

## TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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Hello!

I am interested in applying for the Drama Teacher position.

I am currently finishing my master's in Educational Theatre at NYU Steinhardt and graduated with a BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch, where I studied at the Atlantic Acting School and Playwrights Horizons Theater School. For the past thirteen summers, I have directed at French Woods Festival of the Performing Arts, where I've worked on more than 40 productions with campers ages 6-18.

Along with directing the shows listed on my resume, I have taught a number of classes with the campers, including facilitating the *Improv Troupe* with our oldest students. In *Improv Troupe*, we focus on bringing the principles of long form scene work to short form improv games. Using the philosophies of the UCB Improv Theater, Magnet Theater and the PIT, along with the work of Chicago-based improvisers TJ & Dave, we place an emphasis on creating grounded scenes that allow actors to patiently and organically explore the "moment" in order to find the "game" of a scene. Another popular class I've taught is "Plays of the Week", in which we read works by a large variety of contemporary playwrights. Some of our texts in recent years included *The Wolves* by Sarah DeLappe and *Defacing Michael Jackson* by Aurin Squire.

In addition to my work at French Woods, I have directed at Random Farms Kids Theater, and have taught at the Atlantic Acting School, New York City Center, Inside Broadway, Leap, The Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Play On Studios, Curtain Up Kids, Child's Play NY, P.S. 87 Afterschool, and Actors Technique NY. I also do private coaching with my own students and founded *Playgrounded*, an improv program for kids and teens in NYC.

Working with passionate young performers has taught me to create safe spaces born out of supportive communities in which students are connected around the common pursuit of bravely stepping out of their comfort zones, taking risks, and owning their work. As a director I revel in finding real and honest connection between actors onstage—to me it is thrilling to experience an *actual* conversation between two performers. I love when actors bring their whole selves to a character—the parts they love and the parts they hate. I encourage actors to be completely honest about who they are and remind them that each character they play is just as human as they are. I find it fascinating to work together with actors to discover the story we will share and to explore how to tell that story as honestly as possible. I often find that a cast can teach me more about a play than I could ever figure out on my own. From my training as an actor, where I spent a lot of time studying Practical Aesthetics, I bring an acute understanding of script analysis to my work. I use this understanding to activate actors, pushing them beyond what they believe they are capable of in order to help them commit to truthful performances, driven by love, that seek to both unify by creating *actual* connection with other actors and to disrupt by creating change within those same people.

I love working with kids and I am looking for an opportunity to expand my work. Thank you for taking the time to read this and please feel free to check out [www.aaronfbrateman.com](http://www.aaronfbrateman.com) for more information. I have attached my teaching and directing resume, and I would love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Aaron F. Brateman

## **PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY**

Aaron F. Brateman is an actor, director, and teacher. He is currently pursuing his master's in Educational Theatre at NYU Steinhardt having previously graduated from NYU Tisch. In the last decade, Aaron has directed over 50 productions with kids of all ages, many of them at French Woods Festival of the Performing Arts. In addition to teaching at various schools and studios throughout the city, he founded *Playgrounded*—NYC's only improv program exclusively for kids and teens. Aaron is a proud member of Actors' Equity, and has been seen Off-Broadway, in a national tour, and at theaters around New York.

# CURRICULUM VITAE (TEACHING)

## EDUCATION

**New York University, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York, NY**  
M.A. in Educational Theatre, Grades K-12, Initial Certification  
*Expected Completion: May 2021*

**New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, New York, NY - 2012**  
B.F.A. in Drama- Atlantic Acting School, Playwrights Horizons Theater School

## STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### **STUDENT TEACHING, THE DALTON SCHOOL; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2021-PRESENT)**

- Provided remote instruction on Zoom to elementary school students in theater, often taking on responsibility as the lead teacher.
- Harnessed students' prior knowledge of myths, poetry, and art in lessons that applied film techniques to remote performance.
- Recommendation can be requested from cooperating teacher:
  - Justin Greer (jgreer@dalton.org)

### **STUDENT TEACHING, NEW YORK CITY DOE; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2020)**

- Completed student teaching at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts.
- Assisted in direction of *Never the Sinner* and *Spring Awakening* at FSSA, working closely with students to help them take ownership of acting techniques.
- Designed unit for sophomores in which they applied improvisation to scripted scene work.
- Recommendation can be requested from cooperating teacher:
  - Jamie Cacciola-Price (jcacciola@fssahs.org)

## YOUTH DIRECTING EXPERIENCE

### **THEATER DIRECTOR, FRENCH WOODS FESTIVAL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS; HANCOCK, NEW YORK (2008-PRESENT)**

- Responsible for directing and producing full-scale musical and dramatic productions with children ages 6-18 in as little as 24 hours of rehearsal time.
- Coordinated assistant directors, choreographers, musical directors, and technical designers to ensure success and continuity of productions.
- Adapted or wrote several productions to be performed as world premieres.
- Directed the *Improv Troupe*, which focused on bringing longform technique to short form games.
- Created and executed curricula for a variety of theater classes including scene study, improvisation, script analysis, directing, play reading, mime, voice, and speech.
- Oversaw and managed many one act play festivals, often supervising campers making their directorial debuts.
- Led revamp of theater class structure and curricula.
- Successfully made the transition to remote instruction on Zoom with classes in improvisation, sketch comedy, devising, and theater games.
- Lived and worked closely with children as camp counselor, ensuring that each child had an exceptional experience at camp.

### **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, RANDOM FARMS KIDS THEATER; ELMSFORD, NEW YORK (2012)**

- Directed *Oliver!* at the Tarrytown Music Hall in Tarrytown, New York with children ages 7-17.
- Responsible for creating blocking and choreography and maintaining its integrity across four separate casts.
- Worked closely with producer, choreographer, musical director, and technical designers to collaborate on artistic choices for the production.
- Assisted director in producing workshop of *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* with elementary students.
- Worked closely with actors, coaching them to find freedom, confidence, and energy in their choices.

### **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PLAY ON STUDIOS!; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2014-2015)**

- Assisted director and music director on production of *Urinetown* at The Computer School with middle school students.
- Worked closely with principal cast and ensemble on acting, stage presence, projection, and memorization techniques.
- Assisted director in teaching choreography.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, P.S. 87 AFTERSCHOOL; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2013-2015)**

- Responsible for assisting director on production of *Crazy for You* and co-directing *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.
- Worked together with producer, director, choreographer, and music director to cast show.
- Led group exercises to help students discover character and connect to historical context of show.

**TEACHING ARTIST EXPERIENCE**

**TEACHING ARTIST, NEW YORK CITY CENTER; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2019-PRESENT)**

- Taught pre- and post-show workshops for the *Encores!* program at various middle and high schools in Queens and Brooklyn.
- Created original choreography to *Washington Square Dance* for *Call Me Madam* workshop.
- Modified post-show lesson plan for special needs class, which included student creation of choreography.

**TEACHING ARTIST, JAMAICA CENTER FOR ARTS AND LEARNING; JAMAICA, NEW YORK (2018-PRESENT)**

- Taught and assisted on theater classes in afterschool programs at PS 82Q, PS 86Q, PS 136Q, and PS 160Q.
- Devised an original short play through structured improvisation with the students at PS 86Q based on characters they created through physical exploration.
- Led various theater games to teach the basics of improvisation during weekend classes for the community.

**TEACHING ARTIST, LEAP; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2018-PRESENT)**

- Taught improv classes to K-3 students at PS 75K, focusing on instruction through a variety of theater games.
- Devised short play about immigrant experience based on interviews with students.
- Worked extensively with children to create culturally responsive classroom culture.
- Provided assistance to students with homework.

**TEACHING ARTIST, INSIDE BROADWAY; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2017-PRESENT)**

- Implemented CASA programs by directing and choreographing *NYC Musical Mystery Melodies* with 2nd graders at PS 169X (Baychester Academy), *Broadway Boro Big Top* with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at PS 164Q, and *Getting to Know Me* at PS 16Q.
- Collaborated with art teacher, principal, and vice principal to ensure successful scheduling and execution of program.
- Responsible for teaching music to students from recorded tracks.

**COACHING AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**THEATER TEACHER, CREATIVE MUSE; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2020-PRESENT)**

- Virtually co-facilitated student driven character creation and playwrighting process on Zoom.
- Recorded, directed, and edited final remote performance video which included green screen special effects.
- Designed and implemented original curriculum which used structured improvisation in devising process.

**TEACHING ARTIST, ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2017-2018)**

- Directed and choreographed *Oliver!* and *A Year With Frog and Toad Kids* with elementary school students.
- Led theater games to help immerse children in the world of Victorian England.
- Worked closely with shy children who were hesitant to participate.
- Devised an original musical, *I Gold You So!*, with children using character-based structured improvisation.

**FOUNDER, AARON FARENBACK-BRATEMAN LLC; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2013-PRESENT)**

- Coached students for college auditions who received acceptances to NYU Tisch, Syracuse University, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Oklahoma City University, Elon University, Pace University, Marymount Manhattan College, University of Miami (with full scholarship), Emerson College, Rider University, The Hartt School, Point Park University, Montclair State University, and Muhlenberg College, among others.
- Coached students for graduate school auditions who received callbacks to Julliard and NYU's Graduate Acting Program.
- Designed and maintains website for the business.
- Created *Playgrounded*, an improv program for kids and teens.
  - Created and executed original improv curriculum.
  - Designed and maintains website and social media accounts.
  - Responsible for tracking marketing and analytics.
  - Recruited students to, and taught multiple 10-week sessions of advanced long form improvisation classes.
  - Facilitated workshops at LaGuardia High School, Commack High School, and Kansas State University.

