

# Directing Master Class

## Lesson One: What is a Director

This lesson plan was developed as part of a weeklong arts education residency in Moundville, AL, run by students from the Theatre for Youth BFA program at Samford University.

Description	In our first lesson, students will understand the duties of a director and the basics of stage composition to begin staging well-known fairy tales.
Age	6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> grade, 20 students (2 groups of 10)
Date	Monday
Curriculum Topic	Introduction to Directing
Teaching Artists	John Perine, Nicholas Di Prima assisting
Time	1:00 PM – 1:45 PM, 2:00 PM – 2:45 PM
Resources	Diagram of a stage (blue painter’s tape to mark out the areas of the stage if we’re on carpet?), pictures of dynamic still images (use of levels, varying eye focus, etc.) in a PowerPoint, computer, projector/screen, sheets of paper, markers, acting cubes

### Student Learning

Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Students can describe the duties of a director	Students will discuss qualities of an effective director by identifying qualities in an effective leader
2. Students can identify the parts of the stage	Students will participate in the stage directions game and follow instructions
3. Students can apply understanding of stage positions to tell a story	Students will create still images with their fellow students that represent an event
4. Students can create a safe environment where everyone can learn and play	Students will support the choices made by their fellow students by pointing out their classmates’ strengths

Process:









1. Welcoming Discussion: What is a director? (10 minutes)
  - a. *Initial question:* What do you think a director of a play or movie does?
  - b. *Transition:* So, it sounds like a director is the leader figure in rehearsals for a play, or filming for a movie. What are some traits of a good leader?
    - i. Hand out half sheets of paper and markers
    - ii. Encourage students to write one trait of a good leader on each sheet of paper, and to not check with the other students
    - iii. After a couple of minutes, bring the group back together, and lay out the pieces of paper, grouping similar traits together
    - iv. Ask if there are any traits that might have been left out
2. Learning the Basics: Stage Directions & Levels (10 minutes)
  - a. Go through the grid

Upstage Right	Upstage Center	Upstage Left
Stage Right	Center Stage	Stage Left
Downstage Right	Downstage Center	Downstage Left

- i. Audience
  1. Things to keep in mind
    - a. “Downstage” and “upstage” come from when stages used to be like a ramp, or “raked,” actors would have to walk *up* to get upstage
    - b. Right and left are from the point of view of the actors when they are *looking at the audience*
    - c. Audiences read stages from left to right, like a book, so:
      - i. We tend to trust characters that are downstage/stage right/stage right is their home base
      - ii. Villains tend to live upstage left, or make their first entrance from upstage left
  - ii. Application—Grid game

1. Like Ships and Sailors, caller says an area of the stage to go to, and the group must follow. Last one to any location is out (after a few practice rounds).

b. Foot positioning (5 minutes)

 $\frac{3}{4}$ Right	 Full Back	 $\frac{3}{4}$ Left
 Profile Right		 Profile Left
 $\frac{1}{4}$ Right	 Full Front	 $\frac{1}{4}$ Left

i.

ii. Things to keep in mind

1. Full back is mysterious because the audience cannot see their face
2. While we tend to talk to people “in profile”, it is better to use one of the  $\frac{1}{4}$  foot positions so the audience can see more of the actors’ faces

c. Levels (5 minutes)

i. Ask the group to get on what they think a “low level” is

1. Look for sitting, lying on the ground, crouching, etc.
2. *Discussion:* What kinds of characters would be at a low level?

a. Animals, weak characters, characters that are submissive, etc.

ii. Ask the group to get on what they think a “medium level” is

1. Look for standing at a normal height, perhaps slightly crouched

2. *Discussion*: What kinds of characters would be at a medium level?
  - a. Normal, everyday people! Normal conversations happen at normal levels, usually, if no one is taking power
- iii. Ask the group to get on what they think a “high level” is
  1. Look for standing taller (on tip toes), making themselves as big as possible, searching for some way to get taller.
  2. *Discussion*: What kinds of characters would be at a high level?
    - a. Scary characters, characters in power (kings, popular people), dominant personalities
3. Application: Communicating with Actors (10 minutes)
  - a. *Transition*: The most difficult thing for me as a director, but also the most important skill for a director to have, is the ability to use words to get actors to get in position, rather than entering the space and physically placing them.
  - b. *Application*: Creating pictures
    - i. Have students pick a partner, or assign partners
    - ii. As pairs, the students will direct the rest of the group to get in positions to create a picture of their choosing. Directors are not allowed to enter the space!! They must use their words (pointing is allowed though, if the words escape them)
      1. Scene ideas:
        - a. A day at the beach
        - b. A picnic in a park
        - c. Gym class
4. Closing Circle: What did we learn? (5 minutes)

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## Lesson Two: Continuing with the Basics

This lesson plan was developed as part of a weeklong arts education residency in Moundville, AL, run by students from the Theatre for Youth BFA program at Samford University.

Description	In our first lesson, students will apply the basics of stage composition to begin staging well-known fairy tales.
Age	6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> grade, 20 students (2 groups of 10)
Date	Wednesday
Curriculum Topic	Introduction to Directing
Teaching Artists	John Perine, Nicholas Di Prima assisting
Time	1:00 PM – 1:45 PM, 2:00 PM – 2:45 PM
Resources	Acting cubes

### Student Learning

Objectives	Assessment Criteria
2. Students can describe the duties of a director	Students will exhibit qualities of an effective director by communicating properly with actors
3. Students can identify the parts of the stage	Students will correctly identify the parts of the stage when directing fellow students to their spots in “rehearsal”
4. Students can apply understanding of stage positions to tell a story	Students will create still images with their fellow students that illustrate pivotal scenes from iconic fairytales
5. Students can create a safe environment where everyone can learn and play	Students will support the choices made by their fellow students by pointing out their classmates’ strengths

Process:

1. Welcome: Review (10 minutes)
  - a. Review parts of the stage
    - i. What are some qualities to each part of the stage?
  - b. Review feet positions
    - i. Why is it important to know where actors are facing?
  - c. Review levels
    - i. What kinds of characters can be found at each level?
2. Application: Fairy Tale Stills (30 minutes)
  - a. Students will now “direct” some other students to create a still picture depicting pivotal moments in fairy tales and fables:
    - i. The wolf watching little Red (2 actors)
    - ii. The fairy godmother meeting Cinderella (2 actors)
    - iii. The witch trying to eat Hansel and Gretel (3 actors)
    - iv. Wolf at a pig’s house (1 actor for wolf, 1-3 actors for pig(s))
    - v. The three bears finding Goldilocks (4 actors)
  - b. Potentially allow for another student to create the same image in a different way
    - i. Directors are often given the same source material but when they bring their own creativity to the project, the results can be very different!
3. Closing Circle: What did we learn? (5 minutes)