

Secondary Theatre Lesson Plan using DBP

Facilitators: Kylie, Erin, Julia

Strategies: Stop and Go and Jump, Heartbeat Ball, Obstacle Course, It Made Me Think

Subject: Theatre

Topic: Stage Management

ITEAR: Extend

Time Needed: Two class period sections from two separate days: first day would need about 35 minutes, the second day would need about 45-50 minutes

Materials Needed: Ball, Stick, Hula Hoop, Hawaiian Lei, Assorted personal objects volunteered to be used from students. Speaker to play music with "[Prologue](#)" cued up. Sticky name tags, Anchor charts with VIBES terms and Artist Habits of Mind Terms written on them, Blindfold

Space Needs: Open Space

Grade(s): High School: 9th Grade

MA Theatre Standards:

Creating:

Refine and complete artistic work. Identify theatrical challenges and reflect upon the advantages and disadvantages of different solutions (e.g., scenes that move quickly between two different time-periods). (T.T.Cr.03)

Performing:

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. Organize and lead the production of one technical element (e.g., scenic, lighting, props, costume, sound, or makeup design) in a dramatic presentation. (T.T.P.05)

Responding:

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. Construct an argument for selecting one criteria over another for evaluating the technical elements of a theatrical presentation. (T.T.R.09)

Connecting:

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. Collaborate on design choices in a drama/theatre work that examines a critical global issue from personal, community, and cultural perspectives. (T.T.Co.10)

Essential Question (AKA Focus Question):

How does a Stage Manager effectively communicate throughout a production process?

Enduring Understanding:

The stage manager is the inner mechanism responsible for operating a production that relies on their communication skills throughout a production process.

Learning Objectives:

- The students will embody the communicative skills of listening and responding in Stop and Go and Jump.
- The students will ~~develop~~ **dramatize and employ** communication strategies while multi-tasking and remaining focused on a collective goal in Heartbeat Ball **and Obstacle Course**.
- The students will identify the obstacles in communication while multitasking in Heartbeat Ball **and offer feedback, and analyze and apply possible solutions to obstacles from reflections on peer feedback**.
- The students will integrate and apply communication strategies while **exploring** communicative obstacles in Obstacle Course.

Adaptations/Modifications:

- Stop and Go and Jump
 - The revisions to the requirements for each term can be written on the board as they occur.
 - The requirements for each term can be modified for seated activity.
- Heartbeat Ball
 - What can be “passed around” can be gross-motor movements or sounds instead of objects.
 - Can use tactile and low-vision friendly objects.
- Obstacle Course
 - Students can design a tabletop-sized obstacle course that can be navigated with hands and hand-sized props while sitting.
 - The person representing the actors can be asked to close their eyes instead of being blindfolded. If this is not possible, they can be asked to keep their eyes on the ground. *Keeping in mind that roles are decided by student choice*

FACILITATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION (1 Minute)

Kylie: Hey everyone! As we know, we have been learning about stage management and how crucial having effective communication skills is to operate a production throughout the production process.

Julia: Today we are going to further explore the specific techniques stage management teams need to develop to effectively communicate. Today will push us forward into a place where we will be simulating what it feels like to problem solve and multitask like an SM, but also stretch outside of the world of theatre and see how effective communication impacts how we operate in the world at large as well.

ENGAGE (10 Minutes): Stop and Go and Jump (Practice vocabulary)

Erin: *We've played Stop and Go and Jump before in beginning theatre classes to explore mental flexibility. This is really important in stage management as well, so we have got some adaptations in mind. First, please spread out and find a space around the room. Let's find our new spots in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1....excellent! Start to walk silently around the room. Listen out for directions from us.*

[Wait 5 seconds]

Kylie: *As you are walking, we encourage you to be aware of your pathways and change **walking patterns** often. Sometimes you may be tempted to walk around the room in a circle, so try to **change the shape** of the path that you're in.*

[wait 5 seconds]

Julia: *Keep a soft focus in the room of the rest of the **ensemble and be considerate** of what is around you.—**Going forward**, when we say “stop” you will freeze your bodies in place. Then, when we say “go” you will continue walking. **Go!***

[play for 10 seconds]

Great listening and engaging with the prompts. Next, when we say “jump” you will make a small jump in place, or however you are able to move comfortably. And finally when we say “name” you will state your name out loud once.