**ACTING TEACHER, CURTAIN UP KIDS; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2013)**

- Responsible for directing the *Wizard of Oz* with children ages 6-11.
- Collaborated with head of program to plan weekly rehearsals, cast show, and to make artistic decisions.
- Led improvisation and vocal exercises to help immerse students in the world of the play.

**ACTING TEACHER, CHILD'S PLAY NY; BROOKLYN, NEW YORK (2013)**

- Worked with head of program on creating and executing weekly improvisation classes.
- Directed and choreographed *Free to Be...You and Me* with second and third graders at The Packer Collegiate Institute.
- Created and executed lesson plans exploring Greek mythology through theater games.

**ACTING TEACHER, ACTORS TECHNIQUE NY; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2012-2015)**

- Responsible for creating and executing curricula for multiple acting classes.
- Collaborated with head of program to direct and produce performance of one-acts rehearsed in class.
- Instructed students ages 8-22 in successfully understanding and applying Practical Aesthetics to scene work.
- Engaged with parents to keep them updated on students' progress.

**PROFESSIONAL THEATER EXPERIENCE**

**READER, YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2014-2015)**

- Worked on Tony-nominated Broadway production rehearsing with an understudy.
- Responsible for helping actor to show significant improvement with knowledge of material under short deadlines.
- Maintained open communications with Stage Management and Associate Director to keep them updated throughout rehearsal process.

**LITERARY COMMITTEE MEMBER, THE BOWER GROUP; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2011-2012)**

- Founding member of theater company—member of ensemble of inaugural production.
- Served on the literary committee of the company that was responsible for reading and selecting works to be produced by the company.
- Helped to organize reading of original play at local coffee shop.
- Participated in marketing and fundraising campaigns for several productions.

**ACTOR; NEW YORK, NEW YORK (2008-PRESENT)**

- Member of Actors' Equity Association.
- Performed Off-Broadway in the *Atlantic Theater Company's* production of *10x25* directed by David Pittu.
- Played Templeton in *Theatreworks USA's* International Tour of *Charlotte's Web*.
- Improv House Team player at the PIT, as well as member of Indie Team, *My First Tattoo!*.
- Completed improv training at UCB, The PIT, and The Magnet.
- Performed Off-Off Broadway in *The Bower Group's* production of *Eurydice* at Atlantic Stage 2.
- Devised and performed in *The Ape and the Child* at the Wings Theatre.
- Involved in several developmental readings of *Straight on 'Til Morning*, directed by Lee Kasper (Associate Director of *You Can't Take It With You*).

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.**

## DIRECTOR

- *Apocalypse Live*, **Creative Muse**, Remote, 2021.
- *Mamma Mia!*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2019.
- *Romeo and Juliet*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2019.
- *Band Geeks*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2019.
- *Groundhog Day*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2019. (Amateur World Premiere)
- *Broadway Boro Big Top*, **Inside Broadway**, PS 164Q, 2019.
- *My Favorite Year*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2018.
- *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2018.
- *The Government Inspector*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2018.
- *Hello! My Baby*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2018.
- *A Year With Frog and Toad Kids*, **Atlantic Acting School**, Studio A, 2018.
- *NYC Musical Mystery Melodies*, **Inside Broadway**, PS 169X, 2018.
- *I Gold You So (A Horror Musical)*, **Atlantic Acting School**, Studio A, 2017.
- *Zombie Prom*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2017.
- *All My Sons*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2017.
- *Fame*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2017.
- *Fiddler on the Roof*, **French Woods Festival**, Pavilion Theater, 2017.
- *Oliver!*, **Atlantic Acting School**, Studio A, 2017.
- *Hello, Dolly!*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2016.
- *George M!*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2016.
- *12 Angry Jurors*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2016.
- *Middletown*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2015.
- *Camp Rock*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2015.
- *Aliens vs. Cheerleaders*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2015.
- *9 to 5*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2015.
- *Annie*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2015.
- *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, **PS 87 Afterschool**, PS 87, 2015. (With Heather Gilles)
- *The Boy Friend*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2014.
- *Inherit the Wind*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2014.
- *Elf*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2014.
- *Good News*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2014.
- *Free to Be...You and Me*, **Child's Play NY**, Packer Collegiate Institute, 2014.
- *The Wizard of Oz*, **Curtain Up Kids**, Under St. Marks Theater, 2013.
- *Nothing is the End of the World (Except for the End of the World)*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2013.
- *The Muppet Show*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2013.
- *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2013.
- *Mame*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2013.
- *Godspell*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2012.
- *Anastasia*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2012.
- *Lullabies, Legends, and Lies*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2012.
- *The Jungle Book*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2012.
- *Oliver!*, **Random Farms Kids Theater**, Tarrytown Musical Hall, 2012.
- *Beauty and the Beast*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2011.
- *Guys and Dolls*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2011.
- *Finding Nemo: The Musical*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2011.
- *Disney's Cinderella*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2010.
- *Disney's Pocahontas*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2010.
- *Hands Across the Sea*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2010.
- *Employees Must Wash Hands Before Murder...*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2009.
- *Techno Breakdown*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2008.

## ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

- Assistant Director to Lena Moy-Borgen, *Urinetown*, **Play On! Studios**, The Computer School, 2015.
- Assistant Director to Jill Ahrold Bailey and Heather Gilles, *Crazy For You*, **PS 87 Afterschool**, PS 87, 2014.
- Assistant Director to Julie Schwartz, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, **Random Farms Kids Theater**, Studio Theater, 2012.
- Assistant Director to Evan Ross, *She Loves Me*, **French Woods Festival**, Playhouse Theater, 2010.

- Assistant Director to Lou Maddocks, *Captain Louie*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2009.
- Assistant Director to Stuart Fingeret, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, **French Woods Festival**, Arena Theater, 2009.
- Assistant Director to Jeff Maynard, *Doubt*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2009.
- Assistant Director to Lee Kasper, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2008.
- Assistant Director to Josh Gelb, *Godspell*, **French Woods Festival**, Scott Theater, 2008.
- Assistant Director to Stuart Fingeret, *The Crucible*, **French Woods Festival**, Cat Theater, 2008.



# ARTISTIC RESUME

## NEW YORK

|                       |                         |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 10x25                 | Shelby Comden-Greenberg | Atlantic Theater Company/ <i>David Pittu</i> |
| Eurydice              | Loud Stone              | Atlantic Stage 2/ <i>Connor Unger</i>        |
| The Ape and the Child | Donald Kellogg          | Wings Theatre/ <i>Eric Mercado</i>           |

## NATIONAL TOUR

|                 |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Charlotte's Web | Templeton/Lurvy/Arable/Carter/President | Theatreworks USA/ <i>Andrew Willis-Woodward</i> |
|-----------------|---|---|

## READINGS/CONCERTS

|                            |         |  |
|----------------------------|---------|--|
| Straight On 'Til Morning   | Adrian  | Queens Theatre/ <i>Lee Kasper</i>        |
| 54 Celebrates French Woods | Soloist | Feinstein's/54 Below/ <i>Jen Sandler</i> |

## EDUCATIONAL THEATER

|                                      |                            |  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Cloud 9                              | Joshua/Martin              | NYU Atlantic/ <i>Mikhael Tara Garver</i> |
| Surprise!                            | Peter                      | NYU Atlantic/ <i>Lila Neugebauer</i>     |
| Spring Awakening                     | Ernst Robel                | NYU Playwrights/ <i>Annie Tippe</i>      |
| Making Gay History: Before Stonewall | Frank Kameny/Evelyn Hooker | NYU Steinhardt/ <i>Joe Salvatore</i>     |

## IMPROV

PIT House Team- The Rockefellers

Indie Team- My First Tattoo! (Coach: Rachel Rosenthal, Jacob Davis, TJ Del Reno)

NYU Tisch- BFA in Acting (Atlantic Acting School, Playwrights Horizons Theater School), The Barrow Group Acting School

Acting: Kristen Johnston, Anna Deavere Smith, Neil Pepe, Mary McCann, Mark Brokaw, Steve Rosen, Todd Thaler, Lisbeth Bartlett, Karen Kolhaas, Michele Shay, Heather Oakley, Anya Saffir, Jordan Lage

Singing: Kevin Michael Murphy, Caleb Hoyer, Mat Eisenstein, Jeanne Lehman

Movement/Dance: Sam Pinkelton, Josh Pais (Committed Impulse), Kelly Maurer (Suzuki/Viewpoints), George Russell

Voice/Speech: Katie Bull, Ilse Pfeifer, John Van Wyden, Susan Finch, Charley Layton, Katie Honaker

Improv: UCB- Patrick Noth, Erik Tanouye, Anthony Atamanuik, Kevin Hines, Betsy Stover  
PIT- Sarah Nowak, Patrick McCartney, Rachel Rosenthal, Jamie Cummings  
Magnet- Eleanor Lewis, Elana Fishbein, Rick Andrews

## SPECIAL SKILLS

Teaching Artist, Mime, Ukulele (Beginner), Dialects (English, Southern, Minnesotan, Eastern European), On-the-Spot Puns

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

In our class we are playwrights—builders of game; creators of theater. We analyze the world around us to see what fun we can bring to life. Functioning as a team and looking out for each other with massive hearts, we celebrate our differences and take big old risks that often leave us flat on our faces. But we get right back up again, because as John Dewey lays out, we're on a journey together, and we have learning to do.

