Directing Syllabus and Materials Spring 2013

Table of contents

Page Topic 2 Syllabus—description, goals, method of course, etc. List of assignments and grading 3 4 Ground rules for the course—read and heed 4 Promptbook submission, completion of each step, absences, etc. 5 Guide to choosing scenes 6 Blocking, pictures, and focus: definitions, functions, etc. Techniques for achieving primary focus 7 9 Blocking and focus assignment Promptbook: Why do it? 11 11 Specific directions for preparing the promptbook. Do it exactly this way and no other way or cataclysmic retribution will befall you. 15 How scenes are evaluated Appendix: Verbs, beats, units 15 18 Appendix: Mistakes with verbs 19 Important Dates

Directing

THA 3445-001 TR 9:30-12:00 1080 Doudna Fine Arts Center Fall 2012

Dr. Jean Wolski

Office: 2084 Doudna Fine Arts Center

Telephone: 581-5919 e-mail: jkwolski@eiu.edu Office Hours: MTW 2:00-3:00 or by arrangement

Please note: Occasionally, I will have committee meetings that necessitate my being out of the office. On these occasions, I will post a notice and reschedule my office hours. If the rescheduled times are not convenient for you, please don't hesitate to contact me so that we can set up a meeting at another time.

Prerequisites: THA 2244, 2257 and 2258 or permission of the instructor **Textbooks & supplies:**

- Hodge, *Play Directing; Analysis, Communication, & Style* (Textbook Rental)
- Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (Beg, borrow, or buy)
- A new or used hard-backed 3-ring binder for the promptbooks.

Description and purpose:

This is a beginning course in directing for the live theatre. Its purpose is to teach you how to direct a *full-length play* by directing *segments* of a play from start (choice of script) to finish (actual performance and evaluation). **This is a time-consuming course**—not because I'm a slave-driver (ok, maybe I am!) but because *directing is a time-consuming endeavor*, and I am preparing you for this Universal Truth.

Specific goals of the course include:

- ➤ Refreshing and augmenting theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired in performance, technical, and analysis courses;
- Turning the above into tools for theatrical directing;
- ➤ Learning how to choose, interpret, and approach playscripts from a practical, directorial point of view;
- Creating an effective and usable ground plan for the stage;
- Beginning to find effective ways of working with actors;
- Understanding the process of choosing, analyzing, auditioning, casting, and shaping theatrical playscripts for live performance;
- Seeing and using effective techniques of staging for both proscenium and arena/thrust;
- Compiling and using a director's promptbook;

- Taking charge of an entire directing project from inception to completion;
- Defending and explaining your ideas and choices;
- > Evaluating directing choices in your own work and that of others.
- > In all, you should gain a firm grasp on the **process of directing** for theatre.

Method of the course:

Some readings, some lecture, but *mostly* "hands-on": class discussion, practical exercises and demonstrations, several written assignments, analysis of an EIU production (learning to *see* from a directorial point of view), direction of two scenes, preparation of two promptbooks, directorial self analysis.

Tentative List of Assignments:

Written work (60% of grade)

1.	Streetcarscene goals/objectives	10%
2.	A/B verbs/goals exercise	10%
3.	Groundplan & explanation	10%
4.	Blocking & focus diagrams/explanations	10%
5.	Promptbook #1	10%
6.	Promptbook #2	10%

7. Peer Critiques (Not graded, but must be turned in to avoid 10% reduction in final grade.)

Performance work (40% of grade)

1. Preparation & execution of Scene #1	15%
2. Preparation & execution of Scene #2	15%
3. Oral contributions to class learning	10%

GRADING SCALE

93-100%	Α
83-92%	В
73-82%	C
63-72%	D
Below 63%	\mathbf{F}

Important Note:

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

[Why this 60-40 breakdown in percentages when it seems that 90% of your time is "performance time"? Because at least 60% of directing involves prethinking and analysis outside of and BEFORE rehearsal. If you don't believe me, *just wait*.]

GROUND RULES

Read and heed. I enforce these.

