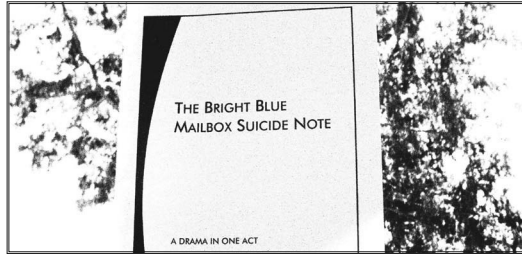


# ACTING THE ISSUE PLAY

by Lindsay Price

*Issue plays are a staple in high school theatre. Here is a list of ways to perform the issue without being overdramatic.*



## Keep the Emotions in Check

Be wary of the number of times your character is involved with extreme emotion. In a one-act play characters should only cry once. Shout at each other once. Hit once. Scream once. If you abuse the extreme emotion it no longer becomes effective. **The more you shout, the less the audience will listen.** All they will hear is the noise, and not the content.

## Fight the Sad

Fight the urge to 'act' sad no matter how sad the issue. Sad plays are already sad. The text is sad. Use all forms of emotion to react to the issue. Anger can be quiet, sad people laugh, and so on. That is what will make the moment alive instead of stereotypical.

## Remember the Audience

Always remember the audience. The issue play can turn into an insular experience for the cast if they get too involved with what they're doing. Always keep in mind that **your job is to keep the audience on the edge of their seats.** Variety is the key. It's always more effective to make an audience laugh right before you hit them in the gut with something dramatic. Silence works in tandem with shouting. Always have

a moment of stillness after a moment of chaos.

## Play the Opposite

Take the most dramatic moment and rehearse it with the opposite emotion. If there are two characters screaming at each other, turn the moment on its ear and have the characters laugh at each other. First of all it will give you a fresh perspective in the scene. You'll find new rhythms in the pace of the dialogue. It's a great way to create a break between the character going through the issue, and the actor. On that note...

## You are Not the Issue

Remember that it is the characters who are in the issue, not the actors. Every time you rehearse a tense, emotional moment, create a clean break. Play a silly improv game at the end of rehearsals. Sing. Do yoga. Play **DUCK DUCK GOOSE**. Create a ritual to bring yourself out of character.

## Trust an Outsider

Have an outside eye watch the show. If you and your cast are knee-deep in your issue, you may not think the show is straying into the over-dramatic. A fresh eye (that you trust!) can let you know if the show is on the right track. 🐼



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The Fine Print

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