Theater is our way into this learning, even if we've never done it before. Viola Spolin says, "Everyone can act. Everyone can improvise. Anyone who wishes to can play in the theater and learn to become stageworthy." We take this as a calling. So, we learn to act—really act, and do a lot of improv. We learn advanced techniques that college kids can barely handle and we do scene work that we know they would run from. We put on great plays and musicals that we have no business doing. It doesn't matter who gets what role or if it's someone's first show—our ensemble must be the one to succeed. We blow our audiences away with our performance. They've never seen anything like it. Others of us design sets and lights and props and do dramaturgy. Some of us produce. Wanna invest? We can handle it. We make it clear that great theater can happen anywhere. We read scripts, ask questions, and learn about theater history—and just cause we're still young doesn't mean we don't understand Shakespeare. In fact, sometimes it's the only thing that speaks to us. We write plays that we can see ourselves in, we learn to take up space with our bodies, and find the power in our voices. We film movies, make puppets, dance, and sing. But most importantly we learn to listen, to make space for our friends, and to hear what they have to say. By understanding each other's goals, we begin to comprehend our own. We figure out what each of us needs and how we can get there. We know that our classroom belongs to all of us and that each of us are leaders in charge of our own learning. We get good at self-assessment to keep track of where we are. We understand that some things take hard work, really hard work, but we're not afraid of challenges. And we're not afraid to tear down barriers that keep some us running in place. Day after day, we walk into Vgotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development*, and day after day we see the limits of that zone shift.

Dr. Immordino-Yang of the Brain and Creativity Institute at USC says that according to her research, "It is literally neurobiologically impossible to think deeply about things that you don't care about."<sup>1</sup> So, we know that we have to care if we're going to learn. That's why we keep class fun and culturally responsive, using theater games whenever we can. We play classics like *Bippity-Bippity-Bop* and *Zip-Zap-Zop*, but sometimes we turn our focus to current events, our community, or ourselves. We understand the enormous power of theater and how it can be used to create change. If we put something in our sights, that something better watch out because we're coming after it. We understand that our art must connect to our world and that so many of us connect to our world through our art. Theater makes it come alive.

In our class we care about life. We learn to navigate this Earth. We know that we have big dreams and big hopes. We spend so much time feeling like big people but once in a while we can still feel super small. We're okay diving into complicated conversations and exploring what it means to be a human being—in ways that are familiar to us and in ways that are not. We don't shy away from scary things; rather we run at them head on. We learn that sometimes stuff is boring, meaningless, and even downright awful. If we can, we talk about who made it that way. But we also learn that our potential is limitless and that the potential of our world is unbelievable. We learn that we can do things collectively that no one ever thought were possible—that the second you underestimate us we will make your jaw drop. All the way to the floor.

We learn to be a community and to make each other laugh. Our class is funny. Like, really, really funny. You'll hear stories about it one day. We figure out how we can change the world because we know it's *our* world to change. And we want you to join us. If someone asks us why we make change through theater, we know the answer is simple. Medicine might save lives, math might help develop new technologies, but only art—yes, *only art*—makes us human.

So, what better way to practice being alive?

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

| Activity  | Procedure  |
|---|--|
| Location for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date</li> <li>• Daily Agenda</li> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• Assignments</li> </ul> | These will all be posted on the board at the front of the space.   |
| Beginning/Opening Procedures (e.g. Do Now, warm-up)   | Students will follow any instructions that have been provided by the teacher upon entering the classroom. If no instructions have been provided, students will take a seat or engage in a warm up of their own choosing in order to be ready to work that day. Students will balance their own needs with the needs of other students in the class. Any warm ups must be physically safe and nondisruptive to other students. When the teacher signals the class to order, students are expected to take a seat or follow other instructions. The teacher will greet the class and check in to see how everyone is doing. Students are encouraged to address any needs they might have that day with the teacher upon arriving in order to keep an open line of communication. |
| Closing/Ending Procedures   | The teacher will check in with students at the end of class about the day's activities. Students are welcome to share insights, moments of clarity or confusion, frustrations, questions, etc. Discussion stemming from what the students share will ensue, time permitting. Students will restore the room to the way they found it when they entered, and bring any personal belongings with them when they exit the space. Students are encouraged to stay for a moment after class to speak to the teacher if they wish to engage in additional dialogue, but they are expected to still be on time to other classes.  |
| Attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Students</li> <li>• Absent Students</li> <li>• Tardy Students</li> </ul>         | Students are expected to be on time and present at every class. The teacher will take attendance at the beginning of each day (sometimes out loud, sometimes privately), and inquire about any missing students. It is important the teacher points out missing students and raises concerns about those students' absences, as every member of the ensemble is essential to the learning. The teacher will mark students absent in the roll book as necessary and indicate if any students are tardy. The teacher will make sure to follow up with any students who are tardy or absent to make sure everything is okay and to figure out how they can help the student be in class.  |
| Student Heading on Papers   | Students will put their name, the date, and the name of the class on the upper left corner of any papers.  |
| Student Behavior During Instruction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention</li> <li>• Participation</li> </ul>               | Students are expected to pay attention to the best of their abilities. They are asked to keep in mind how the teacher and their peers will perceive their behavior as they engage in class based on the agreed upon class expectations. Students are expected to participate in all class activities to the best of their abilities, giving their best effort at all times. Students will not always be successful, but they should always try.  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Student Behavior During Independent Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Talking</li> <li>• Obtaining Help</li> <li>• Completed Work</li> <li>• Out-of-Seat</li> </ul> | <p>Students are expected to be as quiet as possible during independent work so that each student may complete their work with limited disruption. How quiet students are able to be, will of course vary depending on what the activity is. Students will try to answer their own questions before seeking help from the teacher. If they have done this and still need help, they will raise a quiet hand to signal the teacher or quietly get up and seek out the teacher. If the teacher is engaged with another student, the student seeking help will wait until the teacher is finished providing help to the other student. Students who have completed their work will follow an agreed upon procedure established at the beginning of the activity and remain nondisruptive to other students who are still completing the activity. If a student needs to get out of their seat, they will raise their hand and wait to be called on by the teacher.</p> |
| <p>Student behavior during group work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group</li> <li>• Whole group</li> </ul>   | <p>When working in small groups, students will be active participants in the work at hand and their contributions will be proportional to the number of students in the group. Students will be mindful of each other’s learning and provide space and support to that learning. When working with the whole group, students will be active participants in the work and their contributions will again be proportional to the number of students in the group. Especially when working with a large group, students will seek to maintain an awareness of everyone in the group and the way the group functions as a singular unit. Students will understand that they are not a building block of the group, but rather a fraction of it.</p>  |
| <p>Student behavior during interruptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P.A.</li> <li>• Visitors</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>   | <p>During P.A. and visitor interruptions, students are expected to freeze and immediately go silent. Interruptions might be made for safety reasons, so it is of the utmost importance that students follow this procedure until the interruption has ended or the teacher gives a signal that students may resume what they were doing.</p>   |
| <p>Distribution of Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripts/Readings</li> <li>• School Correspondence</li> <li>• Classroom Materials &amp; Supplies</li> </ul>           | <p>The teacher will hand out any necessary materials and will utilize student assistants, when necessary, to help. These assistants will be students who will benefit from being given a responsibility that day.</p>  |
| <p>Leaving the Room:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Teacher</li> </ul>   | <p>It is expected that students will remain in class for the duration of the period. If a student does need to leave, they will seek permission from the teacher by raising a hand or approaching the teacher if this is more appropriate. If given permission, the student will acquire any necessary passes for moving around the school. If the teacher needs to leave the room, they will contact another teacher to keep eyes on the class until the teacher returns.</p>   |
| <p>Interchange and movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpening pencils</li> <li>• Getting supplies</li> <li>• Using References</li> </ul>                                 | <p>Students can freely sharpen pencils or get supplies except when instructions are being given, so long as they are not disruptive to the group learning. Students are welcome to use references when appropriate and technology can similarly be incorporated to enhance an activity with teacher permission.</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using Technology</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p>Use of special equipment or materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCD</li> <li>• Smart Board</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>                               | <p>This will be used in lessons when necessary, but will not be used by students without permission.</p>   |
| <p>Use of electronic devices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cell Phones</li> <li>• Tablets</li> <li>• Cameras</li> <li>• Laptops</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> | <p>Students may bring electronics to class, but are expected to keep them stored away unless they have been given permission to use them to enhance the learning activity by the teacher.</p>  |
| <p>Seating arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group</li> <li>• Small group</li> </ul>  | <p>Students will be given the choice of where to sit in the classroom, as long as it is somewhere in the seating arrangement developed by the teacher. Should other accommodation be required, the student should feel free to speak to the teacher about their needs so that a compromise can be reached. Should the student's choice of seat lead to disruptive behavior, the teacher may reassign the student's seat. When working in small groups, students will sometimes be assigned into groups, and sometimes be given the opportunity to pick their own groups.</p> |
| <p>Student work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing</li> <li>• Collecting</li> <li>• Returning</li> </ul>   | <p>The teacher will distribute student work, seeking help from student assistants when necessary. Again, these assistants will be students who will benefit from being given a responsibility that day. Student assignments can be turned into the teacher by putting them in an assigned bin, or electronically, when appropriate. Student work will be returned as soon as possible directly to the student by the teacher, with the teacher engaging in any necessary follow up conversations.</p>  |
| <p>Correcting papers in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>   | <p>The teacher will sometimes review assignments in class with students. At that time, students will correct papers in order to understand how they are meeting defined goals. The teacher will not correct papers in class and instead focus on the students.</p>   |
| <p>Transitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities</li> <li>• Instruction</li> </ul>   | <p>Students will be given designated break times if deemed necessary, but otherwise will remain engaged in classroom activities. Transitions will be as quick and silent as possible, replicating a professional working atmosphere.</p>   |
| <p>Clean up</p>  | <p>Students are expected to pack away any materials and belongings before leaving class. The room should be restored to the condition it was in before students entered.</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Dismissal   | The teacher will dismiss students in a timely manner, and students are expected to remain engaged in classroom activities until the teacher ends the lesson. Students are encouraged to engage with the teacher on their way out if they need anything. |
| Emergency Procedures:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire drill</li> <li>• Lockdown</li> <li>• Shelter in Place</li> </ul> | Teacher and students will follow procedures laid out by school administration.  |

