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# Playbuilding: Devised Theatre in the Classroom

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## Playbuilding: Devised Theatre in the Classroom

Stage 1 - Desired Results				
<p>Established Goals (e.g., standards)</p> <p>(1) (A) practice theatre preparation and warm-up techniques effectively; (B) employ stage movement and pantomime consistently; (C) demonstrate effective voice and diction; (D) analyze dramatic structure and genre; (F) analyze the interdependence of all theatrical elements. (2) (C) portray believable characters in improvised and scripted scenes of various styles; and (D) improvise and write dialogue that reveals character motivation, advances plot, provides exposition, and reveals theme. (3)(E) analyze the roles of actor, ensemble, and director in production decision making and produce a unified theatrical production;</p>	<b>Transfer</b>			
	<p><i>Students will independently use their learning to...</i></p> <p>collaboratively create a theatrical text, perform in a production using vocal and physical theatre techniques, and reflect on the impact theatre has on the performers and the audience through the process of devised theatre.</p>			
	<b>Meaning</b>			
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Essential Questions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <p>Theatre provides a way for us to connect on a deeply human level and to imagine a different world.</p> <p>Engaging in theatre can significantly enhance intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual development.</p> <p>Theatre is transformative.</p> </td> <td> <p>How do theatre artists build an ensemble?</p> <p>How is theatre made?</p> <p>Why is theatre made?</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Understandings <i>Students will understand that...</i>	Essential Questions	<p>Theatre provides a way for us to connect on a deeply human level and to imagine a different world.</p> <p>Engaging in theatre can significantly enhance intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual development.</p> <p>Theatre is transformative.</p>
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<b>Acquisition</b>	
<p><b>Knowledge</b> <i>Students will know...</i></p> <p>An ensemble is a trusting community (team and family) of artists who are formed and shaped by common experiences and goals.</p> <p>Theatre is an inherently collaborative art form that requires teamwork and individual responsibilities.</p> <p>A theatrical production has a unified vision formed through ongoing group discussion and theatrical practices.</p> <p>Devised theatre is a form of theatre that originates not from a writer or writers, but a collaborative, usually improvisatory, work by a group of people.</p> <p>Devised theatre has five essential elements: a group of actors who agree to work collaboratively, agreed-upon ideas or issues, a workshop and performance space, a director, and an audience.</p> <p>Principles of devised theatre: Group Process, Collaborative, Rigorous Thinking, Trust, Aesthetic</p> <p>The goal of devised theatre is to create and communicate meaning.</p> <p>Stages of devised theatre: exploring, framing, sequencing, rehearsing, performing.</p>	<p><b>Skills</b> <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <p>Generate ideas and bring them to life collaboratively through performance.</p> <p>Create a theatrical text through playwriting, improvisation, and transcription.</p> <p>Write and reflect on collaborative creative process.</p> <p>Give constructive feedback on personal and group process and performance.</p> <p>Perform characters using vocal and physical techniques.</p> <p>Create a unified vision as an ensemble.</p> <p>Use variation in movement based on Rudolf Laban's approach by combining variables in movement qualities of space, time, weight, and flow.</p> <p>Use the effort actions of thrust, dab, press, slash, wring, flick, glide and float.</p>

<b>Stage 2 - Evidence</b>		
<b>CODE (M or T)</b>	<b>Evaluative Criteria (for rubric)</b>	
T	Teamwork Text Meaning Voice Movement	<p>Performance Task(s) <i>Students will demonstrate meaning-making and transfer by...</i></p> <p>Create and perform a collaboratively devised theatrical production.</p> <p>The group will perform at least once, ideally at least twice, for an audience.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Other Evidence (e.g., formative)</p>
M A M M M M M	Cooperation Depth  Insight Physicality Vocal Variety Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvisation games (Yes-Yes-Yes, Yes Let's, Advertisement Game, Machine)</li> <li>• Research Presentation</li> <li>• Idea Oven Exit Tickets– Students write an idea for the project that can cook in the minds until the next day</li> <li>• Reflective Journal &amp; Collaborative Log Book</li> <li>• Character Biography &amp; Character Movement Piece</li> <li>• Reader's Theatre Piece</li> <li>• Self-Assessments (hold up a number, process rubric)</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3 - Learning Plan</b>		
<b>CODE (A, M, T)</b>	<b>Pre-Assessment</b> <i>How will you check students' prior knowledge, skill levels, and potential misconceptions?</i>	
M	<p>Pre-Unit Journal Questions: <i>Answer all the questions that you feel comfortable answering. Share one answer with the class. You may read it, act it, mime it, sing it, post it, etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How comfortable do you feel with the other students in this room?</li> <li>• What is an ensemble?</li> <li>• What is devised theatre?</li> <li>• Why is it important to have a unified vision in a theatrical production?</li> <li>• How comfortable do you feel on stage?</li> <li>• What tools does an actor have available to create a character?</li> <li>• How can he or she use those tools?</li> <li>• What is something you fear?</li> <li>• What is something you like about yourself?</li> <li>• What is something you would like to change in yourself?</li> <li>• What is something you would like to change outside of yourself (family, school, community, country, world)?</li> <li>• Do you feel like you have a story?</li> <li>• If so, do you feel able to tell your story?</li> </ul>	

