



YOUNG SPACE MAKERS

WEEK FOUR: DIRECTING

Directing Theatre

A play will always have a director, or sometimes two directors, as part of the creative team. A director is responsible for the overall creative vision of the show. They will work with the designers right from the very start of the process to create an overall vision for the production and make decisions on the style of the production. Throughout the production process, they will bring the different elements of the show together to produce a final production. Before rehearsals start, they will be responsible for casting the show (deciding which actors will play which character). In rehearsals, they will direct the actors and help them develop their characters ahead of the final performance.

Famous Directors

Some directors are well known for making work in a particular style. Have a look at these directors below and see if you can find any information about the style of their work.



Sally Cookson

Work includes: *A Monster Calls, The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, Jane Eyre, Peter Pan*



Ivo Van Hove

Work includes: *A View From the Bridge, Network, Hedda Gabler, Lazarus*



Marianne Elliott

Work includes: *War Horse, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Company*



Lynette Linton

Work includes: *Sweat, Richard II, Assata Taught Me*



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Styles of Theatre

One of the main things a theatre director is responsible for is deciding what the overall *style* of the performance might be. There are lots of different styles of theatre that can be used to tell stories. The style may come naturally from the type of script you are using, or the director might make a bold choice in style to make the production stand out. Here are some styles of theatre and examples of productions that have been in that style.

NATURALISTIC THEATRE

A *Naturalistic* play is a play that is performed in a *natural* way. The Actors will try to play that characters in a realistic way, using methods to help them understand the character they are playing so they are as accurate as possible. For example, if an actor was playing a policeman, they might research what policemen do day-to-day to make sure they were being a *real* as possible. The *setting* of the play will take place in realistic settings like in a house or in a school rather than, for example, in a magical land. Here are some examples of naturalistic plays. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:



PHYSICAL THEATRE

A play that is in the style of Physical Theatre will use lots of movement and dance, sometimes in place of *dialogue*. Physical Theatre will try to *show* how a character might be feeling through movement, rather than simply *tell* the audience through speech. Sometimes this can mean Physical Theatre productions are very *abstract* (non-realistic) but can also be very powerful and moving for an audience to watch. A play can use elements of physical theatre, just using it in certain moments, or the play could be entirely physical, making it more like a dance performance. Here are some examples of physical theatre plays. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:





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MELODRAMA

Melodrama was a popular theatre style in the Victorian era. It is a very *exaggerated* (over the top) acting style, where actors might use big physical gestures and facial expressions. Melodramas usually have similar characters, called *Stock Characters*, that have certain personality traits, such as an evil villain, a noble hero or a maiden in distress. Pantomime is a common form of Melodrama, as the characters are very unrealistic and the actors perform them in a heightened way. Here are some examples of Melodrama. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:



MUSICAL THEATRE

Musical Theatre is a popular style of performance that combines acting, singing and dancing. In a musical, the songs are just as important as the *dialogue*, and in some shows, everything is sung and there is no spoken dialogue at all. Often, a musical theatre production will have grand, lavish sets and costumes so that they create a *spectacle* for the audience, making the performance more entertaining. The story might be simpler than in a naturalistic play, as the focus is often more on the emotion of the characters. It is often said of Musical Theatre, 'when the emotion becomes too strong for speech, you sing, when it becomes too strong for song, you dance'. Here are some examples of Musical Theatre. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:



TRAGEDY

A Tragedy is a play that will show some kind of human suffering or trouble, that usually ends unhappily. Tragic plays are usually very serious and sad and can often leave an audience feeling shocked or emotional. In the play, the main character will face some kind of problem that they have to overcome, but usually comes with a serious consequence, like a death or banishment of a character.



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Here are some examples of Tragedy. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:



COMEDY

A Comedy is a play where humour is its main feature. A comedy will aim to make the audience laugh. You can get many different types of comedy that might use different techniques to make the audience laugh, such as physical comedy (like falling off a chair or slipping on a banana skin), quick funny *dialogue*, surprises or doing the opposite of what the audience expect and finally using heightened design elements like the set or costume design. A Comedy will usually have a happy ending. Here are some examples of Comedy. Click on the pictures below to watch a short video:



TRY IT YOURSELF

Have a go at these exercises to practise your directing skills:

DIRECTOR HOT SEATING

Ask someone to suggest a well know fairytale to you. Give yourself a few minutes to think about which style you could perform that fairytale in, and pitch it back to the other person giving your reasons why. Think about what you would do in your production that will make sure it would fit with your chosen style.

QUICK FIRE SUGGESTIONS

Ask someone to perform this short script:

PERSON: *Hello! Welcome to my house. Can I offer you a cup of tea?*

Try and direct them to say the line in a different way, to match a style you have picked. Try not to tell them which style you have picked, instead give them specific performance instructions to achieve this. How many different styles can you do?



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Casting

A director is also responsible for *casting* the play. This means choosing the right actors to play the roles of the characters in the play. The actors in a play are commonly called the *Cast*. To do this, a director will advertise for the role, being very specific about the kind of actor they might need. This is called a *character breakdown*. It might mention things like how old the actor should be, what kind of physical features they should have (blonde hair, green eyes) or if the character has any particular qualities that the actor should consider when playing them (e.g a mean, manipulative character). Here are some *character breakdowns*, can you guess which famous person they are describing?

1. Man, age between 50 - 65 years. Must have or be willing to grow a large, white beard. Slightly rounded in the belly. Jolly personality, generous at heart. Must be willing to eat lots of Mince Pies.

3. Woman, aged 30. Blonde with mid length hair. Must be able to sing and play the guitar, particularly in a country/pop style. Must also be able to do an American accent.

2. Man, age mid 50s. Blonde hair required. Posh vocal quality, with bumbling demeanour. Often very clumsy but very intelligent. Must have a good understanding of current politics.

4. Woman, late 80s - 90s. Grey/White hair. Fairly short in height. Posh voice with soft tone. Is calm under pressure and can stay very poised. Must love dogs.

Answers: 1. Santa Claus 2. Boris Johnson 3. Taylor Swift 4. The Queen

AUDITIONS

The next stage of the *casting* process is to run *auditions*, where actors will come and read some of the script for the director. The director will then decide who is best for the role. They will consider not only how the actor looks, but how they interpret the script, what unique qualities they could bring to the role and how they work with other actors.

Casting challenge

Using *Little Red Riding Hood* as your chosen production, create a cast list for your play. First, decide on the style of your production. Then, create a *character breakdown* for each role. Then, find your dream cast for the roles by picking from any actor or famous person who you think would be right for the role. Create a cast list that has the role, actor name and picture of the actor. Once you've decided on your cast, show your cast list back to someone in your house and talk them through why you made the decisions you made. Do they have any feedback on your chosen cast or other good ideas for a cast member? Good Luck!