

### SECTION III: DIRECTING STUDENTS IN CLASS

Performance as Close Reading:  
Notes on Directing Non-Actors in the Classroom  
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Almost all students, even those with no theatrical experience, can give a good performance of a Shakespearean scene when the conditions are right. The usefulness of having students experience Shakespeare's plays through performance is virtually axiomatic, but the complications of handling the logistics can seem overwhelming to the non-director. These few notes, I hope, will bring consolation to the nervous! Directing in the classroom is mostly a matter of setting up those conditions which release the innate abilities of your students and engage their enthusiasm, and it is much easier than it sounds.

Preparations toward performing scenes in the classroom:

1. Set up a work environment that stresses the process rather than the product.

The biggest impediment to performance for the inexperienced student is the fear of failure. This is as paralyzing to the beginning actor as it is to the inexperienced writer. The usual reaction to this fear by the actor is to try to plan in advance every gesture, inflection and attitude, locking into a performance before the text has been explored or even examined. This major problem can be alleviated by being directly addressed: tell your students that you are more interested in the experiment than the final product. Be specific that the piece will not be performed in public, if that is the case. It will reduce nervousness incredibly. The experience of performance is joyful as soon as the students free themselves from the worry of producing professional results. (I am not sure there is a correlation between the absolute quality of performances and the depth of intellectual discovery anyway.)

Tell your students how they will be graded in relation to this assignment, a concern that most will voice directly, but all are obsessed with, whether or not they say so. It is easier for the instructor to grade on such items as effort, enthusiasm and preparation than to sort out the problems of weighing and balancing the impressions made in various roles of different sizes with greater or lesser opportunities.

Finally, it is worth your time to tell students explicitly that the experience of stage fright is normal, and, in fact, useful. Stage fright is just an alternate manifestation of the energy that will become performance.

2. Give your students some basic procedural tools, so that they have a degree of control over their experience and know what to expect.

When performed, scenes should begin with a simple introduction. Someone playing a minor role, or speaking later in the scene, makes the best choice for the role of \*host.\* An introduction should include the play name, scene designation (Act II, scene 3), author, and the names of the actors playing the various characters.

In the absence of a formal theatrical space with an actual curtain, end scenes with the simple word \*curtain.\* It solves that awkward moment when no one is sure if the scene is over or not.

For rehearsals, get your students copies of texts with the largest print possible. Shakespeare is so often printed in editions with tiny, tightly packed print, that access to an enlarging copier is very helpful.

I recommend that memorization be made optional. There is certainly a case to be made for the value of having students memorize their roles completely, but it is my experience that almost as much can be accomplished

pedagogically when students carry a text with which they have a general familiarity. The work can come to completion faster and the anxiety level is lowered.

Casting is very important. There are so many approaches to this that I can only hope to offer you my suggestions of what works best for me. I find it is important to take a strong hand in casting scenes for my classroom. Casting randomly does not work for me. Actors' personalities \*do\* play a part in their performance, and random assignment too often results in such horrible miscasting as to make the play incomprehensible to my students, who do not know the plays well. Specific casting does not have to be stereotypical or traditional, but it helps if it is logical and consistent. Asking students to discuss the possibilities for casting their own scenes, after hearing an explanation of non-traditional casting, works very well.

Disabuse your students of the idea that there is a \*right\* way to do the scene as quickly as possible. If they try to please you by guessing how you want the scene performed they'll waste both your and their time.

### 3. Give your students a physical environment in which to perform.

The most liberating thing you can do for your students is to make the physical environment as specific as possible. They need a place to perform. Even in the most rudimentary classroom it is possible to set up a conceptual mock-up of an Elizabethan stage. It is very useful for students to think of their performances as taking place on a stage, rather than in a real location. (That is, it is better to think of \*Hamlet\* as taking place in a theater rather than in Elsinore.) Just thinking of the performance area as a stage releases great amounts of subconscious information in your actors about the conventions of performance. I have never seen an actor who thought of him/herself as being on a stage fail to orient him/herself toward the audience, but I have frequently seen actors envisioning themselves as being in a castle completely turn away from the audience and speak straight ~upstage.~ Occasionally they even leave the room to wander down a hall!

