
**HowlRound
Theatre Commons:
Essays and
Conversations
from the
First Ten Years
(2011-2020)
Lesson Plans**

Reorienting Directing:
Moving Towards New
Directing Practices

Reorienting Directing: Moving Towards New Directing Practices

Tags for Courses

Directing
Acting
Theatre for young audiences
Directing the young performer
Teaching artistry

Focus Questions

- ▶ How do I envision the role of a director?
 - ▶ What innovations can be made in the practices/methods of directing?
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Pre-Reading

- ▶ *Women Directors: Language Worth Repeating* | by Jess K. Smith
 - ▶ *Queering the Room: Some Beginning Notions for a Queer Directing Practice* | by Will Davis
 - ▶ *A Culture of Trust* | by Taylor Mac
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Pre-Assignment

Read the assigned articles ahead of time and come ready to discuss.

Objectives/Goals

- ▶ Students will interrogate the role of a director.
 - ▶ Students will reimagine the rehearsal room.
 - ▶ Students will practice alternate rehearsal strategies.
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Room Setup

Four corners/spaces cleared of furniture, an audience/actor space, ability to sit in chairs/desks for discussion.

Materials

Four corners prompts written on white paper (one response per paper).

Check-In

(5 min) Everyone share their name, pronouns (what's this?), and three words that describe a rehearsal room. What does it look/feel/sound like? Scribe words on a piece of poster paper or a whiteboard.

Say Aloud

Today we're going to think about how you envision the role of a director in a rehearsal room and with other artists and reimagine what that role can look like.

Engagement:

Four Corners (20 min)

Accessibility Adaptation: This activity can be adapted to utilize pointing instead of physical touch. Please discuss consent with students and make agreements about how to engage in this activity based on what the group is comfortable with. For example, the facilitator might invite students to close their eyes and do a non-verbal poll to assess if students are comfortable having their shoulder touched or would prefer pointing. Adaptation for mobility: Students can remain seated and signal their opinion using their head or arms to point in the direction of their response. For low vision students, be sure to verbally describe where the responses are falling (for example, “We have four people connected to Character A” or “Several characters want something from Character C.”)

1. Make sure you have four corners or four designated spaces in the classroom cleared of furniture so students can safely move their bodies around.

2. As you read each prompt, invite students to answer the prompt with their body, moving to the space that speaks to them most. Tell them: *“Each prompt is a metaphor, there is no right answer. Choose your answer based on what speaks to you, what fits you best.”*

3. As you read each prompt, designate an area in the room for each answer and put the paper with that answer on the floor. Ideally, you would designate each corner of the room to an answer. For example: *“sparkling water”* (point to a corner, put paper on the floor), *“black coffee”* (point to the next corner), etc.

4. After students have moved to their “corner,” ask students in each corner to discuss their answer with their group. Then, call the group back and share out big ideas from each response group.

5. Prompts:

- ▶ My personality is like...
- ▶ Sparkling water
- ▶ Black coffee
- ▶ A smoothie
- ▶ Soda

Art is like...

- ▶ A car
- ▶ A hot air balloon
- ▶ A submarine
- ▶ A train

Directing is like...

- ▶ Painting with finger paints
- ▶ Painting with watercolors
- ▶ Drawing with charcoal
- ▶ Sculpting with clay

The director/actor relationship is like...

- ▶ An orange tree to a bumblebee
- ▶ A wildflower to rain
- ▶ A cactus to the sun
- ▶ Ivy to a wall

A rehearsal room should feel like...

- ▶ A jungle
- ▶ A desert
- ▶ The ocean
- ▶ A big city

Small Group Discussion (20-25 min)

1. Arrange students in small groups of three to four people. Give them a sheet of poster paper and a marker.
2. Each poster paper should have a chart with the prompts written along the top of the paper like this:

Directing practice/method	What does it look like?	What does it sound like?	What does it feel like?
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3. Discuss: How do these directors “undo” directing? What methods do they propose to undo traditional modes of directing? What innovations do they imagine?
4. Have students write each practice/method on their poster paper in the left-hand column.
5. Then, give them time as a group to reimagine their directing practices. Invite groups to consider how these methods manifest in a rehearsal room. What intentional choices can be mad to bring these ideas to life in rehearsal rooms? On their poster paper, have groups record these ideas:
 - ▶ What do these methods look like in a rehearsal room - what is happening?
 - ▶ What do these methods feel like - how does the artistic team feel about the work? How does the room feel?
 - ▶ What do these methods sound like? What is being said by the director/ other artists in the room?

Paint the Space (10-15 min)

1. Students will arrange themselves as an audience with a stage space in front of them.
2. As a group, the goal is to transform the space and imagine what a new/ fictional place might look like. One at a time, each student will enter the stage space and introduce a new element to the space. They will use their body to show its size and location, giving a clear description to the audience. An element could include sounds, textures, objects, smells, or tastes.
3. Give them an example: "Over here is a red armchair. It's this tall and wide. It has holes in the cushions and white stuffing is spilling out all over the floor. It smells like lilacs and there is a coffee stain on the arm."
4. Students can introduce something new or build upon what their peers have added already.
5. Start by giving them the practice prompt: create a natural/outdoors space.
6. Now, ask them to imagine a rehearsal room that reflects the methods/ practices they just identified. Create the space as a full group and make sure everyone adds something to the image. It can be an object, a smell, a feeling, a sound, anything goes!
7. Once they set the space, invite everyone to find a spot in the image they have created.
8. While still inside the rehearsal room space, hand out notecards/sticky notes and a marker to each student. Invite them to write an intention about how they will reimagine their directing practice.
9. Reflect:
 - ▶ How did it feel to create this space?
 - ▶ How do you feel inside this space?
 - ▶ How could you use this activity in a rehearsal room?

Closing: Sandbox (3-5 min)

1. Ask students to join you in a standing circle inside the rehearsal space they've created. That space is still "around you" for this closing.
2. If they feel comfortable, invite them to close their eyes or put their heads down. The facilitator walks around the circle and taps each person in a staggered fashion to prompt them to speak their intention into the space. Each person continues repeating their own intention until they are tapped again, at which point they stop.
3. Encourage them to play with volume and pace as they repeat their intention.
4. Tap each student to end the sandbox.

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