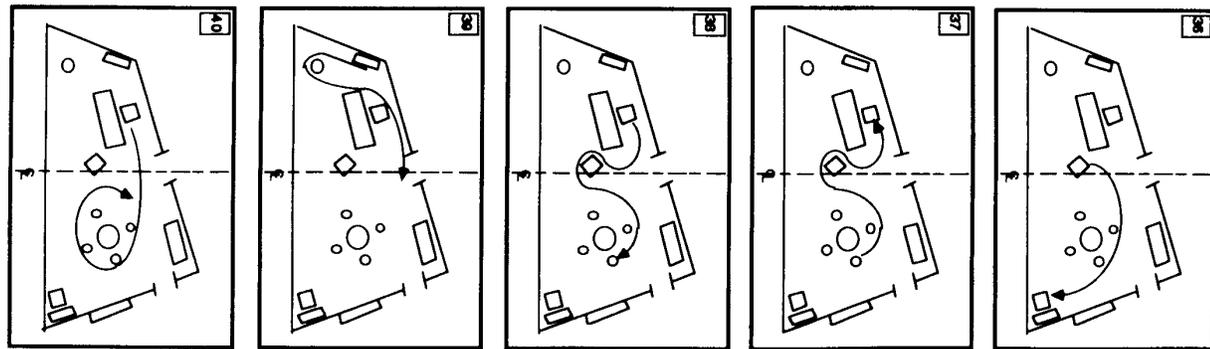
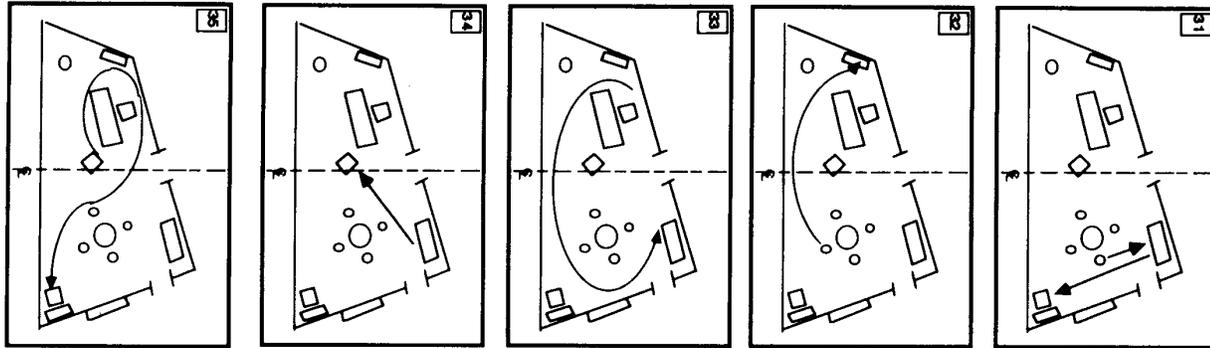
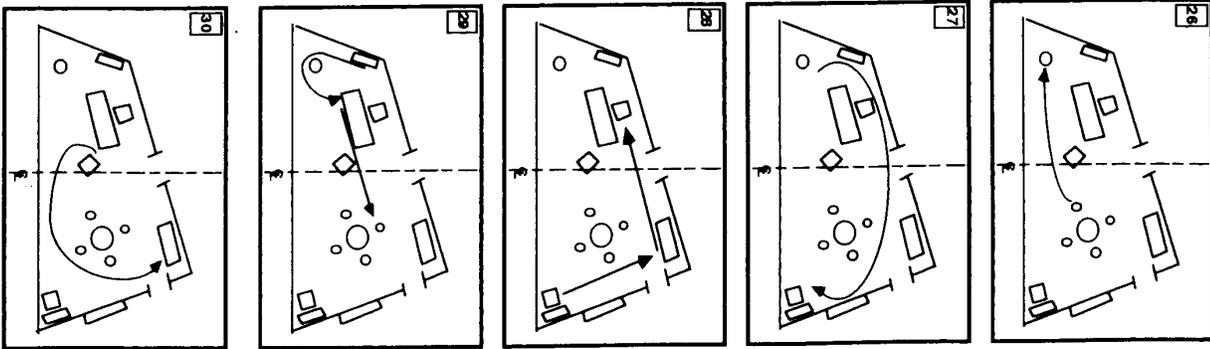
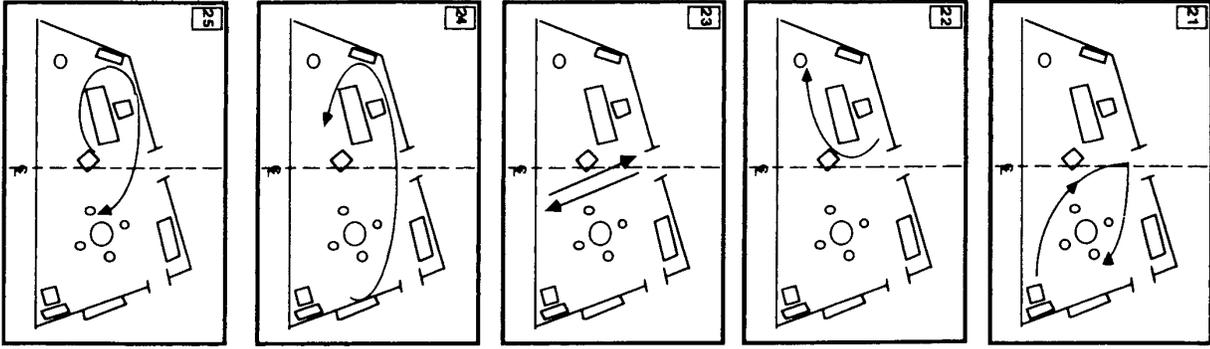
4. Was the *who*, *what*, and *where* clearly established?
5. Were there any *interesting psychological* areas created?
6. Was the overall situation interesting? Would the scene stand on its own, meaning if someone didn't know the exercise, would this still be considered effective theatre? Was there a definite beginning, middle, and end?
7. Were there any effective visual pauses?
8. Did the dialogue seem to fit the movement? Were there any moments that didn't seem motivated? What moments worked especially well?
9. Were there times when the dialogue completely took over, and the storytelling was more verbal than visual? In general, did the director rely more on the visual or verbal elements of the scene to communicate the story, or was there a pretty good balance?
10. Favorite moment? Least favorite moment?