- You may not perform in any of your own scenes—because you cannot focus on directing while rehearsing a role, no matter how small. Besides, scheduling would be nightmarish. For the first scene, and for exercises, we'll use people in this class. For the final scene, you can recruit actors from outside class, but they must be available *during* class in order to perform.
- This is both a theoretical and a skills course. Something new comes up every day, and you cannot learn if you aren't here. My attendance policy is this: There are no "allowed" absences except in case of illness/dire emergency. If you miss once, I'll assume the above. If you miss twice, the skies will thunder and lightening will pour down upon your head. If you miss three times, I will suggest you drop the course. This is not a good class to miss, as there's always something happening, and it's difficult to make up the work. Plan accordingly.
- Theatre is deadlines. My late work policy is to deduct 10% per class meeting day for any assignment that is late for no discernible reason. (For example, 2 days late = minus 20%.) If you think an assignment will be late, give me advance notice and I'll probably understand. (In real life, though, late work = a pink slip and a hard boot out the door.) The late work policy does not apply to scenes and promptbooks because they cannot be late.

Please notice:

- 1. The promptbook is due in *three stages*: (1) The analysis portion (Part A) is due **the week before** your scene is performed. If the promptbook is not handed in at this time, your scene will *not* be performed. Think what a scheduling nightmare *that* will be.... (2) On performance day, the blocking pages and rehearsal diary are due. (3) On the following class meeting day, the post-production analysis is due. Each of these segments must be turned in before I begin to read the promptbook.
- 2. Except under extraordinary situations, your scene *must* be performed on the day it is scheduled. (You may, of course, switch with someone else, if both agree.)
- 3. You must complete each step or assignment before proceeding to the next. In other words, *nothing can be late*—unless approved *in advance*. If an assignment is returned to you for revision, it's due next class period. If it isn't turned in, you can't proceed.

GUIDE TO CHOOSING SCENES: Read this now or regret it later.

- ➤ I will not choose your scene for you. Choosing is part of the process. Choose your own scene(s)—and EARLY! If you procrastinate, you will find yourself very rushed and very sorry.
- ▶ Be wary of scenes requiring lots of men. You may not find them.
- ➤ Because the results *can* be choppy and incomprehensible, **avoid combining scenes from separate areas of the play**—unless you're dead certain the resulting scene will "work". (Sometimes it does.) Confer with me, if you wish.
- Avoid scenes where **lighting or scenery** would divide the space into tiny areas (i.e., 2-3 rooms). Why? Because (a) this restricts you to tiny spaces and results in uninteresting blocking patterns; anyway (b) since we are not using stage lighting, the class *sees* only one large area—not smaller areas—and we wonder why you don't use the rest of the stage.
- ➤ **Avoid** "sit-down-and-talk" scenes. Why? They're usually unintelligible when detached from the rest of the play and/or—worse—dull. We want to see something happen. If you want to watch people blather, watch a talk show. Ergo: Choose a scene wherein something INTERESTING, ACTIVE happens!!
- > Do not, not, <u>NOT</u> choose a scene where large segments of the action revolve around a table, as in a restaurant or a dining room. Why? You can't logically move people around. Besides, I'll kill you. Or worse.
- For your 2nd scene, *do not* choose a scene that is mostly or entirely monologues—especially scenes where characters do not interact.
- ➤ Do not choose a scene that is *really* a monologue that's occasionally interrupted by two other people.
- ➤ Choose something that will interest your audience. Your classmates are your audience; what would interest them? (Within reason....)
- ➤ Choose something that the "available talent" can handle. Very few 18-20 year olds can manage Hamlet or a doddering 80-year-old. On the other hand, don't hesitate to challenge the available talent. Use your judgment.
- > Choose something you *really* like. And understand. And want like mad to do.

Requirements

- ➤ Length: 7-10 minutes, minimum of 3 actors. The 3rd actor must be onstage, speaking *and interacting* with the others for a *minimum* of @ 40% of the scene.
- ➤ The first scene **must be** *contemporary realism*; the second scene can be anything you wish—period, abstract, realistic, classical, etc. etc. But not a monologue interrupted by others.
- Although you'd profit from doing one comic scene and one serious scene, choice of genre is up to you.

BLOCKING, PICTURES AND FOCUS

Definitions:

- **Blocking** usually means placing the actors in a particular spot and in particular configurations on the stage. Some people associate blocking with "movements"—that is, the actors' movements that get them from one place to another. Either way of looking at the word "blocking" is okay.
- A picture is a <u>frozen moment</u>, a snapshot that tells a story. No one changes position during a "picture". (This does not mean actors stand stock still, of course!) People may move to get <u>into place</u> for a picture, but in order for a picture to be a picture, it must be <u>unchanged</u> for anywhere from a brief instant to several seconds or more. How can a picture tell a story? The same way a well-composed photograph tells a story: we see relationships, attitudes, moods and emotions, and/or reactions. Pictures may be dramatic, comic, and everything in between. Study some good paintings or photographs and you'll see what I mean. Good pictures (or "picturization") are a hallmark of good direction.
- **Focus**: The stage is a huge, open space and spectators are free to look at whatever they want. In order to highlight moments, in order to clarify the action, in order to keep the spectators looking where you *want* them to look, stage directors must learn how to <u>focus</u> the audience's attention on the most important moments. Otherwise, the play is chaos. See below under "Techniques for Achieving Primary Focus."