Share the rules, positive incentive/motivational system, and consequences you plan to implement in your classroom.

|  |
|--|
| <p>Rules (up to 5)</p> <p>“Rules” will be defined as expectations, and will be co-created with students. Unanimous consent (including that of the teacher) will be required for something to make the list. When creating the list, students may engage in debate to convince their peers if a motion fails.</p>   |
| <p>Positive Incentive/Motivational System</p> <p>The teacher will point out strong student work and student leadership as a way of providing positive reinforcement and models for students.</p>   |
| <p>Corrective Consequences (Assuming non-violent/threatening behavior)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> time- Students will be given a firm, but gentle reminder of expectations, clarifying potential misunderstandings.</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> time- Teacher will check in privately with the student to try to learn why the behavior is happening. Based on what they learn, they will address the student’s needs as best they can so that the student can be an active participant in the learning.</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> time- Teacher and student will have a brief meeting to see how they can realign their expectations.</li> <li>• Chronic misbehavior- Teacher will learn as much as they can about the situation, and assess the best strategy for helping the student be an active participant in class.</li> </ul> |

## **SAMPLE COURSE SYLLABUS AND PERFORMANCE SEASON**

### **Abstract**

This curriculum and performance season is designed for a high school theater class in a performing arts school called *The Actor's Role in Contemporary American Theater*. Over the course of the year students will engage in four units—Longform Improvisation, Contemporary Theater, Technique and Scene Study, and Workshop, while participating in productions tied to their coursework.

### **Personal Statement and Artistic Philosophy**

Following a recent theater pop culture boom, actor training programs have popped up at universities all over the country. Some of those programs offer their students excellent training, equipping their graduates with concrete tools that allow them to become masters of their craft. Other programs, while I'm sure well-intentioned, fall short of that goal. Still, regardless of the success of the theatrical skill training these programs provide, students in both types of programs often walk away with little to no information about how the *business* of showbusiness actually functions, and in situations where students have been given a more thorough preparation, they, unfortunately, have often been prepared for a theatrical landscape that no longer exists. In high school and college, students have spent their time reading classic works, performing in Golden Age musicals, and working with teachers who have been disconnected from the industry for a number of years. In today's landscape, actors are being asked to do *everything*—write, direct, design, produce, compose, and of course, act. The idea of showing up to an open call and booking work is more of a longshot now than it ever was, and in this time where social media has given every one of us the power to be a *creator*, the industry is seeing more and more success stories that have been fueled by a philosophy of artists creating their own work. I, for

one, believe we should embrace this idea with open arms. It is incredibly inspiring to the actor, who no longer needs to sit around waiting for their opportunity, but we also must equip our students to succeed in a world where their best shot of working comes from being involved in the inception of new work, or forging it themselves. Therefore, this curriculum seeks to not only teach essential acting skills that can be applied in any theatrical situation, but to also immerse students in the world of contemporary theater and the process through which plays are created and produced.

### **Intended Participants**

This curriculum and performance season is designed for high school theater students in a performing arts school. Though this is not an introductory class, it represents a more primary level of training within the broader scope of this sort of performing arts program. Therefore, it is best suited for sophomores who have significant prior theatrical experience. It is expected that students have participated in multiple theatrical productions, and have a working knowledge of basic script analysis skills, acting techniques, and theater vocabulary. Students will also be expected to have a basic understanding of the theatrical landscape as a whole—familiarity with Broadway, general theater history, and the various different jobs that exist in theater. The curriculum is designed for a class of no more than 20 students. Students in the performing arts school would be required to take this class, having auditioned to get into the program. It is expected that such a performing arts school would be situated in or near an urban center, and as a result it is expected that the student body will be widely diverse.

Instruction for this curriculum will take place in a black box theater space. The space has a totally flexible floor plan, theatrical lights, plenty of chairs, acting blocks, tables, and standard rehearsal props. Risers can be set up to create audience stadium seating if desired. Students



have access to laptop computers for research and the room has a smartboard that can be stored away as needed. There is a large theatrical library that features numerous plays and a variety of contemporary theatrical texts. The school also has teachers that specialize in other areas of theatrical creation and who provide assistance on student productions in their areas of expertise.

Since the school is a performing arts school, the arts training it provides is considered pre-conservatory training. The classwork prepares students to succeed in conservatory style university programs with the understanding that many students will choose to not pursue a life in the arts or even a college program in the arts. Still, the school has very high aesthetic expectations from its students and faculty, and the work created is held to high professional standards.

### **Overarching Understandings and Performances Tasks**

As a result of taking this course, students will be able to actively participate as actors in the creation of contemporary theatrical works, having developed a clear sense of themselves as theater artists through a deep exploration of dramatic material, rigorous acting training, and intensive participation in scene and production work. Work in the class is used to enhance the performance season, which has been specifically designed for the sophomore class and culminates in a fully student run One-Act Festival. In the Longform Improvisation unit, students will engage in a historical and practical study of modern improvisation through reading, research, videos, and participation in a variety of theater games and exercises. They will then apply this knowledge to the performance of longform improv, particularly the *Harold*. Throughout the unit, students will be responsible for completing a research project on improv history, performing on a *Harold* “team”, and submitting a journal that documents ongoing learning—accomplishments, frustrations, insights, questions, etc. In the Contemporary Theater

unit, students will engage in an exploration of contemporary theater through readings, videos, and live performances. They will examine what issues today's theater artists are wrestling with, and how they have gone about addressing them. Through this mixed study of content and form, which will include a focus on various production elements, students will think about what kind of theater they would like to see in our world at this moment in time. Students will read a variety of plays throughout the unit, attend a live performance, and present a production proposal for a piece of their own choosing. In the Technique and Scene Study unit, students will activate the plays they encountered in the previous unit. They will strengthen their script analysis abilities to open the path to committed acting performances that build on the skills learned in the Longform Improvisation unit. Students will be assigned scene work that they will rehearse and perform in class. Additionally, they will continue to submit journal reflections that document ongoing learning, including a strong focus on self-assessment.

The learning in this semester will be used to set students up for success as they move onto the second semester which includes units on workshopping a new play and self-producing a one-act festival. In the workshopping unit, students will learn how to apply the considerations of contemporary material and their acting skills to the process of working on a new play that they will create with a professional playwright. Alongside the playwright, they will explore the intricacies of developing a new piece of theater from all sides of a production. This process will in turn prepare students to tackle an entirely self-produced one-act festival at the end of the year while they learn to deal with the considerations of self-producing in class.

## Performance Season- A Community Heals

### 1. Improv Nights

Cast Size: 16 (2 teams of 8 students)

Students in the sophomore class will perform a weekly hour-long improv comedy show that is split between two teams. Improv is one of the fastest growing forms of modern theatrical performance, with theaters and training programs popping up all across the country over the last 20 years. Improv performance is entirely generated by the performers, which primes students to start thinking about and undertake the self-generated work they will create later in the season. Furthermore, improv performance is directly reflective of a community and its issues and has always been an art form created by and for *the people*. These performances will, of course, provide performance practice for the skills learned in the Longform Improvisation unit.

### 2. Contemporary Play

Title: *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play*

Author: Anne Washburn

Cast Size: 8 (5f,3m) (Could be double-cast)

Anne Washburn created *Mr. Burns* in collaboration with the actors at the Woolly Mammoth Theater Company. They used a process that is similar to the one students will ultimately engage in during the workshop production. Additionally, *Mr. Burns* was widely produced by regional theaters across America and serves as a prime example of the type of contemporary play students might encounter in the professional world. The play was chosen because of its post-apocalyptic themes and stories of a community trying to keep it together following a world-changing moment, which will resonate with students following the Coronavirus

pandemic. The play directly ties into the contemporary theater unit students will be involved with in class.

### **3. Contemporary Musical**

Title: *Come From Away*

Authors: Irene Sankoff and David Hein

Cast Size: 16 (12 Characters+Ensemble-6f,6m)

Like, *Mr. Burns*, *Come From Away* was workshopped before it made its way to New York.

The show was originally presented on Broadway in the “poor theater” style, which is an effective way of working for students to learn about as they begin thinking about generating their own theater on a tight budget. Additionally, when the rights are released, regional theaters across the country will surely present the musical, giving students another opportunity to engage in work that they might actually encounter in the professional world.

The musical, which is about the best of humanity and a community coming together in a time of crisis, will directly reflect on the experiences of students and their communities during the global Coronavirus pandemic and continue the healing and reflection this season intends to promote. Students will be able to apply their acting skills from the Technique and Scene Study unit directly to this experience.

### **4. Workshop of a New Play**

Title: TBD

Author: Jess Honovich

Cast Size: 16

In the second semester, working with a professional playwright, students will workshop a new play. This experience will require them to synthesize the skills and theories they have

been developing throughout the curriculum. They will explore the intricacies of developing a new piece of theater from all sides of a production. Students will have input about what they would like to create a play about, and they will work with the playwright, in constant conversation, as they create the piece.