Shakespearean plays work best on stages which have two levels and multiple entrances. In my classroom I have a good heavy desk which I pull upstage into the position of the \*inner above.\* A sturdy table works even better.

Something needs to be done with the desks in the classroom to get them out of the performance space. I have found it useful to pull them around the edges to delineate the edge of the performance space with gaps left on either side of the inner above, at the upstage corners, and at the downstage edges to mark entrances. A minimum of six entrances is needed for most plays. Chalk lines on the floor can serve as an alternative way of defining the edge of the playing area and marking the entrances.

Our colleague Garry Walton recently volunteered that he ribbons off a full sized playing space outdoors, so students can get an idea of the size of an Elizabethan playhouse. As an alternative he suggested taking students to buildings with multiple-storied atria of the type that seem to be proliferating on campuses now. I have recently tried both strategies with wonderful success. Physically experiencing the space is a much needed addition to looking at old Hodge sketches.

### 4. Fill the environment with props.

\*Stuff\* helps. Put a prop in an actor's hand and s/he is transformed. A box of props from which the cast can freely select is a terrific aid. Fill it with fans, capes, Burger King crowns, mugs, goblets, wineskins, drawstring bags, scrolls and old sheets. Around Halloween wonderful props appear that are hard to come by at other times. Skull-shaped treat buckets are invaluable for performing \*Hamlet\*, and costume accessories are often fantastical, which helps when you tackle \*Midsummer Night's Dream\* or any of the romances. The best all-purpose prop is the tube from the inside of a roll of wrapping paper. These tubes make great pretend swords, scepters,

and trumpets.

Actors with props in hand are liberated in a way that those who are \*reading\* from a text never are. They are inventive and playful. If scenes are not going well in class, I'll bet that the students don't have enough \*stuff\* yet. (By the way, after the performance ask students if they would be willing to leave behind any props they brought from home as additions to your collection. They often have no further use for interesting things that you may not have, and are grateful for the opportunity to contribute.)

### A Procedure for Working

#### 1. Rehearsing

The real value of this exercise comes from the discoveries of the rehearsal process, so invest most of your available time in this activity. It is a mistake, in my experience, to place too much emphasis on the eventual performance and too little on the rehearsal.

Begin rehearsal by getting all the actors who are listed speakers on the stage. Quickly decide on the entrances through which the various characters will be entering. This can always be changed later, so don't agonize over it. It is just to get a defined starting place.

When you start the action, tell the actors \*what to do\*, as opposed to what to say or how to say it. This can often be handled through Socratic questioning. \*What are you doing?\* is a very useful discussion opener about a scene. Get the emphasis on the activity as quickly as possible.

The only directing \*trick\* I believe to be worthwhile is to discipline your language so that your instructions avoid the implication that the actors should \*show\* or \*pretend\* something. Instead use active phrases which imply the actors are causing the text. So, for example, instead of saying \*Stand here like you are threatening him, and then say your first line very loudly (or angrily, or quickly)\* it is better to say, \*Go over to him and threaten him. Shout at him, if necessary, to get his attention.\*

Concentrate on the conflict. Either through questioning or instruction see that everyone on stage (not just the principals) knows what they should do. Notice that some of these actions are diametrically opposed to others. Heighten this disparity. It makes for great playing. Suggest that the actors begin to act out these conflicts and see what happens.

Work on very short sections at a time. A minute of running time offers plenty of material for exploration. Watch closely to see that the actors are really doing their part, instead of going through the motions. If you hear something that seems mechanical or uninhabited, stop the action and ask \*Why did you say that?\* (Not \*What does that line mean?\*). Watch to see that the others onstage continue to do things even when not speaking. Urge them to act continuously, instead of \*your turn, my turn.\*

Train yourself to watch the stage and not the page. Observe closely. Stop and urge greater commitment anytime you see something half-hearted or out of sync with the action. Usually when you get these moments it is because the actor does not know what s/he means or is doing. Stop to clarify. This is the heart of the exercise. Take time to discuss what is happening, including the whole class in exploring the possibilities. Discuss the possible meanings. You will know when you have solved the problem because you will get answers which are clear and direct, like \*I'm getting ready to kill him.\* As soon as you hear that, start the action again. You will probably first have to go through a period of discussion where the suggestions are very convoluted and obscure. \*I think it is an Elizabethan way of saying ...\*; \*Wasn't it customary in Shakespeare's time...\*, etc. are tip-off phrases that the actor doesn't know what s/he is doing and is making up rationalizations for unmotivated actions. Stay at the discussion until a simpler answer emerges.