Some functions of blocking:

- To <u>illustrate the action</u>, make it easy for the audience to comprehend / visualize what's going on in the scene.
- To clarify character relationships, mood.
- To keep the action moving forward toward the NEXT THING.
- To help the actors feel/create the illusion of life onstage.
- To <u>arrange the space</u> into **pictures** that are aesthetically pleasing and visually interesting, dynamic, stimulating.
- To <u>refresh the audience visually</u>; audiences weary of seeing the same picture for too long a time. That's why sit-and-talk scenes provoke yawns. Because we were weaned on film and TV, with its frequent change of images, we are used to seeing *movement* and *change* in the picture. It is prudent, therefore, to *change something* onstage every 30 or so seconds. Yes, every 30 or so seconds.
- <u>To keep the audience awake and watching!</u> If it isn't interesting to watch, why should they watch it?
- To create focus. Read on.

TECHNIQUES FOR ACHIEVING PRIMARY FOCUS ON A PROSCENIUM STAGE

Primary focus means "spotlighting" the actor(s) or action(s) you most want the audience to watch at that particular moment. Below are the major techniques for achieving primary focus. Page numbers refer to illustrations in Catron. Study the illustrations carefully, as there's a point being made! You will employ these principles all semester—and, in fact, every time you direct. So learn them well.

<u>NOTE:</u> Everything below assumes there are *three or more actors* on the proscenium stage. If there's only one actor onstage, the audience will automatically look at that actor no matter where he/she is standing. An dtuigeann tú? Therefore, think in terms of three or more actors when you read the material below.

- 1. **PLANE.** Plane means "how far upstage" or "how far downstage". Usually, the actor farthest downstage has greater focus. But not always.
- 2. **LEVEL.** Usually, the higher the actor is off the stage floor (e.g. on a platform, stairway, etc.), the more focus that actor has. But not always.
- 3. **AREA OF THE PROSCENIUM STAGE.** Placing an actor in a dominant area of the stage usually ensures focus. We will discuss "power areas" of the stage in class.
- 4. **BODY POSITION.** The more open (cheated outward) the actor, the more focus that actor has. Usually.
- 5. **CONTRAST IN BODY POSITION.** If everyone else has assumed one kind of body position (e.g., standing) the actor doing the <u>opposite</u> (sitting or reclining, e.g.) usually has greater focus. Why? Contrast. We look at whatever is *different*. That's our nature.
- 6. **ISOLATION.** If an actor is considerably separated from others (has appreciable space around him/her), that actor may well have the dominant focus because he/she is separated/isolated from the others. Standing a few steps away from others does not constitute "isolation". A single actor alone on the stage is not "isolation." It's a single actor alone on the stage.
- 7. **CENTERING**. Placing the actor in the center of a group of 3 or more will probably result in focus. (Think of a big musical number with the lead singer or dancer in the center of the group.)

- 8. **POINTING or LEADING THE AUDIENCE'S EYE.** Can be done three ways: **First way:** If everyone—or almost everyone—onstage is looking at an actor, that actor probably has the focus.
 - **Second way:** If the director arranges <u>other</u> actors in *lines or groups of lines* that emphasize the actor, that actor has focus.
 - Third way: If the director is cagey enough to place an actor so that the scenery emphasizes him/her, this can help focus the audience's attention. Consider, for instance, what would happen if you framed an actor inside an archway. Or placed two lovers in a flower-covered arbor. Or located an actor at the top of a flight of stairs, with the lines of the stairway "pointing" toward the person. Or seated an actor in a high-backed wing chair—especially if the actor is in light clothing and chair is dark (or vice versa). The possibilities of using scenery to emphasize an actor are endless and can be visually stimulating.
- 9. **MOVEMENT.** Remember this, O remember this: The moving actor almost always gets primary focus. [Of course, the opposite is true as well; if all but one actor is moving, audience will focus on the non-moving actor. Why? Contrast!] BUT USUALLY the moving actor takes focus.
- 10. **TRIANGLES.** Triangles can be your best friend on any stage because whoever is the apex of the triangle usually receives primary focus, especially in proscenium. (The apex can be virtually anywhere--depending on what the <u>other two</u> actors are doing.)
- 11. Can you *combine* one or more of these to achieve focus? Of course! ANY **COMBINATION** of the above will help you achieve focus.