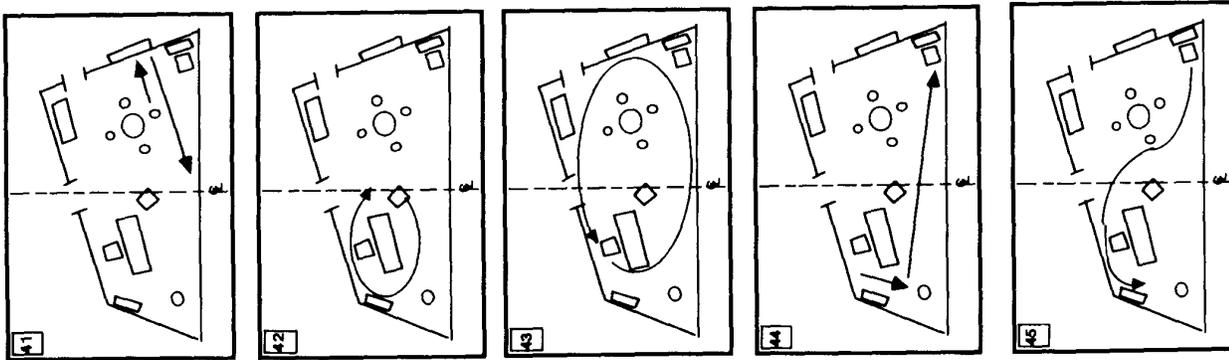
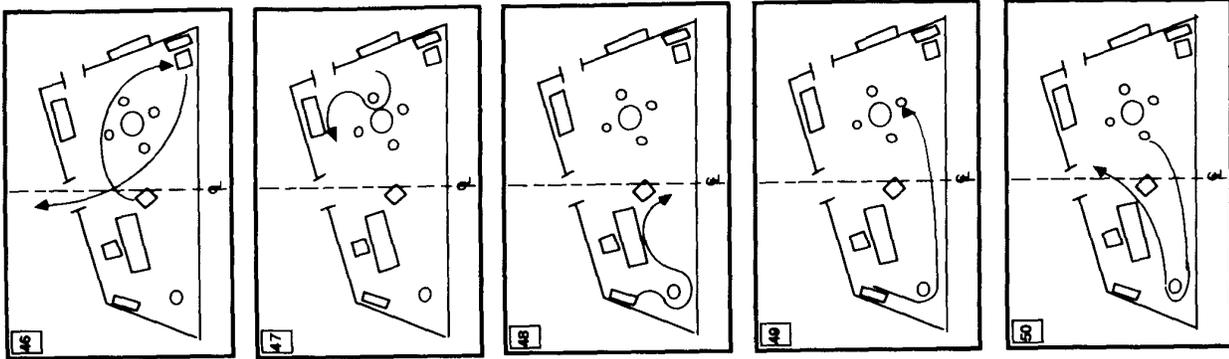
WORKSHEET: JUSTIFIED MOVEMENT – PICK UP SIX

Instructions

These diagrams for bag of “cards.” can be copied and then individually cut out or the directors can simply draw numbers which refer to the numbered diagrams.