Put people onstage to represent anyone mentioned in the text or implied by the action. I have become a notorious neo-Max Reinhardt, because of my fondness for crowd scenes but I find that many Shakespearean scenes

imply a crowd of observers and are taking place in public. It always helps my classes perk up when the stage is crowded. Scene meaning is almost always clearer. Students understand the nature of public actions when they perform them, but they rarely understand this aspect of the text through reading. Setting up a public scene almost always opens up new views of the text in the class. It also helps understanding of the intimacy of small scenes, since they are now clearly contrasted with something.

Most beginning directors talk too much and work too little. By this I do not mean it is wrong to discuss the scene. On the contrary I think this is the point of the exercise, but use discussion to clarify the action. Discussion which is not leading towards doing something is of dubious value during the actual rehearsal. Try never to let anyone describe an action they are thinking about, but ask them to show it to you.

I try to limit myself to two suggestions per actor at any time. I find that is about all they can actually work on. One of the reasons I work very short segments is so that I can give frequent suggestions and then let the actor try them. Work your first minute over and over again until you are satisfied that things are really happening in it.

After you have worked a one minute section a couple of times, let it roll on into the second minute. At a logical stopping point close to the end of the second minute, stop and work on it. When satisfied, go back to the beginning, run the first two minutes and roll on into the third. Continue working in this manner through a five minute section of text, which is usually plenty to fill an hour of rehearsal.

Don't worry overmuch about blocking. Staging is less important in this circumstance than most beginning directors think, but when in doubt, ask the actors to cross to the person they are addressing. It solves most traffic problems. Have some bystanders become kneelers \*downstage\*, and have anyone removing themselves to the periphery of the action come to the \*downstage\* corners. This will keep the scene from become a traffic jam of people trying to hug the back wall.

## 2. What does the rest of the class do while some rehearse?

A scene does not need to include everyone onstage to be successful. Teach the observers, however, to close their books and watch the performance instead of the text. (A single designated book-holder will suffice for keeping order, or for watching lines when an attempt has been made to memorize.) Gather the audience into a tight group ~ letting them spread out will kill discussion ~ and stay near them. I like to comment to them, and I frequently ask them to clarify what they are seeing. Especially when trying to clarify the intent of an actor's activity, the audience can be a wonderful source of suggestions. They are often in a privileged position to see the overall picture developing and to give useful guidance. Their support is also liberating to the onstage actors, who can be transformed into hams by a simple word of encouragement or two from their peers.

## 3. Performance

After thoroughly rehearsing a section, you probably want to \*perform\* it for the class. I find it useful to do so during the next class meeting. By giving it some time there are some inevitable losses of detail, but there are usually an equal number of new moments that have been created by the actors as they have thought about the scene. I like it when the performance includes more than the rehearsal. If I hold the performance on another day, the actors have time to mock up some simple costumes and throw in a surprise or two.

Some teachers have mentioned to me that they divide the class in half and let two groups do different versions of the same scene. This can be very illuminating when two interesting interpretations occur, but it has backfired on me a couple of times when groups got very competitive and there was a clear \*winner.\*

As an alternative, I like to do successive scenes from a script and let one performance roll right into the other. I find this is just as illuminating about differences of interpretation, but sometimes has the added value of possible synthesis if the second group picks up on the choices made by the first and plays off them.

I do scenes that the whole class participates in, but they really enjoy it more when there is someone out there watching. I do not allow outsiders (especially not parents and boy/girlfriends) who inevitably change the dynamic. I usually, therefore, plan to rehearse a couple of scenes in successive class periods using half the class in each, and then perform them in the third class period.