[play the game for 1 minute]

Kylie: *OK, let's change it up and make this a little more challenging. We are now going to swap the prompts.*

[Write the swapped meanings to the prompts on the board. Go and Stop. Jump and Name.]

When you hear “Stop,” you will start walking and when you hear “Go” you will freeze. “Jump” you will say your “Name” and “Name” you will “Jump.” Any questions?

[Check for understanding]

OK, let's try it. Stop!

[We will play the game and alternate through the new prompts for 2 minutes.]

Erin: *Wonderful! Now we have been talking a lot about what a Stage Manager does. ~~Let's~~ **What if** we embodied stage management vocabulary? Let's see what **insight** we would gain into the vocab we already know.*

[We will write Stage Manager vocabulary on the board with their actions. Go=Go, Hold=Stop, Stage Right= Jump to your Right, Stage Left= Jump to your Left, Up Stage= Arms in the Air, and Down Stage= Hands on your knees.]

Let's take a moment to practice these new prompts and actions.

[Practice through all of the prompts.]

Any questions?

[Check for understanding]

OK, let's try it!

[Once students are comfortable moving around the room with the new prompts and actions we will play the game for two more minutes.]

Julia: Great job listening and reacting, everyone! Let's gather in a sitting circle to **express our observations** from these three rounds.

Side-Coaching:

- *Experiment with different **body directions**.*
- *Try to use up all of the open space in the room, filling the **spaces between** other ensemble members.*
- *Remember to **be considerate of your body's movement patterns by minding your pace and space.***

Reflection Questions (5 Minutes):

Julia: *What did you observe about your bodies as we moved from round to round? (Describe)*

Erin: *What was challenging about this activity? What was easy? Why? (Analyze)*

What did success look like in this game when we changed the vocabulary meanings? Feel like?
(Analyze)

Kylie: *How might this game be a metaphor for effective communication for a Stage Manager?*
(Reflect)

What was the collective goal in this exercise, and how is it similar or different to a company's collective goal for a performance or production as a whole? (Reflect)

How did you adjust your body to care for the community? (Reflect)

TRANSITION (1 Minute)

Erin: *Now that we have taken the time to practice some vocabulary that a Stage Manager might use, let's look at how we can start to put that vocabulary into action when multitasking as a Stage Manager. Let's take three seconds to form a standing circle. Find new people to stand next to.*

EXPLORE (10 Minutes): Heartbeat Ball

[Pick up BALL. Make sure STICK, HULA HOOP, and LEI are in reach outside of the circle]

Kylie: *What can you tell me about heartbeats?*

[Pull 'steady beat' 'continuous']

That's right – they have a steady rhythm and they keep going.

[Toss ball lightly and catch in a steady rhythm, making sure the catching sound is audible]

Erin: *This is the heartbeat. It is the most important thing. Let's repeat this phrase as a chorus*

Everyone: *This is the heartbeat. It is the most important thing.*

Erin: *Let's see how we do passing the heartbeat around!*

[Pass clockwise around the circle. Side coach as needed. Once it has gone around a couple times and the rhythm is established, pause the passing]

Julia: *Awesome job everyone. Now, we are going to introduce another object with an action to pass around the circle while still maintaining the heartbeat. Answer out loud: what is the heartbeat?*

Everyone: *the most important thing*

Julia: *Exactly! So, this is our next object and action.*

[Show STICK, tap it twice on floor, and pass counter-clockwise a few rounds]

Kylie: *Alright, let's re-introduce our heartbeat. Now that we have a new object in the circle, remember that the heartbeat is the most important thing. Answer out loud: what is the heartbeat?*

Everyone: *the most important thing*

Kylie: *Let's give it a try!*

[Pass around BALL and STICK. Side coach as necessary. If the heartbeat ball is dropped, everything stops and the facilitator asks the group for ideas on how to complete the goal more effectively. Once the heartbeat ball and tall stick have been established in the circle, pause again]

Erin: *Ok, you all are really getting the hang of this. Here is another object we are going to introduce to the circle*

[show hula hoop].

