

The First Rehearsal

by Maria McConville

Essential Question

How can the first rehearsal begin to build a strong ensemble that will work together toward the same goal?

Ideal group

Beginners. Middle/High school.



Goal/Aim

To build a strong ensemble. Students will begin to build trust within the group. Students will strengthen listening and collaboration skills.

Length of Lesson

This is for a 2-hour rehearsal. Depending on how much time you have, determine what are the most important tasks that need to be accomplished today and work with those. This can be spread out over your first 2-3 meetings/rehearsals.

Materials Needed

Copy of script for each cast member, stage manager, director and designer. Blank paper, pens/pencils/highlighters.

Vocabulary Words

Ensemble: a unit or group of complimentary parts that contribute to a single effect.

Rehearsal: the act of practicing in preparation for a performance. A detailed repetition.

Stage Direction: an instruction to an actor or director, written into the script of the play.

Actor: a person who behaves in the manner of a character, usually by reciting scripted dialogue, in order to entertain an audience.

Director: a person who supervises the creative aspects of a dramatic production and guides the actors and crew.

Designer: works with the director and fellow designers to establish an overall concept for the production and design the stage environment.

Stage manager: to serve as overall supervisor of the stage and actors. To direct or manipulate from behind the scenes, as to achieve a desired effect.

INTRODUCTION

(5-10 minutes)

Introduce yourself as the director! Welcome the cast and crew. Let them know why you chose this particular play and what you are hoping the audience will get out of it. Quickly, what will rehearsals be like? Do you have a rehearsal calendar to pass out or a contract for the students to read and sign?

WARM-UP

(10-20 minutes)

The Name Game

This will get students to start learning each others names. This really works if it's an ensemble that consists of multiple grades and/or classes.

1. Ensemble stands in a circle.
2. A student starts by saying their name to the circle.
3. The student to their right repeats the name that was just stated and then says their own.
4. The following student says the last two names and their own.
5. This continues all the way around the circle.
6. It's always cool if you go last and can say EVERYBODY's names!

WARM-UP, PART 2

(10 minutes)

Opposite Day

Students walk around the space individually, minding others, with the intention of filling the space around them with their body and energy. Once they're able to do this without giggling too much, the director calls out various directions, ie. Jump! After they jump, they should continue walking and listen for the next direction.

Stop!, Walk!, Clap!, Jump!

After a few rounds of this, instruct them that when they hear Stop, it means Walk! and when they hear Walk, it means Stop! When they hear Clap, it means Jump and when they hear Jump, it means Clap! ...Opposites.

ACTIVITY 1

(Duration: the length of your play)

Script read-through

If you can have the whole cast and crew sit around a table, this is great, but really, whatever is most comfortable. The Stage Manager should time the length of the read-through. The Stage Manager also reads the stage directions aloud. Each actor reads their character aloud. Designers take notes on their concept as they hear the play, if this is the first time they are reading it. If not, they can make notes on details to add to their design.

ACTIVITY 2

(5-10 minutes for each designer)

Design presentations

If you have a design team that you have been meeting with previous to this first read-through and they have design ideas/renderings that you have all agreed upon, these ideas should be shared with the cast now. If a director/teacher is doing all of the designing, these ideas should be presented to the cast now.

Share Time

What was something you learned today that you didn't know before? What is something you are excited about? Select volunteers for this, as time is, most likely, running out. This also could possibly be a way for you to end each rehearsal: each ensemble member shares something.

Restate what was learned/practiced

The cast and crew have defined who they are as an ensemble, each member knows what is expected of them at rehearsals and in between rehearsals. Everyone working on the play has established a common goal.

Homework/Writing reflection

Students read through the script on their own and highlight their lines.

Discussion questions

What about this play makes it special? Who is our audience going to be? Why is this an important play for them to see? What is your responsibility to the cast and crew?

Teaching standards met by this lesson

New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theatre

Theatre Making: Acting; Developing Theatre Literacy

Making Connections Through Theatre

Working with Community and Cultural Resources

Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning

Maria McConville is a native New Yorker who has lived in every borough...yes, even Staten Island. She started out at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts and received her BA in Performance from Fordham University at Lincoln Center. Maria has performed all over New York City from Shakespeare in the Park-ing Lot to Theatre Row and across the country with Theatreworks USA. She also a member of AEA, writer, Army wife, proud mother, and an inspired teaching artist.



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