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Directing For The Stage: A Workshop Guide Of Creative Exercises And Projects



Synopsis

Appropriate for both beginning and advanced courses in directing, this is the only theatre text that combines theory with active student participation. The 42 exercises detailed here provide both the instructor and the student a 'user-friendly' workshop structure. With the basic concepts of directing presented progressively, the approach is totally hands-on. The student discovers the demands and problems of directing by actually doing it step-by-step, and through the process, his or her own directing style emerges. Every exercise is presented in great detail and includes both an overview and a section on how to critique a student's work whether you're the director or a classmate. Creativity and confidence building are the central benefits of this excellent workshop text that includes seven sequential chapters: Creating the Directing Workshop, The Silent Seven, Justifying Movement, Ground Plan Exercises, Open Scene Exercises, Closed Scene Exercises and Supporting Parts.

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Customer Reviews

I worry this book may cause new directors to develop bad habits. It is absolutely director centered and ignores actors and how to work with them. For seasoned directors it contains nothing new if you already know how to mount an intellectually consistent, well-staged production. The approach to directing in this book takes away all actor creativity, advocating the director as monarch rather than teacher. Several year ago I saw a production of Mr. Converse's THE TEMPEST. It was 4 hours long, featured added material which was introduced to enforce a strained concept. The actors did

not seem to understand what they were doing or why. They were like square pegs forced into round holes. And the actor playing Prospero was simply painful to watch. The visual imagery was very nice but the show was terribly over-produced and over-directed...EXACTLY what I would expect to see from the person who wrote this text. He obviously practices what he preaches. If this is the style of directing you advocate, and some do, this is the book for you. But to compare it to Viola Spolin is simply outrageous. Better to just buy her "A REHEARSAL GUIDE FOR DIRECTORS" if you like her "IMPROVISATION FOR THE THEATRE." This book can not touch her sensitivity to directing the performer as opposed to directing the play.

Mr. Converse has written with this helpful introductory course, a fine textbook for introducing one to the craft of directing. When viewed in that context, this book serves its purpose well. Having used this text in conjunction with William Ball's superb book "A Sense Of Direction", in the directing class I teach, I have found Converse's exercises to be helpful and precise (if rather dry) in building craft. Especially helpful is Converse's chapters on blocking and creating pictures. His suggestions and activities designed to teach one how to communicate and direct traffic are most helpful. If one is looking for a great read, this is not the book to use. For that I again suggest Ball or Clurman's fine "On Directing". But for some "hands on" activities in the dramatic classroom or for the director just starting out on their own, this will work just fine- as long as you have someone else to bounce your ideas off of.

This book is simple, concrete, and to the point. It will help you develop various directing techniques, and it will leave the rest up to you. Its purpose is not to try and train you into some special type of director, but to give you the basic technical skills that will allow you to find your own artistic style. It is most certainly a great book to start with, and its exercises would likely help more advanced directing students hone their skills.

Wonderfully practical and insightful, this book sensitizes students to the components of stage direction -- narrative curve, rhythm, space, etc.- to create better directors and actors. Each exercise takes one to two fifty minute periods. The quality of your students's work improves immediately. I use this as the cornerstone of my high school class on directing; however, it would be just as useful for serious middle school students and college students. I love this book!

The book should appeal to teachers of both directing and acting in its systematic, comprehensive

approach. I had the good fortune to work with Terry Converse in WSU's Theatre Program for several years, and we pioneered a combined directing and acting course where directing students and acting students worked and learned together. Now that I am teaching at another university I had the opportunity to teach a combined Directing and Acting course, using his book. At first, I thought the directing students might benefit the most, but I discovered the exercises he developed benefitted the actors as well. The actors developed their craft through many of the silent scenes and justifying movement exercises that led them to examine the fine points of their characterizations. The directing students learned how to work with actors and develop a comprehensive approach to directing a scene, and our work culminated in an inspiring Ten-Minute Play Festival at the end of the semester. This book is well written with numerous examples, practical exercises, and assessment guidelines at the end of each chapter--a good, hands-on approach.

In 10 years of teaching high school drama, this is the first book where the theory of directing is embodied in a series of lessons which can be taught sequentially or mixed and matched. I have used the open scripts in acting class with junior students and amended the lessons to my own ends in picturization, focus, tempo, pathway, subtext and a myriad of other directing skills which need to be built upon.

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