It will be passed around like this.

[hula hoop will be passed clockwise by looping it around one arm to the other]

Julia: *Now that we are introducing more objects, let's popcorn out some strategies on how we work together to multitask and maintain the heartbeat at the same time.*

[Call on students for responses]

Those are great strategies to keep in mind as we move forward. Let's stretch to include the SM world a bit more. Remember the stage management vocabulary we used in the last activity? Let's experiment with using "GO" and "HOLD" to maintain the heartbeat. What are some ways we can use our SM words?

[Call on students for responses]

Kylie: *Awesome brainstorming! Are we ready to try?*

[Wait for responses]

I will introduce the objects one at a time. We will start with the heartbeat. Answer out loud: what is the heartbeat?

Everyone: *the most important thing*

Kylie: *Go.*

[Pass around heartbeat BALL clockwise. Re-introduce a STICK counter-clockwise. Introduce HULA HOOP clockwise. Allow action to go for a few rounds. Assess if

students are open to one more item. If not, continue for a few rounds, stopping and side coaching as needed, then collect all of the items and continue to reflection questions]

Erin: *Pause! Everyone, hold please! Alright, we have one more item to introduce.*
[show LEI]

Here is how we are going to pass it.

[LEI will be gently placed over the head, moving around the circle counter-clockwise]

Julia: *Continue using “GO” and “HOLD” as needed. Answer out loud: what is the heartbeat?*

Everyone: *the most important thing*

Julia: *Go*

[Pass the BALL clockwise. Re-introduce STICK counter-clockwise. Re-introduce HULA HOOP clockwise. Introduce LEI counter-clockwise. Side coach as necessary. It is likely the heartbeat will be lost and dropped on the floor– if this happens, everything stops and the group assesses how to move forward. After a few rounds, collect all of the items one at a time, ending with stopping the heartbeat]

Kylie: *Great job everyone. Let’s sit down for a moment **and reflect on our observations.***

Side-Coaching:

- *Remember, your number one goal is to maintain the heartbeat. **It is a constant rhythm***
- *Each new item is another **challenge to engage with**. How will you still make the heartbeat your priority?*
- ***Consider what your overall objective is. Where does our focus need to be as an ensemble?***
- *The heartbeat is the most important thing. Other objects can-hold and go.*
- *Think about how you can **communicate to the circle what you need** to maintain the heartbeat.*

Reflection Questions (5 Minutes):

Erin: *On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being very successful and 1 being we need some work, how successful were we? (Describe)*

What was easy? What was difficult? Why? (Describe)

Julia: *A: What strategies did you use personally **to forward the ensemble’s success?** (Analyze)*

What were some obstacles to the ensemble’s success? (Analyze)

How does listening help you maintain the heartbeat? (Analyze)

How did we navigate through losing the heartbeat? [\(Analyze\)](#)

Kylie: *How did things change when we allowed the chance to verbally **communicate to other members of the ensemble**? What was an example of effective verbal communication that was used and how was it effective? [\(Relate\)](#)*

*Several times we stopped the action to introduce **another challenge to juggle or brainstorm and problem solve solutions**. How was this a metaphor for stage management? [\(Relate\)](#)*

*Let's imagine the significance of each object **in the world of stage management**. What did the ball represent? The stick? The hula hoop? The lei? [\(Relate\)](#)*

TRANSITION (1 Minute)