## **5. One-Act Festival**

Titles: TBD

Authors: TBD

Cast Size: Various

Students will write, direct, design, act in, and produce a festival of one-act plays. Building on their experiences with contemporary theater texts and workshopping a new play, students will now transfer that learning to a context where they are entirely in charge. Truly putting into practice the ideas of self-generated theater, students will create a bold new theatrical experience that is entirely their own.

**SYLLABUS FOR  
THE ACTOR’S ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY THEATER  
2021-2022**

**Teacher:** Mr. Aaron F. Brateman  
**Email:** mraaronfbrateman@nameofschool.edu

**Course Objectives**

In this class, we will learn to actively participate as actors in the creation of contemporary theatrical works, having developed a clear sense of ourselves as theater artists through a deep exploration of dramatic material, rigorous acting training, and intensive participation in scene and production work.

The course will be broken up into four sections:

**1. Improv**

We will engage in a historical and practical study of modern improvisation through reading, research, videos, and participation in a variety of theater games and exercises. We will then apply this knowledge to the performance of longform improv, particularly the *Harold*.

There will be select readings from:

- *Improvisation at the Speed of Life* by T.J. Jagodowski and David Pasquesi with Pamela Victor
- *The Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual* by Matt Besser, Ian Roberts, and Matt Walsh
- *How to Be the Greatest Improviser on Earth* by Will Hines
- *Improv Nation* by Sam Wasson

In this section, you will be responsible for completing a research project on improv history—that may be about an organization, a person, a technique, etc. You should articulate the way that piece of history has shaped modern improv performance. You may present your findings in any way you choose—a written report, a video, a song, a visual art piece, etc.

You will also participate in a variety of theater games and improv exercises which will build our improv skills and allow us to tackle longform improv and the *Harold*. Working as a team, we will strengthen our awareness of our own work, as well as the work of our peers.

Additionally, you will submit a weekly written reflection that documents ongoing learning—accomplishments, frustrations, insights, questions, etc. This is time for you to codify your own thinking. This is not a place to give what you think I want to hear. I am more interested in the genuine reactions you are having to the work you are doing. If every day makes you angry, and you’re not learning anything, tell me about it! I encourage you to actually take

the time to make this meaningful for yourself. At times, we may use these reactions in larger group discussions.

## 2. Contemporary Theater

Together, we will engage in an exploration of contemporary theater through readings, videos, and live performances. We will examine what issues today's theater artists are wrestling with, and how they have gone about addressing them. Through this mixed study of content and form, which will include a focus on various production elements, we will think about what kind of theater we would like to see in our world at this moment in time.

In class, we will read a variety of contemporary plays out loud. Possible plays include:

- *The Wolves* by Sarah DeLappe
- *Bike America* by Mike Lew
- *A Bright New Boise* by Samuel D. Hunter
- *The Cake* by Bekah Brunstetter
- *She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen
- *An Octoroon* by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins
- *The Flick* by Annie Baker
- *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play* by Anne Washburn
- *Failure: A Love Story* by Philip Dawkins
- *Choir Boy* by Tarell Alvin McCraney
- *Oslo* by J.T. Rogers
- *Flyin' West* by Pearl Cleage
- *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl
- *Dark Play, or Stories for Boys* by Carlos Murillo
- *Hir* by Taylor Mac
- *Defacing Michael Jackson* by Aurin Squire
- *Guards at the Taj* by Rajiv Joseph
- *Notes from the Field* by Anna Deavere Smith
- *In the Heights* by Lin Manuel-Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes
- *Fun Home* by Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron

You are expected to attend **two live performances** during the quarter, either with the class (I will arrange those opportunities), or on your own (if you don't like what I've picked out!) Theater is a living, breathing thing, and we will learn the most about it by experiencing it. If you choose to see a show on your own, feel free to support a theater and purchase a ticket (visit [www.broadwayforbrokepeople.com](http://www.broadwayforbrokepeople.com) for the cheapest way to get Broadway tickets), but you can see many shows for free by volunteering to usher at one of their performances. You will help give out programs and get people seated, and then get to watch the show with everyone else. Here are some organizations you can get in contact with if you choose to take this route:

## **BROADWAY**

### Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC)

Call the Freidman Theatre Volunteer Usher line at 212-399-3000 ext. 5463 or email [volunteer@mtc-nyc.org](mailto:volunteer@mtc-nyc.org).

### Roundabout Theatre Company

American Airlines Theatre- Email [AAVolunteer@roundabouttheatre.org](mailto:AAVolunteer@roundabouttheatre.org) with three dates you are available.

Studio 54- Sign up in person at The Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre. Check in with security and ask to register as volunteer usher.

### Second Stage Theater

Email house manager [RPonce@2ST.com](mailto:RPonce@2ST.com) with your full name, phone number, and productions in which you are interested.

## **OFF-BROADWAY**

### Atlantic Theatre Company

Email [ushers@atlantictheater.org](mailto:ushers@atlantictheater.org).

For more information go to [www.atlantictheater.org/faq](http://www.atlantictheater.org/faq).

### Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC)

Stage I and Stage II at New York City Center- Email [mtchousemanager@nycitycenter.org](mailto:mtchousemanager@nycitycenter.org).

### Playwrights Horizons

Email [usher@phnyc.org](mailto:usher@phnyc.org) with “ADD TO LIST” in the subject line.

### Rattlestick Playwrights Theater

Email [usher@rattlestick.org](mailto:usher@rattlestick.org) with “USHER” in the subject line.

For more information visit [www.rattlestick.org/get-involved/work-with-us](http://www.rattlestick.org/get-involved/work-with-us).

### Roundabout Theatre Company

Laura Pels Theatre- Sign up in person at The Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre. Check in with security and ask to register as volunteer usher.

### Second Stage Theater

Email house manager [JSchliefer@2ST.com](mailto:JSchliefer@2ST.com) with your full name, phone number, and productions in which you are interested.

You will also be asked to submit and present a production proposal for a piece of your choosing. It may be a piece we looked at together, or one of your own choosing. This proposal should reflect your own interests and style. You will need to defend your proposal to the class.



### 3. Technique and Scene Study

In this unit, we will activate the plays we encountered in the previous unit. We will strengthen our script analysis skills to open the path to committed acting performances that build on the skills learned in the improv unit. You will be assigned scene work that you will rehearse and perform in class. We will focus on taking ownership of our work throughout the rehearsal process.

You will be expected to read:

- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previtio, and Scott Zigler

As well as selections from:

- *True and False* by David Mamet
- *An Actor's Companion* by Seth Barrish

You will have rehearsal time in class, but you will need to do preparation outside of class as well in order to be successful in this unit—this may require you to spend time reading your play, learning lines, and possibly getting together to rehearse with your scene partner. Scenes presented in class will receive feedback from me, as well as your peers. We will work putting the theories we have read about into practice so that you walk away feeling like you have a reliable process.

You will continue to submit a weekly written reflection that documents ongoing learning—accomplishments, frustrations, insights, questions, etc. As always, this writing should be authentic, and a real documentation of your experience. This writing may serve us in discussion, as well.

### 4. Workshop

Our class will culminate in the workshop of a new play with a professional playwright. This experience will require you to synthesize the skills and theories you have been developing throughout the year. Working with the playwright, we will explore the intricacies of developing a new piece of theater from all sides of a production.

This project will require you to be at some rehearsals outside of normal class time.

As the workshop process will involve constant collaboration and assessment, you will not be required to keep a written record of the process, though you, of course, are welcome to.

After the workshop process has concluded, you will be required to write a 4-5 page essay reflecting on your experience in the workshop, and the class as a whole. As always, this writing should reflect an honest evaluation borne out of meaningful thinking. What have you

learned about yourself as an artist and what will that mean to you as you move forward?  
What comes next?

## **Class Expectations**

You are expected to be on time and ready to work when class begins. Being late will affect the time we all have to do our work, not just you. You should bring any materials you need to be an active participant in class that day, ie. Readings for discussion, scripts, etc. Electronics like phones and laptops may be brought to class, but should not be taken out or used during class time without my permission. In order to maintain an environment where we can take risks, it is essential that we do not film each other during class time. If you violate this policy, you will be asked to delete the video in front of me, and put the device away. If it happens again, I will be forced to confiscate the device, which will then be returned to your caregiver through the process outlined in the student handbook.

I understand that your days are full and busy, and that life sometimes gets in the way. That's okay. We are on the same team, and I will do everything I can to help you have a great time and succeed. This goes two ways though, and I expect you to maintain an open dialogue with me about any needs you may have that day. Accommodations can be made, but not if I don't know about an issue.

Finally, acting can be hard, and it requires bravery and support. We will often be stepping out of our comfort zones, seeking to achieve the unachievable. It is important that we do everything we can to be there for each other. A lot of times, we will fall flat on our faces. I don't expect you to always succeed, but I do expect you to try your best and to keep trying even when things are challenging. There *will be* the other side. I hope as we work together, I can earn your trust, and that as a group we will all do some really amazing things.

## **Class Materials**

- Notebook
- Folder
- Pencil
- Highlighter
- Texts/Readings/Handouts
- Scripts
- Props/costumes

## **Absences and Assignments**

It is essential to your success that you are actively participating in class. Therefore, it is expected that you will be present in all classes. If for some reason you miss class on a day an assignment is due in person, you are expected to turn in the assignment the next day you are present. If the assignment is due electronically, it should still be turned in on time.