BLOCKING AND FOCUS ASSIGNMENT

- You will be assigned <u>one</u> of the situations/scenarios below. Your task is to block the assigned situation/scenario <u>on paper</u> outside of class and then direct it in class—i.e., make it come to life. No need for dialogue, as this is an exercise in blocking and focus. Think of it as a silent movie....
- You will also block <u>the same</u> situation/scenario a <u>second</u> way on paper, using the same ground plan as for the first. You will *not* direct this in class but you *will* turn in as part of the assignment.
- You will turn in <u>a set of diagrams</u> that show each picture/each blocking move <u>and</u> explain why you did what you did. Below each diagram, <u>list</u> the principles that you used to achieve focus. Minimum of 5 pictures per scenario—although some of the scenarios may require more than 5. (Since you're doing the same scenario twice, that means you're turning in a minimum of 10 diagrams, minimum of five per scenario.)

- ➤ When you prepare your diagrams, the person(s) "in focus" should be indicated IN RED.
- ➤ You must use the terminology; that's one of the things you're LEARNING. Do not invent your own terms.
- All this should look like a moment from an actual play, albeit silent. Have fun with it!
- Avoid using the *same* principles repeatedly. Variety, please!

So what do you turn in?

- 1. A set of diagrams (pictures) that show blocking for your assigned situation/scenario. Each picture will show the ground plan* and where the people *are* in relation to furniture, walls, doorways, etc. Below each picture, state the principles used in creating focus.
- 2. You will turn in a *second* set of diagrams (pictures) using the same ground plan but blocking the scenario a *different way*. You must have a minimum of 5 pictures; some of the scenarios call for more.
- 3. You will *direct* your favorite of the two scenarios in class.

*To save time, most people draw the ground plan *once*, then make photocopies of the ground plan—however many are needed for the pictures in your scenario.

SITUATIONS / SCENARIOS

- 1. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures. Use five performers and block the following. Start with everyone onstage. #1 is upset; use others to make #1 the primary focus. Next, #1 faints, falling to the floor and staying "out" for a bit; put the focus onto #2. Next, put focus away onto #3. Next, place focus onto another actor of your choice. End by putting focus back on #1. Do this two different ways <u>with same ground plan</u>. In each case, LIST the principles you used to create focus.
- 2. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures. Using six people, stage a party scene with several people milling around at start. Nobody is especially in focus. #1 and #2 are offstage at the beginning. Bring #1 and #2 onstage and make them the focus. Then switch focus to #3. Change focus to #4 and #5 (shared focus). Then end with focus on #1 only. Do this two different ways <u>with same ground plan</u>. In each case, LIST the principles you used to create focus.
- 3. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures. Use five people, two of whom are eavesdropping on the other three. At the beginning, three (#1, #2, and #3) are already on, with #1 having primary focus. Now bring #4 and #5 onstage as eavesdroppers, with #5 as primary focus. The eavesdroppers are then either discovered by others or they come out of hiding. #2 should now

have primary focus. In the last picture, make #5 the focus. Do this two different ways with same ground plan. LIST the principles you used to achieve focus.

- 4. Using four performers, create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures, in which something catastrophic, awful, or hysterically funny occurs. In the first picture, #1 is the focus. Change the focus to #2. Then change focus to #3. Next, change focus to #5. End up with #1 as primary focus. #4 should never be vastly in focus, but should be <u>in</u> the scene/action. Do this two different ways <u>with same ground plan</u>. List the principles you used to achieve focus.
- 5. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures loosely based on Scene 3 (the Poker Night) of *Streetcar*. Begin with four poker players already on (Stanley, Mitch, Steve, Pablo). Bring Stella and Blanche on (they've been out do dinner and a show). End where Stella introduces Mitch to Blanche. For 90% of the scene, focus should be on Blanche (or Blanche & Stella). Stage this two differentways <u>with same ground plan</u>. LIST principles you used to achieve focus.
- 6. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures based on Nick and Honey's first entrance in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. (4 performers) Start with the moment just before they first walk in (George moves to door) and end with all of them (or 3 sitting, 1 standing). Focus may be wherever you think it needs to be, based on your reading of that moment. Do this two different ways with same ground plan. LIST principles you used to achieve focus.
- 7. Create <u>at least</u> five logically connected pictures encompassing this situation: the filming of a scene for a <u>silent movie</u>, using 6 performers. #1 = the Director; #2 = camera operator; #3 and #4 are male and female actors who are being filmed. #5 and #6 are extras watching the scene that's being shot; they're not in the filmed scene. The shot is of a wife denouncing her two-timing husband. Filming is in progress. For at least half of the pictures, the Director should be primary focus; for at least 40% of the time, the "performers" should be primary focus. Do this two different ways <u>with same ground plan</u>; LIST the principles you used to achieve focus.
- 8. Using seven performers, create at least five connected moments at the scene of a shooting on a city street. #1 is a detective or policeperson. #2 is the distraught spouse of the deceased. #3 is the deceased. #4, #5, #6, and #7 are in the picture only as onlookers. In the first picture, #1 and #2 should have shared focus. In the second picture, #2 should have primary focus. In the third picture, #1 and #7 should have shared focus. Next, shift focus to #7. Finally, shift the focus back to #1. Do this two different ways using the same groundplan. LIST the principles you used to achieve focus.

