

REHEARSAL EXERCISE: THE LINE OF POWER



Use this exercise to define and refine relationships within a play.

Working on a complicated character piece (THE CRUCIBLE, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, A RAISIN IN THE SUN, Shakespeare) and want to move beyond lines and blocking? Use this exercise to physically show where every character “stands” in relation to one another. Who has the most power? Who has the least? How does that affect physical action and reaction?

The Line of Power

Power is:

- The ability to do something, the capability of doing or accomplishing something.
- Political or national strength.
- Great or marked ability to do or act: strength, might, force.
- Possession of control or command over others.

The Meaning of Power

Discuss the meaning of the word “power” with your cast. What does it mean to the characters? Does it mean political power and tyranny? Does it mean someone is the head of the family? Does it mean someone is the oldest? Has the most money? What does the word power mean in the story of the play?

Line Up

Based on that discussion, have the cast form a physical line from most powerful to least as it stands at the beginning of the play. Who has the most power, who has the least? How do you determine those in the middle? Is the lineup as expected, or are there any surprises?

Emotions

Discuss how each characters feel about their place in the line. Happy? Anxious? Bitter? Are there any characters who are angling to BECOME the most powerful? (e.g. Edward in KING LEAR) What emotion expresses their place in line?

Physicality

Based on the lineup, have the cast come up with a physical stance based on where they stand in the line of power. How does being powerful (or powerless) change the way a character stands? What does the line look like physically?

Awareness

Discuss these stances. Have the actors been aware of how they stand in character? Are they applying physical attributes to their character development?

Continued Over...

Adding Dialogue

Run through some dialogue between characters focusing specifically on the line of power and physically showing that power, or lack thereof. Does the tone of the scene change in any way? What's it like for those watching? Remember, this is not necessarily how the scene is going to be blocked, this is just an exploration exercise.

The End of the Play

Re-do the line of power as it stands at the end of the play. Does anyone change position? Hopefully they do, as some characters should have gone through a change from beginning to end. If characters change position, have them define the exact moment, or series of events that led to the change. Can they identify them?

Themes

What are the most important themes for your play? Discuss the vital themes explored in the play. Then, solely based on each theme, decide how the line of power plays out. Does the arrangement of characters change at all? What does that say about the characters and what they're trying to accomplish in the play?