

Objectives: from William Ball's "Some Observations on the Art of Directing"

Objectives. Picture your character sitting in a chair and really see them/study them. Ask them questions about who they are. The golden key is: what do they want? Create a system of wants. There can be nouns and verbs—go for the verbs.

Other names for objectives:

goal, purpose, ambition, intention, desire, need, pursuit, endeavor, verb, what are you going after, what are you trying to get, what are you doing, what are you playing?

There are many words for the want/objective. The only real reason a director is needed in rehearsal is to persistently draw the actor to a more meaningful and appropriate choice of objectives and then to persuade the actor to lend their full commitment to those objectives.

Indicating. This is a feeling rather than playing your objective.

Other words for indicating: generalizing, telegraphing, playing attitude, play the adjective, playing the result, mode playing, being scenic, directing yourself, anticipating, illustrating, demonstrating, mugging, being phony, unbelievable.

Don't use: intellectual verbs (reciprocate, cogitate etc)
Behavior/condition verbs (sleep, laugh, sneeze, states of being)
Existential verbs: too vague (to exist, to die, to become...)
Adjectival verbs: ask yourself, "Does it make you indicate?" Argue becomes argumentative, charm becomes charming, pity becomes pitiful).
Trigger verbs: occur too quickly (slap, kick, kiss, touch).

Do use: Actable verbs: Ones that someone could work a long time, putting themselves behind the word. (convince, excite, tease, encourage, destroy, prove).

Upgrade your objective. Choose a more active verb (from "tell" to "overwhelm").

When the director does not know what the actor's objective is, they ask: "What are you to get them to do?" or "What are you trying to make them do?" The objective should contain: a verb, a verb receiver, and a desired response. (I am trying to convince [verb] him [receiver] to go with me [desired response]).

TIPS AND ACTIVITIES FOR BRINGING OUT CHARACTER

Tips:

- * Sometimes a question for the actor is better than an answer. Ask them for their interpretation and react to their ideas. Avoid "telling what a line means."
- * Don't create blocking for the sake of blocking. Have their movement reflect the motivation of the character.
- * Acting is reacting. Don't have the actor just analyze their line, have them understand the lines of all others sharing the stage with them.

Activities:

- * Tape the actors saying their lines, then have them lip-sync their lines as the lines are played. This will help them to memorize as well as free their hands for gesturing.
- * Switch roles of each cast member so that they are playing another's role. Actors can see how someone else interprets their role.
- * Choose an animal that represents their character in their mind. Visualize how that animal moves and reacts to others. Upon coming out of the visualization, have them move about in the manner of that animal. Go directly from this to a run-through of the play--keeping the movements of the animal.
- * Conduct a series of questions with your whole cast where they must answer/react in character. The questions are general ones: How old are you? If you won the lottery, how would you spend the money? When have you felt love? Allow for interaction.
- * Answer questions on character analysis regarding who the character is, where are they from, what is their family background et cetera.
- * Act out the action of the play without voicing any of the lines. The actors must use non-verbal communication and blocking to know where they are in the script. This can also be done only using gibberish words.

movement.
speech

- ◆ Stronger movements place a person in a place of emphasis or moves them from a weak to a strong position.
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Mood values of areas in terms of tonal qualities and suggestive scenes.

Tonal Qualities in Each Area

Scenes Suggested

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|--|---|
| 1. Down center: hard, intense, harsh, strong, climactic, great formality | Quarrels, fights, crises, climaxes |
| 2. Up center: regal, aloof, noble, superiority, stability | Formal and romanticized love scenes, scenes of domination and judiciary nature, royalty |
| 3. Down right: warm, informal, tender | Intimate love scenes, informal calls, confessions, gossip, long narratives |
| 4. Down left: not so warm as down right; distant intimacy, introspection | Conspiracies, casual love scenes, soliloquies, formal calls, business matters |
| 5. Up right: soft, distant, romantic | Romance |
| 6. Up left: Infinity, ghostliness, depression | Supernatural scenes, background scenes, scenes of isolation and despair |
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William Ball: Pre-Planning for your Play and Text Analysis

You need to know what tradition your play's form comes from.

Predominant Element:

Plot: action moves the story

Character: the play is character driven (example: Chekhov's plays)

Theme: push a thesis, like "Waiting for Lefty"

Spectacle: intensity, speed, energy, sensation, movement et cetera

Language: poetry, like Dylan Thomas' "Under Milk Wood"

Mixtures: most plays have a little of all five, and a preponderance of one. Shakespeare is one of the few who often has all five in equal parts.

World of the Play

Otherwise known as "style", it limits action, and what can be put in the "frame" of the play. Directors have to be experts at sameness and differences. Putting the sameness together and bringing harmony to the component parts is the business of directing.

"Breaking systems" is a bad idea. This is where a director, having established a pattern of systems, introduces a single detail that violates their own system. You **must** be absolutely obedient to your system.

Pre-Production Homework

- Read the script several times to get
 - quick impressions
 - ask questions of the text
 - search out details
 - make notes
 - et cetera
- Make a mental movie of how you see the play being performed.
- Break the play into beats (motivational units)
- Plan the intermission(s)/breaks
- If you can, read other plays by the author
- Look at pictures, other productions, read reviews
- Discover the author's intent
- Think about music and sound.

Once this is all done, abandon it at the first rehearsal so that you don't come into rehearsal with the entire production preconceived.

Text Preparation

Prepare the text before the first rehearsal. Make cuts in advance, not at the rehearsal. Give them a clean copy so that this is the only version of the script they know.

Homework: By the next time you turn in your journal, you should have completed your "Pre-Production Homework." If you do not have time to actually read other plays by the author, research the author and discover things such as typical themes and structures in their writing and the like.