

An Introduction to Drama Teaching Method - How Drama Teachers Guide Students to Organize Stage Actions

Xiyu Chen^{1*}

¹ Thailand Art Department, Krirk University, Bangkok, Thailand

Email Address

475343499@qq.com (Xiyu Chen)

*Correspondence: 475343499@qq.com

Received: 1 June 2022; **Accepted:** 20 June 2022; **Published:** 2 August 2022

Abstract:

This thesis combines the basic knowledge of the director and the practice of drama education, under the guidance of the relevant requirements of the “Drama Classroom Tutorial Textbook for Primary Schools”, a theoretical analysis was conducted to guide students in organizing the stage action, and a corresponding methodology was proposed as a theoretical basis for the drama teacher to guide the students to organize the stage action, also in the rehearsal. Do not discard the results of the aesthetic education attempt. First, analyze the definition of stage action; then, according to theoretical knowledge combined with practical experience, by comparing the methods of working with adult actors, summarize the characteristics and specific methods of the work of the drama teacher and the student actor; the third part of the paper rehearsal itself with the drama education The characteristics and requirements of the “Drama Classroom Tutorial Materials for Primary Schools” have proposed ways to inspire students to seek stage action from two perspectives. There are “question guidance method”, “class performance guidance method”, and “growth tree diagram” when reading scripts. Laws, etc.; rehearsals include the “Faculty-student interaction method”, “imitation practice method”, and “living items law”. In order to make the method mentioned in this paper more practical, it follows the principle of full-person education in drama education and aesthetic education. The paper also proposes various relevant methods and steps for different types of students. More rigorous.

Keywords:

Directorial Studies, Performance Science, Theatre Education, Stage Action, Student Actors, Aesthetic Education

1. Introduction

The introduction of your article is organized as a funnel that begins with a definition of why the experiment is being performed and ends with a specific statement of your research approach. And it highlights controversial and diverging hypotheses when necessary. [1]

Stage performance is a major subject for students majoring in drama and film performance and is an important part of the curriculum of this major. As an educator of drama performance and as a theatre director, I believe it is my duty and responsibility to explore how we can effectively balance the scales of aesthetic education and rehearsal tasks. It is important to work scientifically with students within a limited time frame to give them an aesthetic education while completing the rehearsal tasks. The example referenced in this thesis is a rehearsal involving all freshmen. Most freshmen are 17 or 18 years old, which is a stage with an extremely rich imagination throughout their lives. However, due to the passive learning mode in which teachers lecture and students take notes, students should be exposed to the experimentation in drama performance classes, which are supposed to be colorful and have no standard answers. However, students are often fearful, as if they are handcuffed, which greatly hinders the development of theater performance education. With the gradual recognition of the major of drama and film performance, the teaching mode that all teaching activities are student-centered has been affirmed and praised by more and more educators. How to guide students to organize effective stage actions on their own has become an important barrier to stimulate students' independent learning. It allows students to actively participate in the process of rehearsing the play, so that they can try independent learning, get used to it, and enjoy it. The following are some of my discussions on how drama teachers can guide students to organize stage actions.

2. What is Stage Action?

Stage action is “a relatively complete process of behavior created by the director with the help of the actors, presented on stage by the actors in the name of the characters in the play, induced by the stimulus of a prescribed situation and conditioned by the prescribed situation, and developed for the purpose of accomplishing a given purpose, with the stage opponent (the character with the opposite purpose of action) as the object of action.” [1]

Chernyshevsky, the famous Russian theorist of drama, said, “Artistic material comes from life, and life material needs to be screened and recreated by the artist.” [7] Stage action is the same, it is similar to life action in many ways, but the biggest difference is that stage action is more purposeful and emphasizes more on the accuracy of expression.

3. What is Needed for the Cooperation Between Drama Teachers and Student Actors

3.1. The Director and the Professional Actors Cooperate in Organizing the Stage Action

The stage where the director and the actors collaborate to find the stage action is a cooperative relationship during the rehearsal process. The director needs to control the overall pace of the performance, and also needs to respect the creation of the actors for their roles. Professional actors have the basic ability to find stage action and organize it according to the logic of the task. [9] For the director, it is often only necessary to make reasonable cutting, editing and enhancements to the stage actions organized by the actors.

3.1.1. Cutting

As a director, to ensure the overall pace of the performance, you need to cut the stage actions organized by the actors, so as to retain the actions that best reflect the character and best promote the development of events.

3.1.2. Editing

The director is the actor's "mirror". And why is it necessary to have such a "mirror"? With the creation of the role, the actor's sense of evaluation of his or her own role increases, which requires the director to control the character and to choose and organize the stage action together with the actor.

3.1.3. Enhancement

It is important to add more artistic and poetic stage actions, and to highlight important stage actions, which deepen the theme other than shaping the characters and promoting the development of events.

3.2. The "Special Directing Job" of Drama Teachers

Drama teachers do not only act as directors during the rehearsal of plays, but also perform the following tasks.

(1) Lead students to read the script thoroughly and deeply, and change the obscure words in the script into language that students can understand and accept.