Erin: *As we just explored, Stage Managers have a lot of tasks to maintain and complete while also keeping in mind the full company's collective goal- to maintain the artistic quality of the production and in forward motion. Once you make it through pre-production, rehearsals, and tech, you've got the actual run of the show. To further explore how we can communicate clearly and effectively during this process, we are going to play a variation on Obstacle Course.*

EXPLORE (30 Minutes): Variation on Obstacle Course

Julia: *Before we go any further, get into groups of 4 based on similarities of the shoes that you're currently wearing. When you hear the chime, place your attention back towards me. What questions do we have?*

[Check for understanding]

Great! Let's *begin!*

[after 30 seconds- sound the chime]

Erin: *Congratulations everyone, you have now found your stage management teams. In a moment, we are going to choose which roles we are going to play in this exploration, but let's go over what the expectations are for each role first.*

Kylie: *As a whole class, we will use objects that we have with us in the classroom to serve as obstacles in the course, which will start here*

[indicate start point on one end of the classroom]

And end here

[indicate the opposite end].

Let's take one minute to see what obstacles we can set up our course. To keep things equally challenging, we will reset the course back to how it looks now after each run.

[1 minute to set up the course and sound the chime when done]

Julia: *Great! In your groups there will be four roles: stage manager, ASM, and actor. For the groups of 5, you will have three ASMs. We are going to be posting job descriptions for each role on the board.*

*[Post SM, Actor, and ASM posters on the board *See appendix for each poster*]*

Let's take a minute to silently read and digest what each job does.

[Wait 1 minute]

What questions do we have?

[Answer questions]

Perfect. You have 15 seconds to decide who has each role. Go!

[15 seconds]

Alright! SMs, raise your hand. ASMs, raise your hand. Actors, raise your hands. Great!

Erin: *When giving their verbal instructions to either the ASMs or the actor, the stage manager should use the vocabulary that we have been practicing this week. Let's practice real quick to make sure that we're all on the same page. If I am the audience, and you're asked to move two steps stage left, how would you move?*

[Check for understanding]

If I want you to start moving forward, which vocabulary word would the SM say?

[Pull 'Go']

And if I want you to stop moving, which vocabulary word would the SM use?

[Pull 'Hold']

Kylie: *Great! We have one more twist. Stage managers need to be able to give commands over a headset while the production is live. To simulate this, we will have a song playing in the background while each group is on the course.*

Julia: *Great! Do we have a team that wants to go first? Second? (etc etc) Great! Let's take a minute to meet as a team and see what we can do to offer up strategies for how we will communicate with one another. Everyone has a different management style, so find out what will work for your team! When you hear the chime, finish your sentence and put your eyes back towards us.*

[1 minute and then sound the chime]

The teams that are not directly in the course, you will be observing the different communication and management strategies from the other groups. The best part about learning stage management as a whole group is learning from each other! Team one, come get a blindfold for your actor to begin! When the music starts, you start as well!

[Music begins, and so does the action. Music stops when Actor 1 is guided to the end of the course, or by the teacher's best judgment at the moment.]

Erin: *Great job team one! Someone from that team- what did you notice about your bodies? Your voices? Your feelings? [\(describe\)](#)*

[Pull responses]

Someone that was an audience member, what did you appreciate about how this group communicated and problem solved? [\(describe\)](#)

[Pull responses]

Wow, I loved the specific language in that- specificity is a key tool of communicating as an SM. Specificity in feelings? A key tool for anyone ever. Let's try another group! Keep in mind from our reflection with team 1 that we can [insert lesson learned from Group 1] during this next round! Actor 2, see you in a bit, we need to reset the room and the music!

[Actor 2 leaves while class sets up obstacles the same way that they were before team one began. When class is satisfied, someone brings back in a blindfolded Actor 1. Music begins, and so does the action. Music stops when Actor 2 is guided to the end of the course, or by the teacher's best judgment at the moment.]