#### Gains and Losses

This pedagogical technique has some tremendous advantages. Students who perform scenes, whether well or poorly, feel connected to the text in a way that readers never do. They take ownership in the scene. Research about active learners also suggests that they will retain the memory of a physical discovery long after an intellectual subtlety has slipped away.

To me, the great gain from performance, which makes it worth the investment of the time, is that students will have done very serious close reading and become familiar with every detail of a given section. Shakespearean texts are so dense that even minor scenes reveal depths that are usually glossed over in reading. By avoiding the approach which just covers the juicy bits, one usually discovers anew how many more juicy bits there are!

To completely rehearse a whole play requires upwards of 100 hours, which is much more than most of us have for the whole quarter or semester. I do not suggest that a complete play be rehearsed, but by looking this closely at a single scene the students become aware of how much is there in other scenes. It colors their thinking forever.

This technique is not without losses, however, and I would be less than honest if I didn't mention some. Like any close reading exercise, there is a danger of losing perspective. One can get so mired in one's own part that the big picture slips by unnoticed. Actors who get really involved in this process can end by seeing the entire play through the eyes of their character, no matter how small, and not see the larger issues.

It is important, therefore, to spend as much time putting the play back together as is spent taking it apart. You can be tremendously helpful as an instructor, by pointing out connections to other parts of the play as rehearsal progresses. For me, I also find that for every running minute of class time spent rehearsing I have to spend an equal amount immediately after discussing what happened. My Shakespeare class meets in two hour blocks, which are great for dividing down the middle. The first half of the class is spent up to our elbows in the dirty work of rehearsal, and the second half is spent in reflective debriefing, discussing what was discovered.

A second potential drawback, mentioned earlier, is that the class can get competitive about the performances, if not steered away from this aspect.

Finally, no matter how non-threatening and joyful the process there are always some students who will resist participating. The extremely shy sometimes never come around to valuing the experience and sometimes refuse to participate. It saddens me when they drop the class to avoid the experience. However, I prefer them to those who don't drop, but just complain. I have to make it clear before the drop date that the course will include a performance component in which everyone will be participating. I don't want to build up a fear in instructors in an article attempting to empower them, but students have been known to get ugly about this. Some want their education in very conservative packages. I am willing to say that I think it is as much a part of the course as writing assignments. Instructors not wanting to draw such hard lines may want to plan some alternatives for the pathologically shy or

rebellious students, such as writing a paper on their observations of the process.

#### Some particularly good scenes

I suspect that almost any Shakespearean scene, and a good many by his contemporaries, can be made to work in this situation. I have personal experience with a few that seem sure-fire, which I want to offer:

Richard seducing Anne (in front of the crowd), \*Richard III\*  
The mechanicals performing before the court, \*Midsummer Night's Dream\*  
Puck and the fairy, followed by the first meeting of Oberon and Titania, also \*MND\*  
The opening scene of \*Hamlet\*  
Paulina confronting Leontes with the child, \*A Winter's Tale\*  
The final scene of \*Measure for Measure\*  
The opening of \*Romeo and Juliet\*

and if you want really juicy discussions:

The trial scene, \*Merchant of Venice\*  
The final scene of \*Taming of the Shrew\*

On the whole, I have had less success with the histories, because they are so male-oriented, while my classes are apt to be the reverse. I am also a bit squeamish about the big emotional scenes, which require more than just willingness to try, so \*Lear\*, \*Othello\* and \*Macbeth\* have proven less useful for me. The comedies and romances are gold mines, with lots of wonderful possibilities for groups of all sizes, and all ethnic and gender combinations. I am just recently discovering how rich \*Cymbeline\* is as a resource for a student performance.

#### Finding a Place to Play: Teaching in Non-traditional Spaces

Garry Walton  
Meredith College

One of the worst things about our classes is that they normally take place in classrooms. As students and as teachers, we have spent virtually all of our academic lives in classrooms; we know that kind of place very well. We know the very limited range of architectural variations (seats bolted to the floor or movable, raked amphitheater or level seating, windows on one wall or none, desks or tables) and the typical array of props (maps, chalkboards, lectern, overhead projector maybe--all near the front of the room). Classrooms are familiar, predictable, boring spaces . . . which set up very powerful expectations about what kinds of things will happen inside them.