(2) Encourage each student to try to experience as many characters as possible. If possible, organize the stage action according to the characteristics and purposes of each character [5].

(3) Lead students in character analysis

(4) Incorporate directorial ideas into the stage actions organized by the students themselves.

3.3. Contrast the "Working Methods of Directors and Actors" and Summarize the Priorities of Drama Teachers And Students

3.3.1. Actor Selection

When the director chooses professional actors for the rehearsal of the play, he or she usually chooses actors who share the temperament with the characters in the play, so that it will be easier to be passionate during the rehearsal process. The director can select the most desirable one among thousands of actors according to his or her own understanding and idea of the play. [2] However, drama performance teachers are often more passive when it comes to choosing actors. In drama performance classes, teachers cannot force students to choose roles. And if a student chooses to be an audience, drama performance teachers need to respect his or her decision. Therefore, drama performance teachers often select actors by organizing competitions. Students are free to sign up for roles, and teachers coordinate the roles and groupings rationally.

3.3.2. Differences in Performances by Different Groups

When directors rehearse with professional actors, sometimes several groups of actors will appear in the same scene. In that case, the performances we see must be the same in all kinds of external actions, although the actors are different. Because the goal of working with adult actors is to ensure the integrity of the performance. It is the

common goal of the entire cast and crew to be able to present a complete play to the audience. But the goal of a drama teacher when working with students is not to accomplish a performance that is well-paced and highly stylized, but rather a rehearsal process in which students can experience a different life. Students can experience the psychological changes of different characters through different roles and organization of stage actions according to the different characteristics and purposes of each character. Students are in the stage of physical and mental development, and their personalities are still being improved and transformed, so it is helpful for students to experience a variety of roles to improve their empathy and tolerance. [3]

4. Ways for Drama Teachers to Guide Students in Organizing Action on Stage

4.1. Methods for Teachers to Guide Students to Find Action from the Play

4.1.1. Q&A Guidance Method

Based on the character traits of different characters, the purpose of each character's action is established through the use of the "Q&A guidance method", so as to organize reasonable and effective stage action [6].

Teachers guide students to watch the first scene repeatedly. In that scene, Tian Cuilan is the antagonist with Jin Murong, and they have a long-standing enmity. The purpose of Tian Cuilan is to find the displeasure of Jin Murong while drying pig intestines, while the purpose of Jin Murong is to dry poultices. And the conflict occurs between them in order to grab the clothesline. [10] At this point, students should be guided to think about what Tian Cuilan would do to fulfill that purpose. What is the purpose of finding fault over and over again according to the play? What is the purpose of all of Jin Murong's actions in front of Tian Cuilan? When students understand the characters and can think from the perspective of the characters in the play, they are guided to organize the stage action with a good start.

4.1.2. Character Biography Graph Drawing Method

Before organizing the class competition and selecting the roles, the teacher should lead the class to analyze the roles of each main character. But it is too boring and difficult for students who just have a little knowledge of the profession to write character biographies.

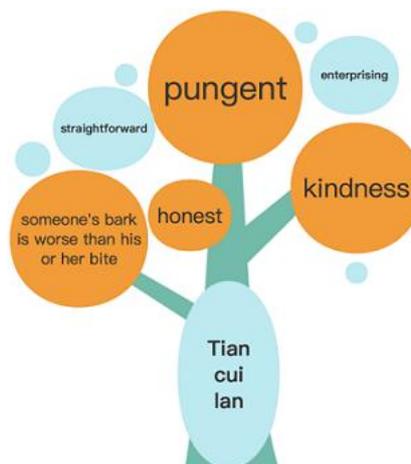


Figure 1. This is the character of "Tian Cuilan".

That problem can be solved by drawing a crossword. The “graph drawing method” is divided into: “tree diagram” and “animalized graph drawing method (seeds of characters)”. [4] The “tree diagram method” is suitable for in-depth analysis of individual characters, while the “animalized graph drawing method” is useful for quickly visualizing and sharpening character characteristics. For example, in the case of the character “Tian Cuilan”, the Figure 1 clearly demonstrates this method.

4.1.3. Animalized Graph Drawing Method

Taking the example of the image of Tian Cuilan and Jin Murong in The Wotou Club, how can different stage actions be organized to show the difference between the two characters? First of all, students should establish two distinct characters in their minds and find stage actions that match the character traits and purpose of their actions. There are many descriptions of Tian Cuilan and Jin Murong in the text. Students described Tian Cuilan as a stray cat and Jin Murong as a peacock with fading feathers and drew various pictures. In the later rehearsals, students found the unique ways of behavior of the characters by simulating these two animal forms and also found the special stage actions belonging to the characters.

4.2. Methods for Teachers to Guide Students in Organizing Stage Actions in Rehearsals

4.2.1. Classroom Performance Guidance Method

Character simulation, animal simulation and other performance training are introduced into the classroom, and rehearsals of the play are infiltrated into the daily line lessons to avoid isolation into a task for students and a burden for teachers. Drama games are integrated to make teaching more systematic. Many drama games involve the training of students' performance.