9. Using five performers, create at least five pictures illustrating the "grand unveiling" at the end of a mystery, where the detective reveals how he/she solved the case and then tells who the *real* killer is. #1=the Detective. #2=the soon-to-be-named killer. #3=the victim's spouse or significant other. #4 and #5= friends of the family who look guilty as heck. In the first picture, place primary focus on #1. Next, switch focus to #3. Then to #5. Then to #4. Finally, give shared focus to #1 and #2 (the real criminal) Do this two different ways using the same ground plan. List the principles you used to achieve focus.

THE PROMPTBOOK

Why prepare a promptbook? Several reasons:

- 1. To **guide** you during rehearsals;
- 2. To **organize** your thoughts and choices *before* rehearsals;
- 3. To **record** your thoughts and decisions--so you don't have to trust your memory.
- 4. It's best to keep all jotted "notes to yourself" in the promptbook. Anytime there's a change, you should record it in the promptbook so you won't forget. Keep any brainstorming pages in the promptbook. It's the central repository of all your thinking.
- 5. Look at the promptbook as a **blueprint for the production**. Its pages should contain all blocking and technical and interpretation notes.
- 6. The book should be so well organized and so CLEAR that you could hand it to a Stage Manager and say, "Here. Block it. I'll be back in a week." Yes, that frequently happens in the professional theatre; in days of yore, it was common practice. (Professional directors are often involved in more than one project at a time.) This should tell you how NEAT AND ORDERLY the promptbook has to be.

SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS FOR PREPARING THE PROMPTBOOK

Items under "A", "C", and "D" should be typed and should appear <u>EXACTLY</u> in the following order. (Why exactly this order? There are many of you, and only one of me. This makes it easier for me. And keeps me happy. And if I'm happy while I'm grading.....)

LABEL everything, please, using THESE headings and no others OR ELSE.

A. PREFATORY MATERIAL: ANALYSIS/RESEARCH PAGES

1. Author, Title, Date of composition (or of first performance)

- o Brief synopsis of play (50 words or less)
- o Brief synopsis of scene (50 words or less)
- Brief statement of where and how this scene fits into the play and why it's <u>in</u> the play (50 words or less)
- o (If doing a 10-minute one-act, ignore the 2 bullets directly above.)
- o All the above should occupy no more than about 1-1/2 pages.
- 2. Brief theatrical biography of the author (i.e., his/her achievements in the theatre--no more than approx. 2 typed pages). List sources. (Good sources include *Dictionary of American Biography, Current Biography*, and various "Who's Who" books. All are available in reference room or you can use the Web. Put this in your own words, please; if it sounds like you simply typed up something you photocopied or downloaded, I'll become peevish.
- 3. Copy of rehearsal schedule(s)
- 4. A ground plan <u>and explanation thereof</u>. <u>WHY</u> did you put the walls, doors, set pieces etc. in those locations? (e.g. I put chair in C because.... Sofa was RC because....) **State REASONS**.
- 5.What props and furniture would you <u>like to have had</u> for an actual production of this? Color scheme? WHY those colors? (An alternative to listing *specific* colors: state what you want the colors to *do* for the set. E.g., "The environment should be cold and sterile because....")
- 6. A costume plan (i.e., what costumes you would <u>like</u> to have had), together with a <u>rationale and defense</u> of choices (types of garments, specific colors, etc.). (An alternative to listing *specific* colors: state what you want the colors to *do* for each character. E.g., "Marsha, the career woman, should look sleek and professional because ______. Her colors would be cool and sophisticated because ______.")
- 7. Analysis of the play, a la Script analysis class. None of these should be BRIEF responses, you understand....
- (a) **What kind of play is this?** That is, is it realistic or nonrealistic? Why do you say so?
- (b) Next, what **genre** is it? Comedy, serious, farce, melodrama, social drama, modern tragedy, absurdist, tragicomedy, etc. etc. Defend your response to this GENRE question.]
- (c) **Theme** of the *entire play* expressed as a phrase or sentence. <u>Defend</u> your theme statement. WHY are you correct? PROVE IT, using ample evidence from text: lines, incidents, sequences, characters, etc.
 - >Minimum of three pages on this segment!<
- (d) Who is the **protagonist**? How do you *know* this character is the

