



**Sample Pages from
The Student Director's Handbook**

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THE
Student DIRECTOR'S
HANDBOOK

BY LINDSAY PRICE



The Student Director's Handbook
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THE STUDENT DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

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THE STUDENT DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Many senior drama classes include a student directing project. Some programs have mixed levels with actors and directors combined. Some schools are lucky enough to have a class specifically about directing.

But it's one thing to say "I want to direct a play" and another thing to figure out the necessary steps that will take you all the way from choosing a play to putting on a production. Being a director is a much different experience from being an actor – you have to make the decisions. You're the boss. And if you're directing a class project, that means you're going to have to be the boss over your friends and classmates. Not an easy task.

- How do you choose, cast, and rehearse a play so that the experience is a good one for all involved?
- How do you circumvent the problems that can arise while directing friends?
- How do you organize rehearsals so you have an answer when your actors look at you and say "What do we do now?"

The *Student Director's Handbook* will ease your way through the process by addressing all of these questions and many more. To take your show all the way to opening night, start by identifying your specific type of leadership role. Fill out the Vision Sheet that's included in this handbook. Hold auditions. And prepare a rehearsal plan (see the Rehearsal Planning section in this handbook, which includes a couple of templates to help you).

THE STUDENT DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

WHERE DO I START?

This section looks at what is involved in the directing process before you even get to auditions. For the student director, this means starting at square one: What does a director do? What kind of leader will you be in rehearsal? What are the steps in directing a play?

WHAT IS A DIRECTOR?

Complete the What Is a Director? Pre-Knowledge Sheet (included in this handbook). Write down your definition of a director and what might make you a good director.

PREPARING TO DIRECT YOUR PEERS.

A director is a boss. That can be difficult when you're directing your peers. What kind of leader will you be in rehearsal?

THE STEPS IN DIRECTING A PLAY.

What are the steps in the process? Identify them in order. If there are other directors in your class, discuss how each of you outlined the steps. What are the similarities and differences? Would you change your order now? Are there steps missing? In your opinion, which is the most important step?

5. What is your goal for your directing project?

6. What are you looking forward to about your directing project?

7. What's one challenge you're looking to address?

PREPARING TO DIRECT YOUR PEERS

I recently spoke with a student director and her biggest fear was directing her friends. "How do I tell them what to do?"

WHAT IS A DIRECTOR?

- Someone who leads a group.
- A person chosen to be in control.
- A person responsible for the interpretation of a play.
- A supervisor of the action onstage and the direction of the production offstage.

What all these definitions have in common is that a director is a form of boss. This can be difficult for the student director: Who wants to be the boss of their friends? How will a group take a director seriously when they were fooling around at lunch five minutes ago?

This can lead to one of two disastrous situations:

- The lackadaisical director who doesn't lead their actors, letting them take control.
- The dictatorial director who overstates their control, demanding that everything is done their way without exception.

The relationships within a production and the tone of those relationships can make or break a rehearsal process. **The process is as much about directing people as it is about blocking or character development.** The play will suffer if a director fails to communicate or set the right tone.

This is especially true for those undertaking the delicate balancing act of being friends with their actors at the same time as leading them.

The key to success is to **strive to be a leader**. Think of the cast as a community. The community is going to function best when there is someone leading the way.

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE

How do you get your actors to take you seriously?

A GOOD LEADER NEEDS THE FOLLOWING SKILLS:

Good Communication: No one can see inside your head. Therefore, never assume actors know what you're thinking. If you have a specific vision for the play, tell your actors what it is. Tell them when they're doing a good job. If there's a disruption, talk about it. It's not easy to give feedback to a friend, but it's an important skill to learn.

Confidence: Sometimes you have to fake this. A leader must take charge. It's not about being bossy. It's about leading the way. You will motivate your actors to work hard for you by being a strong leader. Be decisive. Don't apologize when you critique an actor or when you change your mind. Make firm decisions. Don't worry if it's the wrong decision. Rehearsal is a place where mistakes are not only okay, they're encouraged.

Positive Interaction: You set the tone for your actors' behaviour. If you're sluggish, your actors will match your tone. If you're energetic and committed, your actors will mirror that. If your actors are lifeless, it's your job to counter that attitude. It's your job to inspire and encourage.

You don't have to jump up and down like a cheerleader or pretend to be happy all the time. Positive interaction does not mean manic joy. But the work won't get done if you let a lifeless tone fester.

Collaboration: A cast is a community and, as such, needs a leader. But it also mean that you need input from your actors on how the community (cast) functions. A dictator-director will shut down any feedback. A friend-director will make any change the community asks for, which can lead to chaos. A leader will collaborate with their actors. A leader can work with others' ideas, know when they will work for the good of the community, and be able to turn an idea down constructively. The most effective way to assess ideas is through a well-defined vision, which we'll discuss shortly.

Organization: Have a plan for every rehearsal. It's not necessary to stick to the plan, but never walk into a rehearsal without one. If you've just started rehearsal, you can lose control quickly if you start asking the cast: "What do you want to do?"

LEADERSHIP SHEET

How do you rank yourself as a leader?

Rank yourself on the skills of a good leader. Check one option for each skill.

Good Communication

- I'm very good
 I'm good
 I need to work on
 I need help

Confidence

- I'm very good
 I'm good
 I need to work on
 I need help

Positive Interaction

- I'm very good
 I'm good
 I need to work on
 I need help

Collaboration

- I'm very good
 I'm good
 I need to work on
 I need help

Organization

- I'm very good
 I'm good
 I need to work on
 I need help

What are three steps you can take to improve the areas you think you're weak in?

WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF DIRECTING A PLAY?

Put the following steps in order, with "1" as the first step.

Choose a play	
Dress rehearsal	
Cast the show	
Secure rights	
Tech rehearsals	
Contact the publisher	
Opening night	
Read the play analytically	
Audition	
Block and rehearse	
Create a vision	

Discussion

If there are other directors in your class, discuss how each of you outlined the steps. What are the similarities and differences? Would you change your order now? Are there steps missing? In your opinion, which is the most important step?

THE STUDENT DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

PLAYS AND PUBLISHERS

*A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long.*

A Midsummer Night's Dream V, i

WHERE DO I START?

After you've said "I want to direct a play" what comes next? There is quite a lot to consider before you even get to the audition stage:

- How do you find a play?
- Is there a budget for royalties?
- How do you find out how much a play costs to produce?
- How do you approach a publisher?

CHOOSING A SCRIPT

How do I choose a script to direct?

Your first task is to choose a play. That means reading scripts. Hopefully your teacher will have a library of scripts you can peruse. Also, a number of companies (including ours at www.theatrefolk.com) allow you to read free sample pages from their scripts online. Avoid choosing a play based solely on the description. It's hard to know what a play is like just from a couple of lines of text. Don't end up with a play you don't like because of a misstep in the choosing process.

There are thousands and thousands of plays out there. **Set the parameters of your search** to avoid being overwhelmed. Perhaps your teacher already has some parameters in place: discuss the criteria for your project with your teacher. For example, If your cast size is limited to four, don't look at scripts with casts of ten. If your royalty budget is \$50 a performance, there's no point reading plays that are \$70 a performance.

SET THE PARAMETERS OF YOUR SEARCH

Identify the following for your school and situation:

- Size of cast
- Length of play
- Set pieces available
- Props and costumes available
- Budget for royalties



Teaching Resources

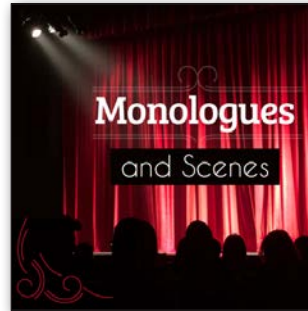
Quality resources to use in your drama classroom



The Drama Classroom Companion

The Drama Classroom Companion is filled with articles and exercises to build the skills needed for theatrical performance as well as real world skills like creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

theatrefolk.com/companion

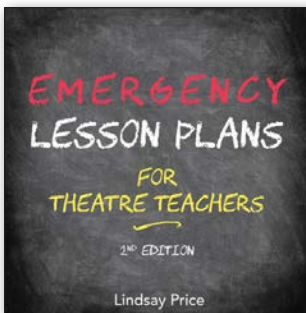


Monologue and Scene Collections

Whether it's for classwork, competitions or auditions, these collections of student-appropriate monologues and scenes can help you find what you're looking for.

All monologues and scenes come from published plays and include running-times, descriptions, character notes and staging suggestions.

theatrefolk.com/collections



Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers

Emergency Lesson Plans For Theatre Teachers, 2nd edition gives you the tools and resources you need to confidently leave your class in the hands of a substitute teacher. Customize your lesson plans to suit the specific needs of your class when you can't be there.

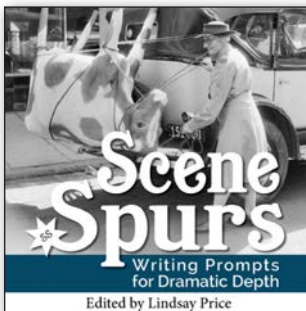
theatrefolk.com/elp



The Student Director's Handbook

Help students take their show from first audition to opening night with *The Student Director's Handbook*. This easy-to-use ebook is full of guidelines, tips and templates designed to help students create a vision, circumvent problems and organize rehearsals on their way to a successful production.

theatrefolk.com/student-director



Scene-Spurs: Writing Prompts for Dramatic Depth

Scene Spurs is a collection of photo-based writing prompts developed by playwright Lindsay Price. The set includes 35 different Spurs along with an instruction guide to integrate them into your drama classroom.

theatrefolk.com/spurs

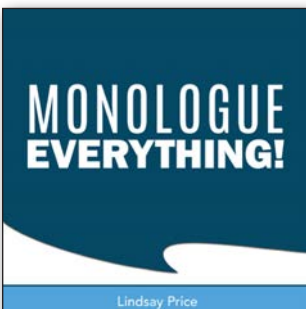


Write Your Own Vignette Play

Your students want to write and perform an original play. You want to include a playwriting unit in your program. But where to start? What if your students have never written a play before? What if you've never written before?

Write Your Own Vignette Play will answer all your questions and more

theatrefolk.com/write_vignette



The Monologue Everything Program

Want your students to write their own monologues? Have you tried to incorporate monologue units into the classroom with less-than-satisfactory results?

theatrefolk.com/monologue-everything



Competition Material

Plays, monologues, and scenes for drama competitions including royalty information and exemptions.

theatrefolk.com/competition



Practical Technical Theater: The Complete Solution for Technical Theater Classrooms

This series of instructional DVDs is perfect for the teacher who feels more at home with a prompt book than a hammer, and would welcome a new, visually oriented teaching tool for their tech classes and production crews.

theatrefolk.com/ptt



www.theatrefolk.com/resources