## Late Work

You are expected to submit all work by the assigned due date. You will lose one letter grade for each day after the deadline that an assignment is turned in. Deadlines are important, and I expect you to meet them, but I also understand that your life is bigger than school. As such, you will receive **one** late assignment pass at the beginning of each semester, which you may use on any assignment that you are supposed to complete on your own. If other students are dependent on you to complete that work, though, you may not use the pass on that assignment (ie. Knowing your lines in a scene you do with someone else). The pass will grant you an extension of **three** days on that assignment (this includes weekends, if applicable). After that, the late work will lose one letter grade for each day it is late.

## Grading Policy

You will *not* be graded on how “good” an actor you are, though you will always receive feedback about your growth from me on any performances you do. Rather, you will be graded on the work and discipline you bring to the process, your engagement in making meaning, and what kind of ensemble member you conduct yourself as. In other words, you will be graded on your participation, preparation, projects, and written assignments. **Three or more** unexcused absences will affect the student’s participation grade.

|     |                                 |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 35% | Daily Participation/Preparation |
| 35% | Projects                        |
| 30% | Written Assignments             |

Grades will be given on this scale:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| A | 90-100% |
| B | 80-89%  |
| C | 70-79%  |
| D | 60-69%  |
| F | 0-59%   |

Please sign, tear off, and return this slip to indicate that you have read through the syllabus.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Thanks a bunch! Looking forward to a wonderful year with you.

-Aaron F. Brateman

## SAMPLE UNIT PLAN

**Unit Title:** Devising by Improvising

**Focus of the Unit:** How can we use structured improvisation to create a devised theater piece?

| Overarching Unit Objectives  | Summative Assessment Strategies   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to perform a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation.</p>  | <p><b>Performance Tasks:</b> Devised Theater Performance<br/> <b>Criteria:</b> Makes strong physical choices, Makes strong vocal choices, Committed to performance, Listens and responds to scene partner<br/> <b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Teacher Feedback (Appendix H)</p> |
| <p><b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to write a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation.</p> | <p><b>Performance Task:</b> Devised Theater Script<br/> <b>Criteria:</b> Character has strong point of view, Script includes specific details, Writing “shows rather than tells”<br/> <b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Teacher Feedback (Appendix H)</p>                          |
| <p><b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to assess structured improvisation as a playwriting tool.</p>                | <p><b>Performance Task:</b> Written Reflection<br/> <b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br/> <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback on written reflection</p>  |

### A. Relevant Learning Standards:

#### Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.

HS1a. Use theatrical conventions to revise a devised or scripted drama or theater work.

HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

#### Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

## **B. Context for Learning:**

Audience: 10th grade theater class with 20 students in a specialized performing arts public high school in a large urban area. The class is a 45-minute-long playwriting class. The class runs in a double period with their acting class and sometimes lessons may extend into the next period if more time is needed. The school serves grades 9-12 and Special Education. Students audition to get into the program and take several classes a day in their desired concentration in addition to core curricular subjects. The school has 853 students. The student body is diverse--11% Asian, 13% Black, 33% Hispanic or Latinx, 36% White, and almost 6% American Indian. It should be noted, that this school contains a much higher percentage of white students than is represented in the city's school system at large. 1% of the students at the school are English Language Learners, and 19% are students with Special Needs. The student body is about 31% male and 69% female.

Known Learning Needs: Several students in the class have IEPs which include supports for redirection, focusing prompts, teacher check-ins, small group work, preferential seating, and visual support of information.

Modifications:

Learning Disability—Multi-step instructions will be broken down as needed.

Speech and Language Learning Disability—Written agenda, scaffolding, redirection, prompting, kinesthetic components to the lesson.

English-Language Learners—Pre-teach key words and phrases through examples; use physical demonstrations and visual illustrations.

Previous Knowledge: Students have completed a year and a half of theatrical training. They are experienced performers and have a working knowledge of character analysis and acting technique. They have received physical and vocal training and are expected to commit to strong physical and vocal choices in all acting work, as well as continue to work on listening and responding to their scene partner. This lesson is designed for the second semester of their playwriting class, so students will have had previous exposure to various playwriting techniques. Students recently completed a playwriting unit in which they wrote “really bad plays” and had to incorporate specific requirements into the plays, ie. the play needed to include a cow. In their freshman year, they completed a unit in improvisation, so they have a working knowledge of improv technique, as well.

**Lesson Title:** Who Am I Anyway? (Lesson 1 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How can we use physical exploration to create a character?

| <b>Lesson Objectives</b>  | <b>Formative Assessment Strategies</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use physical exploration to create an original character.  | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Character Walks<br><b>Criteria:</b> Makes strong physical choice, Makes strong vocal choice, Committed to exercise<br><b>Documentation:</b> Side Coaching, Brief Notes (Appendix A)                                      |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to describe an original character.   | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Character Worksheet (Appendix B)<br><b>Criteria:</b> Responds to prompts with detailed answers, Responses work together to create cohesive character<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback on worksheet (Appendix B) |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to examine the process of developing a character through physical exploration in relation to other playwriting techniques. | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Group Discussion<br><b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix A)                               |

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.

HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and instructions for Character Walks will be written on the board to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up on Smartboard for unfamiliar locations or vocabulary. Visual demonstrations

of different types of leading will be provided by teacher, and teacher will go over Character Worksheet to make sure language is clear.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared as much as possible to create an open playing space.

**Materials Needed:** Smartboard with internet connection, Character worksheets

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Introduction (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher introduces the unit and goals for the unit. They lead a discussion with students about what a devised theater piece might look like and how it is created. The teacher asks students to draw upon their previous knowledge of playwriting in order to examine how devising might fit into or complicate their existing definition of the art form. The teacher then defines “structured improvisation” and leads a brief discussion about how it will be used in the unit, explaining that students will create characters to use in improvised scene work.

#### **2. Setting the Scene (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher asks students to draw on their previous playwriting knowledge to identify that well-told stories need a clear who, what, where, and why. The teacher explains that in this process students will first explore the “where” and the “who” of their piece. The teacher explains that the class will need to select a non-geographic location for their piece, ie. a pirate ship or a Starbucks. The teacher fields suggestions from the class and writes them on the board. They also pull up images from the internet to display on the Smartboard, serving as a visual representation of the suggestions. Once all suggestions have been fielded, the teacher will lead an anonymous vote to select a location. The teacher announces the winner of the vote and the winning location is used as the setting of the devised piece.

#### **3. Character Walks (20 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains how students are going to use the next exercise to create characters that will exist in the location the class has selected. The teacher asks students to draw upon their previous knowledge of acting technique and leads a group discussion about what it means to make strong physical choices, strong vocal choices, and to commit to a performance. The teacher encourages students to keep these ideas in mind as they go through the exercise.
- b. The teacher begins leading the exercise and asks students to walk around the space. They remind students to make sure they do not get stuck walking in a circle, encouraging them to use the whole space instead.
- c. The teacher instructs students to walk in neutral, meaning that the speed they are walking at should be a 5/10 if 1 is the slowest they can possibly move and 10 is the absolute fastest. The teacher instructs that students should not make any physical adjustments to their natural way of walking. The teacher explains that students will try adjusting the speed they are walking at. The teacher instructs them to try out:
  - i. A 7
  - ii. A 3
  - iii. A 1



- iv. An 8
    - v. A 10
    - vi. And a return to neutral.
  - d. The teacher instructs students to shift their attention from the speed they are walking at to a focus on what part of their body they are leading with while they walk. The teacher explains that no effort should be made to change anything; that students are simply observing. The teacher tells them that they will now experiment leading with different parts of the body as they walk. The teacher tells students to begin leading with:
    - i. Their head
    - ii. Their chest
    - iii. Their elbows
    - iv. Their stomach
    - v. Their pelvis
    - vi. Their knees
    - vii. Their feet
    - viii. Their butt
    - ix. Return to neutral
  - e. The teacher side coaches as needed, reminding students to find the extremity in their physical isolation by committing strongly to that choice. The teacher also sidecoaches, offering feedback to students who may be having trouble isolating different body parts.
  - f. The teacher instructs students to lead with a body part they have explored in the group work or one of their own choosing. The teacher encourages students to once again commit to the most extreme version of their physical choice.
  - g. As the students walk around the room leading with the body part of their choosing, the teacher encourages students to think about what kind of person might be moving around the space the way they are moving, and more specifically, what kind of person might be moving around this way in the location the group has selected. In other words, what does it feel like to move the way they are moving, and who might move like that?
  - h. The teacher encourages students to think about this character's name, age, appearance, family, relationship to the location of the piece, occupation, likes and dislikes, goals and aspirations.
  - i. As students answer these questions in their minds, the teacher encourages them to also think about what their character might sound like, reminding them to draw on previous knowledge that changing their physicality will change the way their body produces sound. The teacher then instructs them to continue walking and begin speaking a stream of consciousness in their "character's voice" (1<sup>st</sup> person) about what their character did that day.
  - j. The teacher asks students to shake out their bodies, shake off their characters, and return to neutral walking.
- 4. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**
- a. The class sits in a circle and the teacher facilitates a discussion about the students' experience participating in the exercise. The teacher asks students to reflect on how

creating a character through this process compares with the way they have created characters in their previous playwriting experience.

**5. Character Worksheet (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher distributes the Character Worksheet to students and asks them to think a little deeper about the specifics of the character they have created. The teacher asks students for suggestions about what detailed responses to the questions on the worksheet might look like, highlighting strong suggestions.

**Homework:** Students complete the character worksheets. The teacher provides feedback on the worksheets as to which responses feel flushed out and which could use more supporting detail.

