

Play Production Vocabulary

(from the “Importance of Being Earnest Learning and Teaching Guide, Scotland”)

Directing

Directing means considering a variety of roles involved in a performance and deciding on what you wish to happen. The director must state what they would like to happen, and in the case of actors, how they would guide them to doing so.

The director has the overall concept for the performance of the play. There are various different styles of directing from authoritarian to consensus style. The director has the vision of the play, emphasising the key themes and ideas in the play. The director relays her/his ideas to be developed by all the other roles in the production team. The director will need to negotiate successfully with the following individuals. It is therefore important that the director has clear ideas of what s/he wants to happen.

To have a strong directorial concept, you must have a strong understanding of all the roles in a production team.

Set designer and deviser

The set designer researches and plans and often makes the whole set (the area that the actors perform in). They need to reflect the practical requirements of the play as dictated in the script. They also need to reflect the ideas and themes of the play as well as the style, period, setting and atmosphere. Their design should also be made in liaison with the director and match his/her requirements.

Lighting designer and technician

The lighting designer chooses the types of lights, with effects/colours to reflect the time/place of action. They also have to emphasise particular moments, areas, create mood, tension and reflect the ideas, and the themes of the play. This should be in consultation with the director and stage designer.

Sound designer and technician

All sound effects and music are the sound designer’s responsibility. They must look at the requirements of the play in terms of content, style, period, atmosphere and setting. This should also be done in consultation with the director.

Costumer designer and wardrobe manager

All clothing worn on the stage must be chosen/designed specifically for the performance. It should reflect the style and period of the piece. It should reflect the design concepts as already discussed in consultation with the director. They need to keep notes and/or drawings to interpret the script.

Make-up designer and artist

The make-up artist designs suitable make-up and hair for the actors to reflect their character, status, background and themes of the play. They may need to consult with the director and the costume designer.

Props designer and manager

The person in charge of the properties (props) has to decide which props are suitable and would enhance the production. They need to decide what style the props should have, in consultation with the designer and/or director and/or actors.

Stage management

The stage manager is in charge of the production while it is being performed. The stage manager needs to attend rehearsals and keep an accurate log of all movements, actor entrances and exits, all set changes, costume changes, lighting cues, sound cues, prop requirements and movements and any other important factors that may affect the performance. They need to coordinate all these details during the performance and ensure that all activities backstage are carried out efficiently and at the right time, in the right order to allow for a smooth performance.

Actor

An actor performs plays in a suitable style, reflecting the ideas and themes of the play. The actor is under the charge of the director. The actor needs to keep notes on their interpretation of character, list their tasks and preparation and annotate their script with moves and directions.

Directing actors

The director has to have a clear understanding of acting to communicate it the directorial commentary.

The directorial commentary must refer to voice and movements.

Voice:

- strength
- pitch
- time
- accent
- volume
- clarity
- emphasis
- pause
- tone
- articulation
- fluency

- intonation
- register
- quality

Movements:

- open/closed
- angular/curved
- symmetrical/asymmetrical
- balance
- speed
- timing
- positioning
- use of levels
- use of space
- rhythm
- stance
- use of direction
- gesture
- facial expression

When describing how you wish your actors to move and talk, try to incorporate a style of moving.

An example might be that instead of 'walking', describe 'walking tired' or 'slowly dragging feet'. The more concise the description, the clearer an actor and an examiner will understand your intentions.

All instructions must be justified.