



Advice From Theatre Professionals

Lesson Overview

Estimated Time: 80 minutes (2 periods)

In this lesson students will reflect on advice provided by professional theatre artists and demonstrate their understanding through tableau and characterisation.

Learning Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will

- Students will name and summarize skills, mindsets, and habits a theatre professional uses in their work
- Students will identify their own skills in drama and choose one they intend to develop further in class, and reflect on how the advice they hear might help them improve as collaborators and theatre artists
- Students will identify how a theatre professional's lived experience helps shape the advice they share
- Students will use tableau, dialogue, and poetry to present their understanding of professional theatre artists' advice.

Guiding Questions

- What skills might be required for a successful theatre career?
- What challenges do theatre professionals face?
- Why might it be valuable to hear advice from professionals who have worked in theatre and the arts for the majority of their careers?
- If you could ask one question to a theatre professional, what would it be?

Readiness

This lesson could fall at any point in a unit on roles and careers in theatre. There should be a working knowledge of elements of effective tableaux and scenes.

Terminology

- Director
- Designer
- Playwright
- Actor
- Producer
- Tableau
- Choral Speaking

Materials

- **Legend Library Interviews:** Suggestions: Linda Griffiths, Tantoo Cardinal, Christopher Newton, Christopher Plummer, Michael Greyeyes, Ardon Bess, Tom Hendry, Mark Breslin, Araby Lockhart, Michael Eagan
- Chart papers displayed around the room each titles with one of the following roles : director, designer, playwright, actor, producer
- **PDF #1 - Theatre Careers - Responsibilities and Challenges T-Chart**
- **PDF #2 - Tableau Success Criteria**
- **PDF #3 - General Assessment: Drama Performance**
- **PDF #4 - Choral Speaking Checklist**
- **PDF #5 - Elements of Voice and Choral Speaking**
- Video Projector (or devices for students to use individually or in pairs)
- Chart paper and markers
- Sticky notes/ Post-It Notes
- Journals

Minds On

Small Group & Whole Class > Responsibilities and Challenges in Theatre Careers

Options:

- 1) Provide students with **PDF #1 Theatre Careers Responsibilities and Challenges T-Charts**
or
- 2) Display 5 chart papers around the room, each labelled with a different theatre role: director, designer, playwright, actor, producer and a table underneath labelled “responsibilities” on one side and “challenges” on the other.

Invite students to visit each paper and write down what responsibilities and challenges they think these careers hold.

Bring the class together to discuss the ideas shared.

Key Questions for Discussion

Who might each role be responsible for communicating with in the theatre?

Why might someone have difficulty completing tasks in their job? What obstacles might get in the way?

How does this role contribute to the success of a production?

What might someone in this role need to succeed?



Individual > Responsibilities and Challenges in Theatre Careers

Provide journals for students to write an entry responding to the prompt: *What advice do you think a professional theatre artist might give someone who is just starting in their career?*

Differentiation

Students may complete the chart paper task individually, in partners, small groups, or as a whole class discussion.

Responses may be written or shared orally

Journals could be typed, written on a sheet of paper, or completed in a physical book

Assessment for learning

Observation and sidecoaching, as needed.

Action!

Teacher Notes

This next activity could be viewed by students using devices either individually, in small groups or in partners, or screened using a projector for the whole class.

Individual > Legends Library

Ask students to choose to watch two to four interviews from the CTM [Legends Library](#). Ideally, they choose legends who work in different areas of theatre (not only actors).

Invite students to use a Post-it note to write down words of advice from the artists. They should choose something that really resonates with them.

The following interviews are recommended:

- [Linda Griffiths](#) (playwright, actor)
- [Tantoo Cardinal](#) (actor)
- [Christopher Newton](#) (director)
- [Christopher Plummer](#) (actor)
- [Michael Greyeyes](#) (actor)
- [Ardon Bess](#) (actor)
- [Tom Hendry](#) (producer, theatre founder)
- [Mark Breslin](#) (founder of Yuk Yuk's)
- [Araby Lockhart](#) (actor)
- [Michael Eagan](#) (stage designer)

Whole Class > Advice Gallery and Discussion

Bring the class back together for a discussion of their interviews.

Key Questions for Discussion

- *What are 3-5 pieces of advice you identified from theatre professionals?*

Invite everyone to post their words of advice onto an “advice wall.” Everyone may take time to read the different words of wisdom.

Key Questions/ Prompts for Discussion

- *Why did these comments stand out for you?*
- *Do any pieces of advice surprise you? Why?*
- *Does the advice apply to theatre jobs in particular or life skills (like inclusion, representation, collaboration, perseverance, resilience, adaptability, risk taking etc.)? What kind of advice do you gravitate towards?*

Small Groups > Tableau & Scenes

Put students into small groups. Ask them to choose one of the pieces of advice from the gallery - to be determined amongst themselves- to represent as a tableau and then brought to life in a short scene.

Hand out **PDF #2 Tableau Success Criteria & PDF #3 - General Assessment: Drama Performance** to each group, or project it for all to see. The tableau should clearly depict the advice in action in the context of theatre. Encourage students to use:

- Levels (high, medium, low)
- Facial expressions
- Clear physical intention
- They can represent living or non-living things
- Be aware of where their audience is and angle their tableau accordingly

The tableau should be titled, and the group members will determine how to share that title with the class.