**Lesson Title:** Focus the Lens (Lesson 2 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How do we activate character choices in a script and performance?

| Lesson Objectives   | Formative Assessment Strategies  |
|---|--|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to dramatize character choices.   | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Monologue Performance<br><b>Criteria:</b> Actor makes strong physical choices, Actor makes strong vocal choices, Actor is committed to performance<br><b>Documentation:</b> Group discussion with teacher feedback, Brief Notes (Appendix C)                         |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to write a monologue for an original character.  | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Monologue Worksheet (Appendix D)<br><b>Criteria:</b> Character has strong point of view, Script provides specific details about character, Writing shows rather than tells<br><b>Documentation:</b> Group discussion with teacher feedback, Brief Notes (Appendix C) |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how structured improvisation helps define character choices in a script in relation to other playwriting techniques. | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Group Discussion<br><b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix C)   |

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.

HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up on Smartboard for unfamiliar topics or vocabulary. PROVE IT claims will be

provided in advance to make sure language is clear. Students will be provided extra time to write as needed.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared as much as possible to create an open playing space for the first half of the class. Students will spread out to work individually to write their monologues, and they will create an audience area with chairs to watch the monologue performances.

**Materials Needed:** Smartboard, Rant/Rave prompts, Movie prompts, PROVE IT claim papers, Monologue worksheets, Scene proposal sheets, Character worksheets (to reference)

## **Procedures**

### **1. Introduction (3 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that students are going to continue exploring the characters they created in the previous lesson by writing and performing monologues as those characters. The teacher explains that the monologues will be about something the character wants deeply and will activate the character choices students laid out in their worksheets. The teacher explains that the monologues should contain a strong point of view, specific details, and that the writing should “show versus tell”. The teacher leads a brief discussion asking students to define these criteria based on their understanding from previous playwriting experience. The teacher notes students’ initial understandings. The teacher explains that before they begin writing, they will take a deeper look at these concepts.

### **2. Rants and Raves (8 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that this first exercise will look at point of view.
- b. Students sit in a circle and the teacher gives a suggestion of a topic that students can rant or rave about. Going around the circle, students then either rant or rave about the topic in a short 10-15 second monologue. For example, the subway: “I sure hate the subway! I can’t stand being packed in a metal tube like a sardine with hundreds of strangers! And has anyone ever gotten on a subway car that doesn’t smell? Well if they have, they probably don’t have a nose!” The teacher may switch the topic as it moves around the circle by fielding a suggestion from the class. The teacher will have some pre-prepared topic suggestions available if students wish to draw from those.
- c. The teacher explains that as students ranted or raved they each took on a strong point of view. The teacher leads a brief discussion asking students to highlight a rant or rave they found particularly engaging. The teacher asks students why they found that rant or rave so interesting to watch. Inevitably, a student will attribute the speaker’s passion about the topic as a contributing factor, and the teacher highlights how a character with a strong point of view can be more engaging to an audience.
- d. The teacher asks students to think about their work from the previous lesson and assume the physicality and voice of the character they created. The teacher instructs students to activate the choices they laid out in their character worksheets and think about how their character might rant or rave about the topics they have discussed so far—in other words, how does your character feel about the topic? The teacher

provides a new topic and students go around the circle again, ranting or raving on the topic as their character.

- e. The teacher leads a brief discussion asking students how they can apply “point of view” to writing their monologues and how the improvisation affects the way they understand the concept in relation to previous playwrighting experience.

### **3. Guess the Movie (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that the next exercise will focus on the importance of providing details. The teacher explains that in the exercise a student will think of a popular movie and try to get the rest of the class to guess the movie. The teacher will have some movie prompts on hand if students wish to utilize them.
- b. First, the student will explain the plot of the movie with as little detail as possible, starting with, “It’s a movie!” If no one in the class can guess the movie (which of course they won’t be able to yet) the class responds with, “We need more details!” The student then provides a slightly more detailed description, “It’s a movie about friends!” The class responds, “We need more details!” “It’s a movie about friends who get separated!” This goes on until the student provides enough detail for someone else in the class to guess the movie.
- c. After a few students have had a turn, the teacher leads a discussion about the importance of providing details. The teacher asks how students were able to provide more details (probably by expanding on something they had already laid out) and what that did for everyone’s understanding of what they were describing. The teacher asks students how they will be able to apply this idea to writing their monologues, and how the improvisation affected their understanding of the concept in relation to previous playwrighting experience.

### **4. PROVE IT! (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains the concept of “showing versus telling” and explains that the class is going to do an exercise to explore the concept.
- b. Students are given a claim on a strip of paper, ie. “I am the strongest person in the world!” They read the claim out loud, and the rest of the class responds, “PROVE IT!” The student must then act out a proof of their claim, ie. They might “lift” extremely heavy weights as if they were light as a feather or balance an “elephant” on their pinky. If the student tries something but the class doesn’t feel like what they did was supportive evidence, the class can say, “Nah! We don’t believe you!” and the student will have to try a different way of proving the claim.
- c. After several students have had turns, the teacher will lead a discussion about the exercise, asking students what their experience was like watching and participating in the exercise and why showing is a more powerful tool than telling. The teacher asks students how they might translate this concept into their writing, and how the improvisation affected their understanding of the concept in relation to previous playwrighting experience.

### **5. Monologue Worksheet (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that students will now write thirty-second to one-minute monologues for the characters they created in the previous lesson. The teacher reminds students that the monologues should be about something the character deeply desires and that students should apply the techniques they just explored—strong point of view, including details, “showing versus telling”.

- b. Students write their monologues using the Monologue Worksheets (Appendix D).

**6. Monologue Performance (10 Minutes)**

- a. Students perform the monologues they wrote, taking on the physical and vocal choices they have made for their characters. The teacher asks students to draw upon previous performance knowledge to suggest some things they should keep in mind as they perform—strong physical choices, strong vocal choices, and committing to the performance.
- b. As they watch each other’s monologues, students should take notes about which characters they think would work well in scenes with their own character. At the end of class, students will submit three scene proposals, delineating 1-2 other characters in the scene as well as a justification of why they think the characters would be in a scene together (Appendix E). The teacher will assemble different pairings before the next lesson based on these proposals.

**7. Dramaturgical Discussion (4 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher leads a discussion about the monologue performances. The teacher asks students about the work they saw and if there were moments that stood out to them as moments for the group to explore further. The teacher encourages students to explain why they felt those moments were interesting and how the skills they looked at earlier in the day influenced the shaping of those interesting moments. The teacher also asks students how the improvisations affected their understanding of the playwriting concepts discussed in relation to previous playwriting experience. Students highlight moments or characters that they would like to further explore in the scenes and rest of the piece, as the teacher records them on the board, and uses the group answers to help shape the scene combinations in addition to the personal responses.

**Lesson Title:** A Little Less Conversation... (Lesson 3 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we use structured improvisation to devise a scene?

| Lesson Objectives   | Formative Assessment Strategies   |
|---|---|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use structured improvisation to create dialogue for original characters.   | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Structured Improvisation<br><b>Criteria:</b> Accepts and activates offers, Plays clear relationship with scene partner, Has clear objective<br><b>Documentation:</b> Side coaching, Group discussion with teacher feedback, Brief Notes (Appendix F), Teacher comments on script  |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use structured improvisation to create dialogue for original characters.  | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Structured Improvisation<br><b>Criteria:</b> Characters have clear relationship, Characters have clear objectives, Scene has dramatic action<br><b>Documentation:</b> Side coaching, Group discussion with teacher feedback, Brief Notes (Appendix F), Teacher comments on script |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how structured improvisation can be used to create dialogue for original characters in relation to other playwriting techniques. | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Group Discussion<br><b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix F)  |

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.

HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and What Do You Want? objectives will be provided in advance to make sure language is clear.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared as much as possible to create an open playing space for the first half of the class. Students will create an audience area with chairs to watch the Structured Improvisation performances.

**Materials Needed:** Smartboard, What Do You Want? objective prompts, Recording device

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Introduction (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that the students are going to do some structured improvisations to put together the dialogue for the devised theater piece. The teacher facilitates a brief discussion to review the definition of structured improvisation. The teacher also engages the students' previous knowledge of improvisation guidelines and asks students to suggest some rules that they should follow as they work throughout the lesson, ie. Yes anding, listening, collaboration, playing a strong base reality, establishing a clear relationship, etc.

#### **2. What Do You Want? (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that in the structured improvisations they will do throughout the lesson, it will be very important for the characters to pursue objectives in the scenes, just as characters would in a traditional script the students might perform. The teacher explains that in this exercise, students will practice playing objectives in an improvised scene.
- b. Two students are selected to do a scene, and each selects an objective prompt (provided by the teacher). The prompt will contain an objective like, "Get your scene partner to say that they love burritos." Keeping in mind the improv rules discussed at the beginning of the lesson, the students will then improvise a scene in which they must complete their objective before the other person does. The teacher may point out that students might not want to make their objective too obvious because if their scene partner figures out what they want, they may purposely avoid doing it.
- c. The teacher leads a discussion with the students about their experience watching and performing in the exercise and how playing an objective affected the scene. The teacher also asks students how the improvisation affected their understanding of the concept in relation to previous playwriting experience.

#### **3. Structured Improvisation (25 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher posts the scene combinations on the board that they have created based on student feedback from the previous lesson.
- b. The pairings of students improvise scenes together for the rest of the class, keeping in mind the class's selected scene location. The teacher reminds students to also incorporate the "writing" skills from their monologue work—strong point of view, including details, "showing versus telling". The teacher also asks students to use the exploration of their character's want from their monologue to create an objective for their character to use in the scene.