protagonist?

- (e) Who is the **antagonist**? Why do you think so?
- (f) Somewhere in this section, state the **nature of the conflict** in the entire play (i.e., what clashes/fights?), then state the nature of the conflict in this scene.
- (g) **Major Dramatic Question** of the entire play and then of this scene and why you think so.
- (h) **Locate/explain:** inciting incident, point of attack, and equilibrium for entire play--then explain/defend your responses (Why are you correct?)
- (i) A one-sentence statement starting with, "This is a scene about..." Why do you think so?
- (j) Why is this scene in the play? Why is it needed? (Obviously, if you choose a 10-minute play, do not complete this question.)
- 8. CHARACTERS: For <u>each character who's on longer than 60 seconds</u>, provide the following information:
 - (a) Character's superobjective in the play. (To + verb.) Defend your response. (If one of your characters appears only in the scene you're performing [and not in the rest of the play], say so--e.g., a butler, waiter, whatever.)
 - (b) Character's overall objective in <u>this scene</u>. (To + verb.) Defend your response. (If doing a 10-minute 1-act play, state "See above.") (c) Unit goals (See B #5-b, below.)

(Use the "to + verb + explanation" form. What does each character WANT? W H Y ?]

Example: Unit 1-Blanche: To _____ in order to_____. Stanley: To _____ so that _____. Stella: To _____ because ____. Unit 2, 3, 4, etc.-(Same format)

REMEMBER: ALL OF THE ABOVE MUST BE TYPED. Everything BELOW should be done in PENCIL in margins of script.

- B. <u>SCRIPT ANNOTATIONS IN PROMPTBOOK</u>. (I'll show you an example of how this is done.)
 - 1. Put everything in a 3-ring notebook **Do not not NOT** hand me one of those clear "report covers" with the slip-on spine--I'll hand it right back to you. Please **do not encase individual pages in plastic page covers**. That's an added expense, not to mention a colossal time-waster. If you do

- not want me to mark on pages, put a note in the front. (Teacher cert majors may want the promptbook for portfolio purposes.)
- 2. Photocopy the scene—or retype/scan it, if you wish. Play text should be on only one side of the page. Make annotations on the *blank* pages facing text pages.
- 3. At the top, give the entire scene a single title—one that encompasses the action or mood or events. (The trunk scene in <u>Streetcar</u> could be titled something like "Blanche Comes Clean" or "Blanche versus Stanley: Round One". The title should be something that HELPS you and the actors UNDERSTAND THE SCENE/ACTION BETTER.)
- 4. Divide the scene into <u>units/beats</u> (insert heavy black line within dialogue). Number the beats/units: "Beat 1", "Beat 2", etc.
- 5. For each unit/beat, provide:
 - a. A <u>title</u> for that beat/unit
 - b. <u>Unit goals</u> (To + verb + reason) for each character (If you wish, place this information under A -#8- (c) above; if you choose to put it there, there's no need to duplicate the information inside of script.)
- 6. On blank page facing text, show all your pictures, blocking, and moves. Write everything out and make diagrams just as we did in class. If the blocking changes during rehearsal--and it probably will--annotations should reflect final blocking only. Blocking notations should be so clear, so legible, and so easy to follow that SOMEONE ELSE could block your scene without you. (You don't need to list principles you used to achieve focus.)
- 7. Any notes on interpretation should appear within blocking notes. (e.g., "Start build here" or "Stanley--cat and mouse game here", etc.)
- 8. Any technical notes (lights, props, sound, etc. etc.) should appear on these pages, if you want to include them.
- C. **AFTER THE SCRIPT PORTION:** a typed <u>rehearsal diary</u>, stating what you did at each rehearsal: a day-by-day account of actor/director problems that arose, how you solved problems, how you helped the actors, how you shaped the scene, and so on. [This is NOT a "gripes section" about how tired you were or how much trouble you had finding the right chair or the fact that "X" was late or whatever--unless you state how you <u>dealt</u> with the problem.]
- D. **NEXT: A POST-PERFORMANCE SELF-EVALUATION** of how well you feel you accomplished the task and your goals, how well you served as director, and what you wish you had done differently. <u>In other words: what did you</u>

<u>learn</u> from directing and performing this scene--i.e., "lessons" you can take to next directing project? What did you do *well*? What do you need to *improve*? What do you know <u>now</u> that you didn't know before [Be specific. General gushing, gritching, and/or gee-whizzing will be frowned upon. This should be a *minimum* of 2 pages of <u>specifics</u>.]