<p>A</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p>	<p><b>Learning Activities</b></p> <p><b>Week 1: Ensemble Building</b>  <i>Essential Question: How do theatre artists create an ensemble?</i></p> <p><b>Day 1</b>  Do Now (Journal): How are you feeling today? How do you feel about being in advanced theatre class this year? What are you excited about? What are you nervous about?</p> <p>Introduce the Essential Questions for the unit, and explain how the unit will culminate in a devised theatre performance and give them a copy of the rubric to keep in their journal. Explain that we will start by building our ensemble through games and trust building activities.</p> <p><b>Change Places Game:</b>  This game has many names. Some include: Move Your Buns, I Love My Neighbor. The group sits in the chairs. Someone stands in the center and says “Hi, I’m _____.” Everyone repeats their name. “Hi, _____.” Then the person in the middle says, “Change places if...” and they can fill in the sentence with things like “you have a dog,” “you are wearing a jacket,” “you like horror movies,” “you have ever been in a play.” Whoever the statement applies to gets up and changes places in the circle. The person to not get a seat starts the next round.</p> <p><b>Name/Action Game:</b>  Stand in a circle. One at a time, each person says their name followed by an action. The entire group repeats the person’s name and action. Each time a person add their name, the group repeats their name and action and then each name that has already been said. At the end, ask for volunteers to say everyone’s name and action by themselves.</p> <p><b>Day 2</b>  <b>Group Juggle:</b>  The group stands in a circle (or two circles if it is a large group). The ball is thrown from person to person and each time someone throws a ball they say the person’s name they are throwing it to. Once the pattern is set, it repeats. Eventually, try the same pattern without saying names, then start to add more balls to the circle. During and after the game, discuss the why of this game.  Possibly places: Helps us develop focus and teamwork, helps us learn names, we learn to keep going even if we make a mistake—just like in a play.</p>	<p>Progress Monitoring (e.g., formative data)</p> <p>Reflective Journal</p> <p>Self-Assessment:  How did you do as a focused team member today? Hold up a number 0-5.</p>
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A	<p><b>Day 3/4</b> Do Now (Journal): Why is “saying yes” important?</p> <p>Discuss the foundational principle of improvisation is saying yes.</p>	
M	<p>Yes, Yes, Yes: Stand around in a circle. Write a story together piece by piece with the next person in the circle only adding one additional word to the sentence. When the group feels they have come to the end of a sentence, they fold their hands, bow and say, “Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.”</p>	
M	<p>Advertisement Game: Perform this game in group of four to eight. The premise is that they are on a marketing team and they have to come up with a product, slogan, logo, spokesperson and jingle. The catch is that every first idea is the best idea. Every idea given, no matter how silly/weird/stupid, must be accepting with enthusiastic shouts, high fives and affirmations. When they have come up will all the elements of the advertisement, it's the next group's turn.</p> <p>Discuss why it is important to say yes when doing devised theatre.</p>	<p>Self-Assessment: How did you say yes today? Hold up a number 0-5.</p>
M	<p><b>Day 5</b> Human Knot: An a group or groups, stand in a circle. Instruct everyone to grab one persons hand across the circle, then grab a different person's hand with their other hand. Their task is to untangle themselves from the human knot without unlinking hands. Afterward, discuss how this exercise helps us develop teamwork and grow as an ensemble.</p>	<p>Self-Assessment: How did you do as a focused team member today? Hold up a number 0-5.</p>
M	<p><b>Week 2: Choosing a Theme</b> <i>Essential Question: Why is theatre made?</i></p> <p><b>Day 6</b> Do Now (Journal): Write about an issue or topic you feel passionate about.</p> <p>Agree/Disagree Activity Read a series of statements. After each statement, students move to either the “Agree” or “Disagree” side of the room. Start with more mild statements and move to more serious ones. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love sports. I love music.</li> <li>• I eat fast food at least once a week.</li> <li>• People spend too much time on the internet.</li> <li>• I support the death penalty.</li> <li>• Racism is a problem in our community.</li> </ul>	<p>Reflective Journal</p>