One of the quickest and most powerful ways to change a class is to change the space in which it meets. I have found three different ways to change the teaching space: to move to a classroom different than those I normally teach in, to move some classes outside, and to set up my assigned classroom differently.

#### I. Move to a different room

One of my advantages is that my Shakespeare classes are typically scheduled at either the beginning or the end of the academic day, when there are more classroom choices than in the mid-day "prime time." Consequently, I can often find a vacant space in my building or in an adjacent one just by looking around -- without going through the sometimes involved logistics of officially requesting a change. Whenever I spot a free classroom that presents interesting possibilities, I move the class there, just for a single class period. Simply moving into an unfamiliar space automatically enlivens the class (the Russian formalists called it *ostranenie* [making strange]; psychologists know it as the Hawthorne effect).

At 8 a.m. or 4 p.m. it is easy for us to find two or three vacant classrooms on our hall, so we commandeer them. After we divide up a 25-student class into groups of 5, each group finds a rehearsal space to use for working up their small scene. After 20 minutes we meet back in our assigned classroom for "show and tell." Sometimes we go looking for a bigger space for our "performances."

One space that has worked very well is the large lecture hall, with raked, amphitheater-style seating and a small raised platform at the front of the room. After small groups of students have been studying and rehearsing particular scenes for part of a class period, we try to move for the end of class or for the following class to the lecture hall where they can perform their scenes. When I move to the back of the hall and give them the front platform, they are immediately "on stage" and suddenly behave accordingly, with energy and presence.

Another more public space that has proven very useful for class performances is our college "rotunda." The administrative building features a 3-story atrium, a large open central stairway, and a domed ceiling. Surrounding the open atrium on the upper two levels are circular walkways leading off to office corridors. Because the dorms are connected to this central campus building by breezeways, its lobby is the campus crossroads. And as I discovered fortuitously this semester, it is the campus' best public performance space. (What is more, the lower level lobby is just the size of the Rose's pit!)

In an early class I distributed students on the three levels and had them recite Marc Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech one line each but as if in one voice. In 15 minutes of making sure that every classmate could hear every line, they discovered Globe-sized voices. And as each of us in turn recited our line from the central staircase at about stage height, we made another startling discovery: it was instinctive in that space to play to the vertical rather than the horizontal audience. The space virtually demands that rhetorical voices and gestures be lifted upward toward the surrounding galleries. The administrators who were drawn from their adjacent upper offices to our brief public performance drew our attention as much as the pedestrian student traffic crossing the lobby right under our noses.

Most campuses have real performance spaces -- theaters, of a couple of different kinds -- that may be available for a few class periods every semester. I prefer the "black box" or studio theater space for teaching, because it is so flexible and so intimate. In addition, the theater students who often feel a bit out of their element in "lit" classes are perfectly at home in the studio space and can host the rest of us in "their space."

Having visiting troupes of actors do workshops for students in our large proscenium theater has alerted me to the benefits of having at least a few classes in that space. Though not very effective for the kind of discussions I like (when everyone talks to each other and not through the

teacher as traffic controller), a proscenium theater is even more powerful than a studio theater at giving students a sense of being "on stage." Scenes or monologues have even more impact in this kind of space, but also induce more trauma in performers, so I tend to use it at the end of a semester, after students have had time to become really comfortable with a speech or scene.

Maybe my departmental and college administrators are atypical, but I get little resistance to this moving. I'm sure it helps that we try to avoid imposing bureaucratic burdens on schedulers or inconveniencing colleagues. The obvious increase in student energy and enthusiasm seems to dampen criticism.

## II. Go outside

Another advantage I enjoy is a beautiful, spacious campus in a temperate climate. But surely teachers in places other than North Carolina hear the perennial cry every spring, "Can we go outside?" My students associate being outside with "laying out" to work on tans; so for years "class outside" sounded oxymoronic to me. But that was when I still thought I had to dominate everything that took place in "my" classes. I have since discovered that student-centered, performance-centered classes can be wonderful outside.