- c. The teacher records the audio of the scenes as the students perform. The teacher sidecoaches as needed, prompting students to explore deeper when appropriate.
- d. After each scene, the students performing and watching are asked if there is any part of the scene they would like to see expanded, or an idea that they would like to see pursued further. If so, the students performing will improvise based on the feedback they give or receive.

**4. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher leads a discussion about the day's improvisations. They ask students about their experience performing in and watching the scenes, and to assess structured improvisation as a playwriting tool, contextualizing it with previous playwriting experience.

**Homework:** The teacher will post the recordings of the scenes online and students, in their scene groups, must transcribe the recordings into scripts. They may make edits and changes to the text as they see fit in order to make it more cohesive or expand on any ideas. Students will submit their scripts to the teacher for feedback. The teacher will provide suggestions about any adjustments they believe students should make.

**Lesson Title:** Writing is Rewriting (Lesson 4 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How do we use a workshop rehearsal to revise a devised theater script?

| Lesson Objectives  | Formative Assessment Strategies   |
|--|---|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to revise a devised theater script through a workshop rehearsal.   | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Workshop Rehearsal<br><b>Criteria:</b> Works collaboratively with scene partner, Considers moments in script to revise<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher observation, Brief notes (Appendix G) |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to revise a devised theater script through a workshop rehearsal.                                      | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Workshop Rehearsal<br><b>Criteria:</b> Works collaboratively with scene partner, Considers moments in script to revise<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher observation, Brief notes (Appendix G) |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how revising a script through a workshop rehearsal compares to other revision techniques. | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Group Discussion<br><b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback in discussion, Brief Notes (Appendix G)    |

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.
  - HS1a. Use theatrical conventions to revise a devised or scripted drama or theater work.
  - HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared as much as possible to create an open playing space for the first half of the class. Students will create an audience area with chairs to watch each other's performances.

**Materials Needed:** Smartboard, Student scripts

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Introduction (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains that students will have a workshop rehearsal to revise the scripts they put together from their structured improvisations. They lead a discussion with students about what this means and to source some strategies students might employ to do this successfully as they rehearse the scene on its feet, ie. finding a way to reword some lines if they are not working. The teacher fields suggestions from students and writes them on the board.

#### **2. Workshop Rehearsal (20 Minutes)**

- a. Students work in their groups to workshop their scenes, making changes and revising their scripts based on the strategies discussed at the beginning of class. The teacher floats between groups, observing and making suggestions as needed.

#### **3. Assembly (15 Minutes)**

- a. Students watch each other's scenes. When they have watched all the scenes, they will decide as a group the order that the scenes should occur in the devised piece. The teacher will facilitate the discussion and record the order on the board. Students may make suggestions about the order, and may vote if necessary, to agree on an order.

#### **4. Conclusion (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher facilitates a discussion about the lesson's activities. They ask students to reflect on the experience of workshopping and revising their scene and compare that experience to the way they have revised other plays.

**Homework:** Students will create a final version of their script based on the changes they made in their workshop rehearsal.

**Lesson Title:** Curtain Up! Light the Lights! (Lesson 5 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we perform a devised piece of theater?

| Lesson Objectives   | Summative Assessment Strategies  |
|---|--|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to perform a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation.  | <b>Performance Tasks:</b> Devised Theater Performance<br><b>Criteria:</b> Makes strong physical choices, Makes strong vocal choices, Committed to performance, Listens and responds to scene partner<br><b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Teacher Feedback (Appendix H) |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to write a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation. | <b>Performance Task:</b> Devised Theater Script<br><b>Criteria:</b> Character has strong point of view, Script includes specific details, Writing “shows rather than tells”<br><b>Documentation:</b> Tick List with Teacher Feedback (Appendix H)                          |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to assess structured improvisation as a playwriting tool.                | <b>Performance Task:</b> Written Reflection<br><b>Criteria:</b> Engages in meaningful reflection, Provides evidence for conclusions<br><b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback on written reflection  |

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr.3 Refine and complete artistic work.

1. Theater artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal and active participation.
  - HS1a. Use theatrical conventions to revise a devised or scripted drama or theater work.
  - HS1b. Use physical and vocal choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

NYS Common Core ELA 9-10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Standards

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL’s, key-terms will be pre-taught.

**Spatial Organization:** The space will be cleared to make an open playing space.

**Materials Needed:** Smartboard, Student Scripts, Tick Lists

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Rehearsal (15 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher leads a discussion about the lesson's expectations. They ask students to draw upon their previous understanding of performance for suggestions of things to keep in mind as they rehearse and perform during the day, ie. making strong physical and vocal choices, committing to their performances, and listening and responding to their scene partners.
- b. Students rehearse the devised theater piece using the running order they created in the previous lesson and applying the discussed acting skills.

#### **2. Devised Theater Performance (20 Minutes)**

- a. Students perform their devised theater piece.

#### **3. Conclusion (10 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher leads a discussion about the unit's activities, asking students to reflect on their experience devising and performing the piece. The teacher asks students to assess how structured improvisation could be used in future playwriting and to evaluate how the experience compared with previous playwriting experiences.

**Homework:** Students will complete a two to three-page reflection about their experience devising a play through structured improvisation. In the reflection they should assess improvisation's general use as a playwriting tool, their own experience using it, and what impact this work will have on any future playwriting.

## Appendix A

| <b>Lesson Objectives</b>  | <b>Notes</b> |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use physical exploration to create an original character.  |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to examine the process of developing a character through physical exploration in relation to other playwriting techniques. |              |
| <b>Other Thoughts</b>   |              |

## Appendix B

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### CHARACTER WORKSHEET

Please respond to the following prompts about your character in as much detail as possible.

1. **NAME:**
  
2. **AGE:**
  
3. **GENDER:**
  
4. **WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER LOOK LIKE? ANY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OR CLOTHING? AN OBJECT THEY ARE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **WHERE IS YOUR CHARACTER FROM? DID THEY ALWAYS LIVE THERE? WHAT ARE THEY DOING AT THE LOCATION OF OUR PIECE?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. **DOES YOUR CHARACTER HAVE ANY FAMILY? IF YES, WHO ARE THEY? WHAT ARE THEY LIKE? ARE THERE OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN YOUR CHARACTER'S LIFE? WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. **OCCUPATION:**

**8. WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER BELIEVE IN? WHAT DO THEY LOVE AND WHAT DO THEY HATE? WHAT ARE THEY PARTICULARLY GOOD AT AND WHAT ARE THEY PARTICULARLY BAD AT?**

**9. WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER WANT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD? WHY DO THEY WANT THAT? WHO OR WHAT STANDS IN THEIR WAY OF GETTING IT?**

**10. WHAT ELSE SHOULD SOMEONE KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER, IF ANYTHING?**

**11. PLEASE DRAW YOUR CHARACTER BELOW:**



## Appendix C

| <b>Lesson Objectives</b>  | <b>Notes</b> |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to dramatize character choices.   |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to write a monologue for an original character.  |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how structured improvisation helps define character choices in a script in relation to other playwriting techniques. |              |
| <b>Other Thoughts</b>   |              |

## **Appendix D**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

### **MONOLOGUE WORKSHEET**

Write a thirty-second to one-minute monologue for your character about something they deeply desire. What do they want more than anything in the world? Why? What stands in their way of getting it?

Remember to make sure the monologue has a strong point of view, includes plenty of specific details, and “shows versus tells”.

**CHARACTER NAME:**

**MONOLOGUE:**

## Appendix E

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### SCENE PROPOSALS

**YOUR CHARACTER:**

#### **SCENE PROPOSAL 1**

1. CHARACTER NAME:

2. CHARACTER NAME:

JUSTIFICATION:

#### **SCENE PROPOSAL 2**

1. CHARACTER NAME:

2. CHARACTER NAME:

JUSTIFICATION:

#### **SCENE PROPOSAL 3**

1. CHARACTER NAME:

2. CHARACTER NAME:

JUSTIFICATION:

**ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?**

## Appendix F

| <b>Lesson Objectives</b>  | <b>Notes</b> |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use structured improvisation to create dialogue for original characters.   |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use structured improvisation to create dialogue for original characters.  |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how structured improvisation can be used to create dialogue for original characters in relation to other playwriting techniques. |              |
| <b>Other Thoughts</b>   |              |

## Appendix G

| <b>Lesson Objectives</b>   | <b>Notes</b> |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to revise a devised theater script through a workshop rehearsal.   |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to revise a devised theater script through a workshop rehearsal.                                      |              |
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to evaluate how revising a script through a workshop rehearsal compares to other revision techniques. |              |
| <b>Other Thoughts</b>  |              |

**Appendix H**

**STUDENT NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEVISING BY IMPROVISING TICK LIST**

**PERFORMANCE**

| <b>Learning Objective</b>   | <b>Criteria</b>                       | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Drama-Based Objective:</b><br>Students will be able to perform a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation. | Makes strong physical choices         |            |           |
|   | Makes strong vocal choices            |            |           |
|   | Committed to performance              |            |           |
|   | Listens and responds to scene partner |            |           |

**SCRIPT**

| <b>Learning Objective</b>  | <b>Criteria</b>                                  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|--|--|------------|-----------|
| <b>Language-Based Objective:</b><br>Students will be able to write a devised theater piece created using structured improvisation. | Character has strong point of view               |            |           |
|  | Script provides specific details about character |            |           |
|  | Writing “shows rather than tells”                |            |           |

**TOTAL:** \_\_\_\_\_ /21

✓ + = 3 ✓ = 2 ✓ - = 1

**COMMENTS**