You will be evaluated on neatness, organization, clarity, and attention to detail.

EVALUATION OF PERFORMED SCENES

As a director, you will be evaluated on:

- 1. How well the groundplan served the action.
- 2. How well you used the entire space.
- 3. Blocking, picturization, and focus--
 - (a) Blocking: Varied? Motivated? Kept our interest and kept the scene moving?
 - (b) Pictures: Were pictures composed well: interesting, pleasing, dramatic? Yet logical and unforced?
 - (c) Focus: Clear? Or did we wonder whom to watch at any given moment?
- 4. Your <u>own</u> grasp, understanding, and interpretation of the scene and its moments.
- 5. Actors' understanding of character, role, speeches, and moments. How secure and well-rehearsed actors appear.
- 6. How well the scene built to its climactic moments.
- 7. Overall effectiveness of scene: Did it seem strongly guided? Was it interesting to watch? Did you get the playwright's intentions across? Would we want to see this again? Was it watchable? Did you make something happen?
- 8. Miscellaneous: Main strength of the scene; main problem area of the scene, etc.

Appendix: The Care and Feeding of Verbs and of Beats/Units

O Verbs: The Core of Good Acting

Use this discussion for ALL your acting/directing—but also for helping you in the analyses. The following was written for actors, but you certainly will find it useful in your directing.

Dull acting is formless and general. ("Be mad here." "Be sad here." *Yecch.*) *Vivid*, interesting acting is **specific** acting. Until you find a **SPECIFIC**, colorful, powerful verb **for each moment**, your acting will be vague, unfocused,

meandering—and *dull*. The more specific you are, the more interesting and focused you are.

Unless you choose wimpy verbs. NO WIMPY VERBS ALLOWED!! Some of the wimpiest are:

stating, explaining, asking, telling, being, informing

BLAH!!!! YECCCH!!!! These are ho-hum and borrrrrring. Why? What actions are implied in any of the above? Standing there and TALKING. That's dull, dull, dull! The verbs above give the actor nothing TO DO but blather. Avoid them, as you'd avoid unfocused blathering onstage.

Some STRONG verbs that give actors LOTS to do include

defend, lash out [against], command, demand, beg, plead, beseech, protect, mother, deflate, reject, heckle, scheme, rip on, rip into, needle, prod, soft soap, wound (The list is endless!)

These are **electric** with possibilities. They DO something SPECIFIC. They make YOU do something specific. They kindle vivid, colorful ACTION that will keep you—and your scene—and your partner—and the audience ENGAGED!

Remember to express goals in the **TO + ACTION VERB FORM.** Then complete the thought (why are you doing this/why do you want this?).

The verb is your (the character's) way of responding to a stimulus. It's also probably your goal. (e.g., **"To throw him out of this room!"** The <u>way</u> this is stated suggests a highly emotional response to the other person's presence in the room. The goal is to get him out. "Throw" may be taken literally or figuratively.)

Remember, too, that **a goal seeks a reward**. If you have a goal, there MUST be some implied "**pot of gold**". The goal is at once an ACTION and a means of ACHIEVING a reward. In the example above, the reward might be "**so I can get on with my life.**" In other words, you want the guy the hell out of there forever. (That's the reward—life without the schmuck you just pitched out of the room.) Thus, your goal statement would be/could be

To throw him out of this room so I can get on with my life!

"Throw him out" is the verb and the goal, "so I can get on with my life", is the REASON and the REWARD Your **tactics** could be either verbal or physical fisticuffs, depending on the scene.

Dividing a scene into "beats" (or "units" or "sub-scenes")

How do you know when one beat ends and another begins? Sometimes it's dicey, but here are some tips.