Actually, I didn't make this discovery: my students taught me. All I did was to ask each student group to plan a scene for the next class. They assigned parts, devised costumes, and (most unexpectedly) found a performance space. At the beginning of class they led us all out to a walled garden adjacent to our Alumnae Office. In this secluded space among the wrought-iron furniture and the ivy we discovered Prospero's isle. Caliban entered dragging bicycle chains from the nearby bike racks; Prospero found his staff under a neighboring tree; birds chirped on key for the magical island noises. Miranda slept on cue, but none of the students dozed for a moment. I had tried outdoor performances before, in spaces that I had selected, but once again this semester my students taught me that they learn best and enjoy it more when they are in charge of their own learning -- including being in charge of finding the playing space for their own performances.

What the students had sensed instinctively is that the performance space needs definition. The walled garden created a defined space, a potentially magical place where a script could become a performance. (The platform in the lecture classroom has something of the same effect.) A totally undifferentiated space outside on a grassy lawn is much less likely to be as effective. But there are some easy ways to mark a space for performance.

A pair of large spreading trees will work wonderfully to demarcate a playing space. Behind them can be back- or off-stage. The assembling students can form a semi-circle in front of them as the playing space. In Weimann's terms, the trees can become the *\*locus\** and the open yard the *platea*. (Incidentally, those terms make much more sense to students after they have experienced performing outside on a lawn under a tree.) The rude mechanicals' performance in the last act of *Midsummer Night's Dream* will work well anywhere, but their *\*rehearsal\** scene in act 3 comes alive in unexpected ways when played in the place Quince describes: "This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house" (3.1.3-5).

Another instructive way to use outdoor space for performing, without losing the class (like Redcrosse knight "Poured out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd"), is to inscribe the text of a notable Elizabethan playing space on

the tabula rasa of a flat plot of ground. Thanks to the recent London excavations of the Rose and Globe sites, we now have some rather precise dimensions for these two famous playing spaces. With a tape measure, a hammer and a few stakes, and some rope or twine or (better yet) colorful plastic construction-site tape, a teacher and class can mark off the site plan for the Globe or Rose in about 20 minutes. Immediately students get a sense of those dimensions, and how they would have impacted a performance: how close to each other and to the stage are the groundlings, how far to the galleries, how large a playing space is available and therefore how crowded is a crowd or battle scene. This process establishes the horizontal dimensions of an Elizabethan theater as vividly and experientially as the earlier one in the atrium space emphasized the vertical. After this exercise and the one in the rotunda, test questions on Elizabethan playhouses are a snap.

### III. Set up your classroom differently

So far all of these strategies have involved moving from the classroom that the scheduling gods have given you. That is not always possible, or convenient, or preferable. Often the best solution is to transform the space where you are. Here are some ways to do that, suggested by Kurt Daw:

It is not always possible to change your venue, but almost any classroom can be reorganized to be a conceptual Elizabethan theater. This rearrangement works best in classrooms with high ceilings, the larger the better, but I have had success in even low, crowded spaces.

Bear in mind the essential features of Elizabethan public theaters as performance spaces. They are multi-leveled, capable of being accessed from multiple entrances, surrounded on three sides by audience, and featuring minimal scenery, furniture or location indicators.

These features can be mimicked in your classroom. Tackle the multiple levels first. It is the logistical centerpiece and provides the most spectacular results in changing the atmosphere of your lecture space into a "theater." All that you need is a sturdy table or a heavy desk to indicate the second story. (I volunteered to have the oldest, clunkiest desk on campus put into my classroom. Seven or eight students can stand on it without danger, as it was built in the 1950's to withstand nuclear onslaught. The students seem to take inordinate pleasure in standing on the teacher's desk.) Center this second level on whatever wall of your classroom has the greatest height, about two feet away from the wall (so that people can wait "offstage" behind it), and you have an instant "inner above." The top of this desk does not need to be large. If two people can stand comfortably on it you have met your needs for most plays.