M	<p><b>Day 7</b> Do Now (Journal): Write about a different issue than the one you wrote about yesterday. Try to pick a theme or topic someone else brought up.</p> <p>Use the games, machine and sculpting, to explore different themes. Have a discussion to choose a theme, then continue to explore that theme through the games. After each round of each game discuss what discoveries were made and what made an impression on the players.</p>	Reflective Journal
M	<p>Machine: The group stands in a circle. One person starts the machine by stepping into the center and doing a simple, repetitive motion. The machine slowly grows one person at a time until everyone is a part of the machine. After a few silent machines, add sound. Eventually, add “themed” machines (e.g. abandonment machine, freedom machine, anger machine, forgiveness machine)</p>	
M	<p>Sculpting: Divide the class into pairs. Each partner takes turn “sculpting” the other person into distinct representations of ideas. For example, the first theme may be fear. The A partner sculpts the B partner into an abstract or literal interpretation of fear. All the A partners walk around the gallery and observe the other fear sculptures. A and B switch roles and the exercise repeats.</p>	Self-Assessment: How did you do as a focused team member today? Hold up a number 0-5.
A	<p><b>Day 8/9</b> Research: Now that the group has chosen a theme, it is time to explore the theme more in depth. Spend a class period on computers and/or in the library and have partners create either a Power Point, a poster or some other simple way to present their findings. Research can also happen after school and during the week. Research can include interviews, observations and experiences.</p>	
A M	<p><b>Day 10</b> Share Research: Each pair takes a few minutes to present their research to the class in an organized fashion.</p> <p>Journal: Write about your specific contributions to your research partnership.</p>	<p><b>Research Presentation</b></p> <p>Reflective Journal &amp; Collaboration Log Book</p>

M	<p><b>Week 3: Exploring the Theme/Building the Play</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i>  <b>Day 11</b>  Journal: How does this theme apply to my life?  Share out in any creative form desired by each student: reading, monologue, song, dance, poem, visual art, scripted scene, short story, etc.</p>	Reflective Journal
M	<p>Invite feedback and exploration. Class may choose to revisit machine or sculpting.</p> <p><b>Day 12</b>  Journal: Create a character who is grappling with this theme. Write a narrative about this character, a description of this character or monologue from this character's point of view.</p>	Reflective Journal
M	<p>Share out journal. Invite feedback and exploration through improvisation exercises.</p>	
M	<p><b>Day 13/14</b>  Improvisation: Create improv scenarios that revolve around the theme. Let them play out. Discuss the scenes. Have students improvise as their characters they created the day before.</p> <p>Visioning process: What do we want to say? What story do we want to tell? Why is this important? What is our thesis?</p> <p>Continue improvisations to explore theme and structure of show.</p>	
M	<p><b>Day 15</b>  Journal: What are you most interested in working on with this project? Acting, writing, directing, design, tech?</p> <p>Role assignments: Be sure each student has at least one role to play in the creation of the devised work. It is totally fine to have students with multiple roles. The roles can be as fluid or flexible as is necessary for the work.</p>	Reflective Journal