Kylie: *Our observers, what strategies did you see this team use? [\(analyze\)](#)*

What adjustments were made in response to watching Team one's run? [\(analyze\)](#)

[Pull responses]

[Process continues until all groups have had a run through the course. You do not need to describe and analyze for each round- use your own discretion to ask questions when/if a major shift occurs.]

*Great teamwork everyone! Now, let's move some of these obstacles to the side and come together in a circle to ~~chat about what we just did.~~ **reflect on our observations.***

Side-Coaching:

- *[When in between groups]. Let's **reflect** on what just happened. How can we clarify what, exactly, our directions mean?*
- *SMs, look to your ASMs for ideas on how to help guide the actor through the course. **Collaborate as a team!***
- *ASMs and SM, feel free to **move your bodies around to gain new perspectives of the course.***
- *Actors, **this can be difficult!** Focus your breathing and place your attention on the SM's voice only. **Your safety is just as important, even more so, than the end goal.***

Reflection Questions (5 Minutes):

Julia: *Let's look at **Stage Management as an art.** How did you collaborate towards a collective goal? [\(analyze\)](#)*

Erin: *Let's use our imaginations to step further into the experience of a stage management team. What obstacles does an SM need to face when communicating to others in the company? An ASM? An actor? [\(reflect\)](#)*

Kylie: *How do personal identities and management styles impact the power and responsibilities of the stage manager? [\(reflect\)](#)*

*Let's **stretch** past the theatre for a moment. What role does effective communication play in ensuring safety and success for groups that we find ourselves in? [\(reflect\)](#)*

TRANSITION (1 Minute)

Julia: *Today we explored vocabulary and complex tasks that a Stage Manager might face during a production process. Let's take a moment to reflect on our whole lesson and think about what we learned today.*

REFLECT (5 Minutes): Discussion

Erin: *Looking at our VIBES Posters, what in these categories did we use during the activities? [\(describe\)](#)*

Kylie: *From previous lessons, we discovered what a stage manager is and their job descriptions. How were you asked to **stretch and explore** today? [\(analyze\)](#)
What **insights did we gain** on how a stage manager functions in the production process further today? [\(analyze\)](#)*

Julia: *What role does communication play in better understanding the art world of stage management? [\(relate\)](#)*

How does your experience in the activities today make you think about the role that communication plays in tending to your community? [\(relate\)](#)

Ending Statement and 'It Made Me Think':

Julia: *Thank you so very much for your hard work today! We've still got more exploring to do with the world of stage management, but this was a nice opportunity to really take a deep dive on what it means to properly communicate in this field. To stage managers, effective, concise, clear communication is crucial to their goal to keep the show afloat throughout the entire production process. To help practice one more time our effective, concise, and clear communication skills, we are going to end with a round of "It Made Me Think".*

Erin: *We'll take about 30 seconds to think to ourselves a word or one-breath phrase to describe what we're leaving today still thinking about. Then, we will go around the circle and say what we're thinking about, followed by the phrase "it made me think".*

Kylie: *So take a little moment to think about what you'd want to mention. When you have something, just direct your eyes back on me.*

[30 seconds]

Great! I'll begin and we will go around the circle this way.

[Begin 'It Made Me Think']

Appendix

- Into the Woods- "Prologue"
 - Start point: 0:00:00
 - End point: 0:04:50
- Obstacle course job description posters

ACTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Blindfolded while being guided from one end of the course to the other● Listen and respond to the Stage Manager's verbal commands

ASM
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Be guided by the Stage Manager to move at least three obstacles● Move around the course to gain new perspectives● Collaborate with Stage Manager to propose ideas

STAGE MANAGER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Verbally guide actor through the course using SM vocabulary● Guide the ASMs to move at least three obstacles● Collaborate with the ASMs for troubleshooting and ideas

Resources

Stage Management: The Essential Handbook (Palin, 2011)

The Stage Manager's Toolkit (Kincman, 2016)

Managing the show (Mulcahy) - Originally published in *Teaching Theatre*