You don't need to worry about creating the inner below. Even in real Elizabethan style stages, the most common treatment of the inner below is just to be used to reveal a scene which instantly spills out into the general playing area. Just leave room to enter on either side of your desk or table. I like to reorganize the desks in the room into a square which marks the edge of the playing space. Puncture this boundary with breaks one desk wide on either side of the desk, at the upstage corners, and at the downstage corners. Pull these desks about two feet away from the wall so there is room to walk behind them and you have your tiring house offstage space.

I have sometimes arranged extra desks in front of this playing space for audience members to sit, but have found over time it is better for the purposes of this exercise to make the audience become groundlings. I let them move about freely, which they are inclined to do, since they have no chairs.

If, for some reason, one of my class members must be able to sit, such as the wheelchair bound physically-challenged woman in my current section, I revive the Elizabethan tradition of letting him/her sit right on the stage.

This classroom arrangement takes care of all the elements. The last guideline, that the space remain neutral and flexible, is accomplished via negativa. Don't bring in extra furniture unless absolutely necessary. Shy away from realistic indicators of location. Tell the actors in your scene they can use only what they can carry on with them, and they must remove it again at the end by carrying it out. Flags, banners, and torches set the scene. Anything more becomes a hinderance.

I pass out drawings of the Globe, so my class knows what it is they are imitating, and I allow them to use their imagination to help. In one of my classes an art student came in early and drew a wonderful rendering of the stage house on the chalkboard with colored chalk.

Students understand the metaphor of the lecture hall all too well. Altering the use of the room to a new metaphor completely changes things and is sometimes as refreshing as a field trip, with only minimal disruption to the schedule and far fewer logistical and bureaucratic problems.

How to Direct Students in Class  
David Sauer, Spring Hill College

How to direct student scenes in class? Simple. Pick the right scenes! Which are right? Those that require being acted out to make sense. There are three kinds of \*rightness\* corresponding to Perry's three main levels of student learning stages: scenes with one right answer, scenes with two, scenes with many answers.

DOING IT RIGHT

Take the simplest examples, where the text has built in stage directions and meaning. The task for the students with this kind of scene, is to find the embedded stage directions. When they are there, then there is one right answer for the scene. In this case, just get the students to work through a problem to discover the solution. Here is the simplest example, from \*School for Scandal\* end of 2.2:

MARIA. But, whatever my sentiments of that unfortunate young man are, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

LADY TEAZLE \*returns.\*

JOSEPH SURFACE. Nay, but Maria, do not leave me with a frown~by all that's honest, I swear~Gad's life~here's Lady Teazle.~You must not~no, you shall not~for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle~

MARIA. Lady Teazle!

JOSEPH SURFACE. Yet were Sir Peter to suspect~

LADY TEAZLE. What's this, pray? Do you take her for me? ~Child, you are wanted in the next room.~What is all this, pray?

JOSEPH SURFACE. Oh, the most unlucky circumstance in nature! Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavoring to reason with her when you came.

LADY TEAZLE. Indeed! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning~do you \*usually\* argue on your knees?

JOSEPH SURFACE. Oh, she's a child~and I thought a little bombast~but Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

The fun of doing this scene in class is of the recognition that actors and audience alike have when the gestures and movements coincide with the lines. The key here is Lady Teazle's last line, which informs us that Joseph was on his knees with Maria. But when did he get there and why? The choppy speech just before the entrance of Lady Teazle indicates that a lot of business must be going on with Joseph. What business? When exactly does he see Lady Teazle? Is his line about her an aside? Is Lady Teazle's first line aside? Said only to Charles? Why doesn't Maria hear it? All of this can be worked out and solutions found which are rewarding because one has the sense of doing it \*right.\*

Other scenes that work this way and \*need\* to be acted out in class: Romeo and Juliet first meet, doing the sonnet together with the hand jive.

Richard II and Bollingbroke doing the handing over of the crown. (as Berger indicated, this is not so simple, and may not have one \*right\* answer)

Richard III and Anne over the casket with sword. (This one can be varied by having the students do it, then pulling an Audrey on them: add six pallbearers. Redo the scene, to see which of the lines are said to each other, and which with consciousness of the onstage audience. Is Anne playing to this audience? Is Richard? At what points?)