	<p><b>Week 4: Exploring Movement</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i></p> <p><b>Day 16</b>  Leban Introduction</p> <p>Do Now (Warm-Up): Mirror Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In pairs students spread out around the room; person A mirrors person B for 2 minutes, person B mirrors person A for 2 minutes, then both A and B lead. The change in leadership should not be noticeable.</li> <li>• Instruct the students to use different levels, activate the whole body and move off the spot. Movements should be continuous although this does not preclude stillness.</li> </ul> <p>Exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the students walk around the room. Instruct them to walk with different effort qualities. After you have described the effort action and they have practiced it, reveal the name. The effort actions are as follows: thrust, dab, press, slash, wring, flick, glide and float. More information on what the effort qualities look like and additional Leban Movement lessons and activities can be found online.</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 17</b>  Leban exercises and improv</p> <p>Do Now (Warm-Up): Leban Review  Review all the different effort qualities and actions together moving through each one.</p> <p>Walk around the space again. Move as your character. What how does your character utilize the different effort qualities and actions?</p> <p>Select additional Leban Movement or character exercises.</p> <p><b>Day 18/19</b>  Prepare and present character movement pieces. Explore characters through movement. Create 30-90 second movement pieces. The piece can tell a story, demonstrate or personality or any character and movement related performance. Avoid using voice or sound.</p> <p><b>Day 20</b>  Present character movement pieces. Discussed how theme may have been revealed through movement pieces.</p>	<p><b>Character Movement Piece:</b> Uses at least a few distinct effort qualities or actions.</p>
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<p>M</p> <p>A</p> <p>M</p> <p>T</p> <p>M</p>	<p><b>Week 5: Exploring Voice</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i>  <b>Day 21</b>  Journal: What does my character have to say? How does my character feel about the theme? What experiences has my character had with the theme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocal Exercises of instructor’s choice. Be sure exercises address vocal resonance, rate, pitch, tone, texture and volume.</li> <li>• Improvise scenes and monologues to discover their character’s voices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 22</b>  Do Now (Warm-Ups): Vocal Exercises of instructor’s choice.</p> <p>Create and rehearse reader’s theatre scene. Groups can be as few or as many as the instructor or group desires. Each scene or monologue should address the theme from a character’s perspective. Write and rehearse the scenes.</p> <p><b>Day 23/24</b>  Present reader’s theatre scenes.</p> <p><b>Day 25</b>  Applying, combining and workshopping the scenes. How might we use some of these scenes in the performance? Let’s hear them again. What does it look like when we add movement? When we do the scenes with movement and silently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal: Write about your specific contributions to your character movement piece.</li> </ul> <p><b>Week 6: Exploring Text (Framing)</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i></p> <p><b>Day 26</b>  Improvisation and transcription: Students take turns improvising theme or character based scenes. Other students transcribe their improvisation—some writing dialogue, some writing movement</p> <p><b>Day 27</b>  Improvisation and transcription</p> <p><b>Day 28/29</b>  Improvisation and transcription</p> <p><b>Day 30</b>  Rewrite, rework, revise</p>	<p><b>Reader’s Theatre Scene:</b> Evaluate actors on vocal resonance, rate, pitch, tone, texture, volume and exploration of character and theme.</p> <p>Reflective Journal &amp; Collaboration Log Book</p> <p>Reflective Journal &amp; Collaboration Log Book: Questions are instructor’s choice for this week.</p>
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<p><b>Week 7: Writing, Shaping, Revising (Sequencing)</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i>  <b>Day 31</b>  Rewrite, rework, revise</p> <p><b>Day 32</b>  Brain break. New train of thought. Watch other devised works, play an unrelated improvisation game, play a sport or have a dance party. Explain that idea/project incubation can often make room for further discoveries and insights.</p> <p><b>Day 33/34</b>  Workshop and polish script.</p> <p><b>Day 35</b>  Rehearse</p> <p><b>Week 8: Bringing the Story to Life (Rehearsing)</b>  <i>Essential Question: How is theatre made?</i>  <b>Day 36</b>  Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 37</b>  Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 38</b>  Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 39</b>  Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 40</b>  Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Week 9: Sharing the Story (Performing)</b>  <i>Essential Question: Why is theatre made?</i>  <b>Day 41</b>  Dress Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 42</b>  Dress Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 43</b>  Dress Rehearsal</p> <p><b>Day 44</b>  Performance</p> <p><b>Day 45</b>  Post-Mortem have a discussion with feedback about the process and performance. Allow time for individual written reflection.</p>	<p>Finished script</p> <p>Reflective Journal:  Have students start each day with writing what they hope to accomplish. Have them end each class by writing what they discovered or did.</p> <p>Memorization Check</p> <p>Performance Task:  See Rubric</p> <p>Reflective Journal:  Reflect on entire process and performance.</p>
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