The tableau should be able to be comfortably frozen for 7-10 seconds, and then come alive in a short scene where the actors will use dialogue to share the advice in action. Perhaps someone is giving the advice, or completing a task using the advice, it is up to the students. Students may have a brief period of time to plan out what may be said in this scene, but invite improvisation as well. The scene should be no longer than 30 seconds long and then can end in a tableau once again.

Differentiation

- Instead of titling the tableau and scene, the audience could guess the piece of advice based on a group's performance
- Students may watch as few or as many videos as they can and have the capacity for.
- Students may collate their pieces of advice verbally, writing, or using diagrams or pictures.
- Students may reflect on their chosen piece of advice in their journal, as a video response, orally to the teacher.
- Groups may choose either a tableau or a scene to share the advice. They may create more than one.
- Students who may not want to participate in the tableau may direct their group mates on positioning, and/or create the script or text for their peers to act out.

Assessment as / for learning

- Review **PDF #2 Tableau Criteria** and **PDF #5 General Assessment: Drama Performance** with the class before they engage in these drama conventions
- Students may use their assessments to self-evaluate, or you, as the teacher, may assess the class. Both would be beneficial.
- Peer feedback: invite students to respond with constructive critiques of each other's tableau and scenes. They may respond to: clarity of the tableau, effectiveness of the advice in action, strength of the scene, use of space and physical performance.

Consolidation

Individual > Journal Response

Give students some time to reflect on the Advice Gallery in their journals.

Key Questions for Reflection

- *Which piece of advice stood out to you most? Why?*
- *Which one would help you most in drama?*
- *How might an artist's lived experiences affect the advice they give? Did you see an example of this in one of the interviews you watched? Explain.*

Small Group > Choral Speaking

Invite each student to review their journal responses and choose one sentence that they are most proud of, that they feel was well written, or that reflects their feelings on a professional piece of advice clearly and thoughtfully. Alternatively, they can choose the piece of advice itself. Ask them to read over this line several times so they know it.

Split the class into groups of 4-6. Ask each member to share their chosen text from their journal or piece of advice with their group. Instruct the groups then order the phrases in a way that connects. Let them know they can use the lines more than once.

Once the groups have created their poem, invite them to devise a **choral speaking** performance using the poem they created. Review **PDF #4 Choral Speaking Checklist**.

Go around the room and gesture to each group to share their choral speaking advice poems. Post them on the advice wall at the end to inspire students in drama class throughout the year.

Differentiation

Students have a right to pass

Turn out the lights or invite the students who aren't sharing their poem to close their eyes (if they're comfortable doing so) and listen to the other performances. This is meant to be an audible presentation, not a visual one.

If students are not familiar with Choral Speaking, they can refer to **PDF #5 Elements of Choral Speaking** and/or you can do a mini-lesson on choral speaking prior to beginning this task.

Assessment [as, for, of] learning
PDF #4 - Choral Speaking Checklist

Curriculum Expectations

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Drama

Creating and Presenting

B1.2 engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on examining multiple perspectives related to current issues, themes, and relationships from a wide variety of sources and diverse communities

Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing

B2.3 identify and give examples of their strengths, interests, and areas for improvement as drama creators, performers, and audience members

Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts

B3.2 identify and describe several ways in which drama and theatre contribute to contemporary social, economic, and cultural life

End of lesson



DIRECTOR

RESPONSIBILITIES	CHALLENGES



PRODUCER

RESPONSIBILITIES	CHALLENGES



ACTOR/ PERFORMER

RESPONSIBILITIES	CHALLENGES



DESIGNER

RESPONSIBILITIES	CHALLENGES



PLAYWRIGHT

RESPONSIBILITIES	CHALLENGES



Tableau Success Criteria**An effective tableau:**

- is connected to an important moment in the text/ aspect of the issue
- has a clear focal point
- includes energized, whole body gestures and facial expressions that clearly communicate the mood or feeling being explored
- arranges the bodies in relationship to one another in a way that makes the main idea clear/makes the relationship between the characters in the image clear (e.g., levels, distance, physical connection, eye contact)