5. How to Guide Students to Organize Stage Actions on Their Own According to Different Characteristics of Students

5.1. Principles

5.1.1. The Grouping Principle of “Educating Without Discrimination”

When rehearsing in groups, students of different types are grouped evenly, so that the types of students in each group have an equal share. It is important not to leave out students who are interested in drama but have a poor foundation in order to improve the quality of the performance. [8]

5.1.2. The Teaching Principle of Teaching According to Their Aptitude

For different types of students, different directions and methods of guidance will be developed according to the situation. The purpose of drama education is to improve students' personalities. Because of the different growing environments and life experiences, the aspect of each student's personality that needs to be improved must be different. Each student has their own strengths for everyone to learn from, and each student has their own weaknesses that need to be corrected under the guidance of the teacher. As a drama teacher, one needs to guide the students in organizing stage actions while not forgetting the original intention of perfecting students' personalities with drama education.

5.2. Key Points and Methods of Teaching for Students with Different Characteristics

The students who participated in this teaching activity were all freshmen at the university, and they were familiar with each other. There are cliques in the class, so when it comes to grouping, I follow the principle of even grouping and deliberately break up the existing cliques to give students the opportunity to work with more students and get to know them better.

Based on the educational principle of teaching according to their aptitude and with reference to the real situation of the class, students can be divided into the following four types of characteristics and the corresponding guidance methods and key teaching points are illustrated.

5.2.1. Students who can Deliver Rich and Effective Stage Action During Rehearsals (the Giving Type)

This type of student is still relatively rare. If there are such students in the class, they can drive the rehearsal atmosphere, which is a good thing for the whole class. Teachers should give more praise to those students. For beginners, they are very eager to get the teacher's approval, and the teacher's praise following the correct behavior of students can motivate other students.

5.2.2. Students Who are Less Creative in Rehearsals (the Imitating Type)

It is the nature of children to imitate, and they will imitate and enjoy themselves when they see interesting actions. The drama teacher should protect the students' desire for imitation and guide them to develop their own understanding of the characters based on imitation to show what the character in their minds would do to accomplish the task.

5.2.3. Students who Have Difficulty Organizing Effective Stage Actions on Their Own During Rehearsals (the Getting Type)

These students can be further divided into two types according to their personalities: "extroverted" and "introverted".

For students who are more introverted and self-disciplined in their daily life, a group exercise of the liberation of nature should be organized before rehearsal, which can start by asking students to play characters with similar characteristics to their own personalities to develop a sense of belief. But like this student, who is interested in the role of "the liar", the teacher wants to protect his enthusiasm for drama. After all, the purpose of rehearsing a play in a natural class is to give students the opportunity to try out various character lifestyles on stage. And the final completion of the role is not the most important thing.

6. Conclusions

The essence of drama aesthetic education sometimes conflicts with the professional skills required by students to rehearse drama. That situation cannot be changed now, but drama teachers should know that the purpose of teaching and training students to organize their own stage actions is to give them the opportunity to think and organize their actions from someone else's perspective, to develop their thinking and action organization skills, and more importantly, to cultivate a professional actor. And if an

actor wants to pursue further development in the professional path, he or she must master acting techniques that belong to him or her. The teaching method of “teacher acting and student imitating” should never be used, not to mention the teacher directly telling the students what to do. When a drama teacher is guiding students to organize stage actions, they are in a cooperative relationship. And the teacher must be patient, giving systematic guidance and teaching students according to their aptitude.

Students’ imaginations are limitless, and I hope this thesis will help drama teachers to work with students in more effective and interesting ways in the rehearsals of their plays, and to collide with them in a more exciting way.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Bao, Q.M.; Liao, X.H.; Ding, R.R.; Jiang, T. Basic Course in Directorial Studies. *Culture and Art Publishing House*, 2007, 4.
- [2] Compiled by the Department of Drama Education of Central Academy of Drama, Tutorial Materials for Drama Classes in Primary Schools. *Culture and Art Publishing House*, 2018, 1.
- [3] Kanter, J. State of Play: Theatre Education at a Crossroads. *Theatre Topics*, 2020, 30(3).
- [4] Alice, M.R. Theatre Education. *Performing Arts Journal*, 2018, 17(2).
- [5] Peter, Z. Toward Revising Undergraduate Theatre Education. *Theatre Topics*, 2015, 25(3).
- [6] John, L.; Tedesco, P.J.; Kaufmann. Interpersonal skills for the high school drama director. Assistant Professor of Speech and Drama, Central Michigan University, Assistant Professor of Speech, Iowa State University, 2009, 26(3).
- [7] Thomas, A.B. From the Drama Director’s Chair. *Music Educators Journal*, 1983, 70(1).
- [8] Pestana, J.V.; Valenzuela, R.; Codina, N. Theatrical Performance as Leisure Experience: Its Role in the Development of the Self. *Frontiers in psychology*, 2020, 11.
- [9] Richard, S. The Significance of Theatrical Performance. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1939, 8(3).
- [10] Carrie Huang On how drama actors shape stage characters - a three-dimensional structure based on role stage action. *Drama House*, 2020, 31, 13-14.



© 2022 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)