Blocking diagrams for bag of “cards.”

Student-Actor’s Name: _____ Assignment Due: _____

Student-Actor’s Notes: _____

CARD # _____

 **EXERCISE: BLOCKING A SCENE OR ONE-ACT**

Introduction

Student-directors will demonstrate their understanding of directing and blocking fundamentals, and demonstrate their ability to make strong blocking choices by drawing a random scene and blocking it for a performance.

Instructions

- Each student-director will receive a two-person scene (this should be one with many high risk physical possibilities) and a floor plan of the stage.
- Student-directors get into groups of three and decide who will be the first to direct. Each student-director will have a turn to block the other two in their group.
- First, cross out all the pre-existing stage movement on the script.
- Second, go through the script and mark all the entrances and exits.
- Third, go through and highlight everywhere movement has to take place. Narrow down the movements to specifics in the margins of the script. Example: Mary: I XLDT chair, 2 XUCT sofa
- You have 20 minutes to block the script.
- Student-directors perform their scenes for the class and discuss their observations. Were the physical objectives achieved in each beat? Were there levels incorporated, as well as strong and weak stage and body positions? Discuss what the student-directors observed and learned both from an acting stand point as well as directing. Student-directors will discuss what they learned from the blocking process.

Director: _____

Play: _____ Author: _____

ACTOR: _____ Character _____

ACTOR: _____ Character _____

ACTOR: _____ Character _____

ACTOR: _____ Character _____

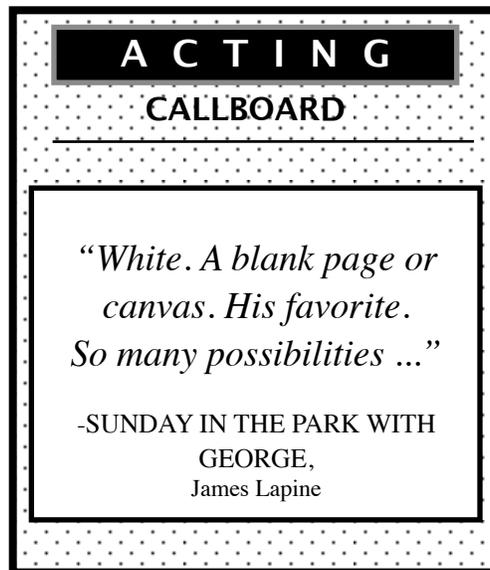
Handouts

- One-act plays and scenes for assignments and exercises.

Sources for further study

- David Ball. *Backwards and Forwards, A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Southern Illinois University, 1983.
A great little book for actors, directors, and playwrights.
- William Ball. *A Sense of Direction, Some Observations on the Art of Directing*. Drama Book Publishers, 1984.
A candid, personal account of the author's method of directing.
- Curtis Canfield. *The Craft of Play Direction*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963.
A classic text.
- Louis E. Catron. *The Director's Vision: Play Direction from Analysis to Production*. Mayfield, 1989.
- Robert Cohen and John Harrop. *Creative Play Direction* (2nd ed.) Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- Harold Clurman. *On Directing*. Macmillan, 1972.
Presents his own directing notes from ten of his best-known productions.

- ❑ Terry John Converse. *Directing for the Stage: A workshop guide of 42 creative training exercises and projects*. Meriwether Publishing, 1995.
- ❑ Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra. *Fundamentals of Play Directing*. (5th ed.) Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1989. (? ed. 1974, Revised ed. 1966) (1st Ed.: Alexander Dean. *Fundamentals of Play Directing*. Farrar, Rinehart, 1941)
This classic text was reissued and enlarged by Carra and Dean, listed above.
- ❑ John E. Dietrich and Ralph W. Duckwall. *Play Direction*. 2nd ed. Prentice-Hall, 1983 (revised edition of John E. Dietrich's *Play Direction*. Prentice-Hall, 1953.)
This classic text was reissued and enlarged by Dietrich and Duckwall.
- ❑ Llyod Anton Frerer. *Directing for the Stage*. NTC Publishing Group, 1996.
- ❑ Francis Hodge. *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*. (4th ed.) Allyn & Bacon, 1994. (Prentice-Hall, Inc. 3rd ed. 1988, 2nd ed. 1982, 1st ed. 1971)
A classic text.
- ❑ Michael McCaffery. *Directing A Play*. (Schirmer Books Theatre Manuals) Schirmer Books, 1989 (American edition).
- ❑ David Wilker. *Theatrical Direction, The Basic Techniques*. Allyn & Bacon, 1971.
A classic text.



Can you take a joke?
Question: How many directors does it take to change a light bulb'?
Answer: Only one but he would like to see it several different ways.