GENERAL ASSESSMENT: DRAMA PERFORMANCE

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING Elements of Drama • ROLE/ CHARACTER • RELATIONSHIP • TIME AND PLACE • TENSION • FOCUS AND EMPHASIS:	The student exhibited a limited understanding of the elements of drama. They required prompting and direct support to demonstrate them in the story drama exploration.	The student exhibited some understanding of the elements of drama. They required some prompting and support to demonstrate them in the story drama exploration.	The student exhibited a good understanding of the elements of drama. They incorporated them into the story drama exploration with considerable confidence.	The student exhibited an excellent understanding of the elements of drama. They thoroughly explained and incorporated most of the elements into the presentation with ease.
COMMUNICATION Expression and ideas in a written task or performance Use of conventions Understanding your audience Critiquing and reviewing others	The student expressed their ideas either in writing or orally with limited effectiveness. The audience did not appear to be considered in the creation of this presentation. With prompting, the student reluctantly provided positive or constructive feedback on others' dramatic processes.	The student expressed their ideas either in writing or orally with some effectiveness. The performance was mostly suitable for the audience. With prompting, the student provided positive or constructive feedback on their own and others' dramatic process.	The student expressed their ideas both in writing and orally with considerable effectiveness. The performance was suitable for the audience. The student comfortably provides positive and constructive feedback on their own and others' dramatic process.	The student expressed their ideas both in writing and orally with a high degree of effectiveness. The performance was carefully planned and very suitable for the audience. The student confidently provided positive and constructive feedback on their own and others' dramatic process.
APPLICATION Performance Skills, Choreography, Soundscapes,	The student demonstrated a few performance skills using some use of the stage. More time could have been spent on vocal techniques including expression, volume, gestures, and fluency. The incorporation of audio or visual aids to enhance their performance was lacking.	The student demonstrated some effective performance skills. They occasionally used vocal techniques, good use of the stage. There was some audio or visual aids to enhance their performance but more would have improved the performance.	The student demonstrated considerable performance skills. They used creativity, vocal techniques, good use of the stage, and deliberate audio or visual aids to enhance their performance.	The student demonstrated impressive performance skills. They used creativity, vocal techniques, interesting use of the stage, and deliberate audio and visual aids to enhance their performance. The student took creative risks during this performance



THINKING Design and Planning in a group - collaboration Planning during the rehearsal process Creating the script and generating ideas	The student had some difficulty working collaboratively with classmates. They required reminders to engage respectfully when sharing ideas and listening to others. They were frequently distracted by other students in the class and often off task. With direct support and redirection, the writing was somewhat clear, and offered a persuasive technique to convince others that their energy source should be preferred. The student made some productive use of their in-class time. They required regular reminders to bring the necessary materials to complete their tasks. There was some evidence of brainstorming.	The student mostly worked collaboratively with classmates, occasionally acting respectfully by sharing ideas. They are encouraged to be willing to try others' ideas as well. With support, the writing was somewhat clear, and offered a persuasive technique to convince others that their energy source should be preferred. The student made some productive use of their in-class time. They required some reminders to bring the necessary materials to complete their tasks. There was some evidence of brainstorming and idea generation.	The student worked collaboratively with classmates, acting respectfully by sharing ideas and listening to and trying others' ideas as well. The writing was clear, made sense, and offered a variety of persuasive techniques. The student made productive use of their in-class time and had the necessary materials to complete their tasks Brainstorming and idea generation was documented and clear	The student worked collaboratively with a high degree of effectiveness by acting respectfully and patiently when sharing ideas and happily trying others' ideas as well. The writing was very clear, made sense, and offered a variety of persuasive techniques. The student incorporated more than the necessary vocabulary in their script. The student included drama language beyond just dialogue in the script, they used stage directions too. The student made productive use of their in-class time and was always prepared for class with the necessary materials. Brainstorming and idea generation was well documented and clear
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Choral Speaking Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____

Poem/Performance Title: _____

Criteria

Yes /
Sometimes /
Not Yet Examples /
Comments

Use of Voice

I use dynamics (loud/soft) to make the text more interesting and expressive. ☐ ☐ ☐

I change my pitch (high/low) to match the feeling or character of the words. ☐ ☐ ☐

I adjust the tempo (speed) of my voice to reflect the mood or rhythm of the poem. ☐ ☐ ☐

I use tone (light, medium, heavy) to create atmosphere or emotion. ☐ ☐ ☐

Expression and Creativity

I use repetition to emphasize important words or ideas. ☐ ☐ ☐

I help create sound echoes or responses with the group. ☐ ☐ ☐

I speak clearly and with energy so the audience can understand the words. ☐ ☐ ☐



PDF #4**Teacher/Student Resource****Criteria**Yes /
Sometimes /
Not YetExamples /
Comments

I participate in unison speaking with my group (small or large).

☐ ☐ ☐

I use antiphon (call and response) effectively.

☐ ☐ ☐

I help with overlapping dialogue or canon (round) so our timing sounds interesting.

☐ ☐ ☐

I contribute ideas for sound effects or body percussion that fit the poem's meaning.

☐ ☐ ☐**Reflection**

I can describe how my voice choices helped to show the poem's mood or atmosphere.

☐ ☐ ☐

I listened and responded respectfully to others' ideas in our group.

☐ ☐ ☐

ELEMENTS OF CHORAL SPEAKING

1. *How might we use our voices to make a text sound really interesting?*
2. *How might we use our voices to create an atmosphere or environment?*
3. *How might we use our voices to reflect emotion or mood?*

- Dynamics: Volume (loud or quiet)
- Pitch: the highness, or lowness, of sound
- Tempo: speed
- Tone: light, medium, or heavy sounds
- Repetition - to emphasize important points
- Echo
- Unison: speaking as partners, small groups, large groups
- Antiphon: a part or line that is spoken or chanted in response.
- Overlapping dialogue.
- Canon - speaking parts of the poem in a round
- Sound Effects or body percussion