- When a <u>significant</u> character enters or exits. Usually this will change the <u>dynamics</u> of the scene, the direction in which the scene is going. Usually, too, when a significant character enters/exits, onstage GOALS change. **When goals change, a new beat has begun.**
- When someone abruptly <u>changes the prevailing topic of conversation</u> and the conversation moves into <u>new areas</u>, a new beat probably has begun.
- When a character <u>achieves a goal</u> and it is obvious that the other character <u>gives in, is subdued, or is beaten</u> (literally or figuratively), then **the next thing will be a new beat**. Why? Because, undoubtedly, the scene will swing into something new. When something NEW starts, that's most likely a new beat.

Rules of thumb about beats (or units or sub-scenes):

- A beat is like a play in miniature. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. An action STARTS/IS INITIATED (beginning), then the action reaches a high point (middle), then the action reaches its conclusion—or is sidetracked into something else (end).
- "The action" spoken of here may mean (a) a topic of conversation, (b) a prevailing mood or tone or emotion, (c) or both. BUT it will have a beginning, a middle, an end.
- How "long" is a "typical" beat? Who knows?! It depends on the playwright and on what's going on. But:
 - <u>Seldom</u> (that's "seldom" not "never") will a beat be only a third of a page or a half of a page or even three-quarters of a page. If you <u>do</u> find such a short beat, it's usually a break the playwright inserted to chop up a longer beat and make it seem less long.
- There <u>are</u> no hard-and-fast rules on how long a beat is—or how many per scene—or how many per play. The number is as varied as dramatic literature!!

Keep this in mind: When something NEW begins, when something has ENDED, you're looking at a new beat—a new direction—a new thing. That means the goals and the emotional tenor have changed, and you HAVE TO BE AWARE of this—or you'll be playing the last beat and not the new one. To miss a change of beat is to miss a change in direction, which means you aren't paying attention. And neither will the audience because everything sounds the same.

Learn from Others' Mistakes Or

Boo-boos from the Past regarding Goals & Verbs

A verb can be an action word (Run! Jump!) or a state-of-being word (is, are, feel to be, etc.). The latter are NOT good verbs for acting. Why? A goal/objective is a want, a need, a desire, a MUST-HAVE for the character, and the best way to express such feelings is through a verb that is active, energetic and forward looking. "Forward" to what? Forward to the reward or goal.

Too often, when young actors and directors express their characters' objectives, they write down ACTIONS or STATES OF BEING, not goals. For instance: **Ucky:**

"To feel bad about what I did." That's a state of being. No goal. Static.

Improved:

"To make it up to him for what I did so that he'll come back to me."

Ucky:

"To <u>remember</u> that time with Alan...." That's not a goal. It's what the character is DOING. There's no real reward.

Improved:

"To <u>relive</u> that time with Alan so I can prove to Mitch...." (More active. Implies *forward motion* to a new level.) [Or simply "To <u>prove</u> to Mitch that he means more to me now, so that...."]

Ucky:

"To <u>tell</u> him I love him." Or "To <u>express</u> my love for him." VERY DULL, DULL, DULL, DULLEST—because all the actor can do here is blather. Plus, where's the reward? See previous pages on "tell" as a verb. UGH!!!

Improved:

"To make him understand how much I love him so that we can be together again as we once were."

Ucky:

"To lash out at Stanley." Good verb, no reward. Thus, vague action from the actor. Rather like "Be mad here." Ugh-ly.

Improved:

"To <u>hurt</u> Stanley like he's hurting me right now <u>so</u> he'll get off my back." Strong verb, clear reward? Yes.

Important Dates:

Jan. 8-13: ACTF/NO CLASS

Jan. 14: Auditions for CLOUD 9 & STINKIN' BADGES Jan. 15: Callbacks for CLOUD 9 & STINKIN' BADGES

Auditions for EIU Dancers

Jan. 21: MLK Day/No Classes

Feb. 3: Strike for DUTCHMAN & FLORENCE

Feb. 28: Begin presentations of Scene 1

March 3: Strike for SPELLING BEE

Mar 11-15: SPRING BREAK March 21: USITT/NO CLASS April 14: Strike for CLOUD 9

April 18: Begin presentations of Scene 2

April 29: 10:15-12:15

Final Exam period

Finish projects, if necessary

All materials due.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS PRODUCTIONS Spring 2013

A CELEBRATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN THEATRE: DUTCHMAN by Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and FLORENCE by Alice Childress

The Black Box February 1-2 at 7:30 p.m. February 3 at 2:00 p.m.

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

The Theatre February 27-March 2 at 7:30 p.m. March 3 at 2:00 p.m.

CLOUD 9

The Black Box April 10-13 at 7:30 p.m. April 14 at 2:00 p.m.