#### COMPARATIVE SCENES: DUALISM

Once students (and teachers) have confidence in finding the embedded stage directions, let them take on the next most complicated moment-one in which there are two clear possibilities, neither one certain in the text. The hope, here, is that two groups will do the scene differently. They may need prompting~instruct each director what needs to be done. Take the opening of \*King Lear\*: 1.1. 1-32. The problem: how close is Edmund? Have one group try it with Edmund near enough to hear Gloucester's lines about him. Have another try it with Edmund far enough away that he does not hear those lines.

KENT. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

GLOU.It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most; for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

KENT.Is not this your son, my Lord?

GLOU.His breeding, Sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am braz'd to't.

KENT.I cannot conceive you.

GLOU.Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-womb'd, and had, indeed, Sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

KENT.I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

GLOU.But I have a son, Sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who is yet no dearer in my account: though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

EDM. No, my Lord.

GLOU. My Lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

EDM. My services to your Lordship.

KENT. I must love and sue to know you better.

EDM. Sir, I shall study deserving.

GLOU. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The King is coming.

In this scene, I do not think there is one right answer on how to block the action. One place to start would be with Alan Dessin, who worked on the

meaning of \*this\* on the open stage (Is not \*this\* your son, my Lord?). See \*Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters\* (Cambridge UP, 1984). To make clear to the students how much they have learned, after their presentation in class, try showing the scene on a videotape or two. (Brook cuts this opening, but use the Olivier and BBC versions to get two different stagings). This will then get students to say, \*our interpretation was better, they missed the move on this line or that.\* Once they do that, of course, then you have won: they have broken free from the authoritative vision that assumes there is a \*right\* way to do Shakespeare, and will become much more critical observers and readers once they have made this breakthrough.

#### COMPARATIVE SCENES: RELATIVISM

Other scenes have no real guidelines, and the options available are numerous. For example, I have picked Egeus in 4.1 of \*A Midsummer Night's Dream\* because Philip C. McGuire has written on the scene ("Egeus and the Implications of Silence" in \*Shakespeare and the Sense of Performance\*, eds. Marvin and Ruth Thompson, Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1989: 103-116). The problem here is Egeus' (\*open\*) silence when Theseus says he will overbear Egeus' will. What is the reaction of Egeus? Of Hermia, of Hippolyta? A number of possibilities could be offered quickly. I'd suggest each person trying a different role~to see what reactions filter through each person.

The. Good morrow friends. St. Valentine is past:  
Begin these love birds to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I pray you all, stand up.  
I know you two are rival enemies:  
How comes this gentle concord in the world,  
That hatred is so far from jealousy  
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity.

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
Half sleep, half waking; but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here.  
But as I think~for truly would I speak~  
And now I do bethink me, so it is:  
I came with Hermia hither; our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,  
Without peril of the Athenian law~

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough!  
I beg the law, the law upon his head!  
They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,  
Thereby to have defeated you and me:  
You of your wife, and me of my consent  
That she should be your wife.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;  
And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me.  
But my good lord, I wot not by what power~  
but by some power it is~my love to Hermia,  
Melted as the snow, seems to me now  
As the remembrance of an idle gaud  
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;  
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart  
The object and pleasure of mine eye,  
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia;

But like a sickness did I loathe this food:  
 But as in health, come to my natural taste,  
 Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,  
 And will for evermore be true to it.  
 The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met;  
 Of this discourse we more will hear anon.  
 Egeus, I will overbear your will;  
 For the temple, by and with us,  
 These couples shall eternally be knit.  
 And, for the morning now is something worn,  
 Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.  
 Away, with us, to Athens: three and three,  
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.  
 Come, Hippolyta. Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and Train.

It is with this kind of a scene that the teacher has the most work to do. Student intentions will not be fully clear in the first presentation. So the teacher must get the class and participants to articulate what they saw (or intended). Help to reblock the scene to make those intentions more clear, if there is time. At the same time, one needs to articulate other possibilities that might not have been considered.

Once this is done, however, the real problems begin. Ann Thompson, writing in *The Shakespeare Quarterly's* 1990 special issue on teaching, criticizes the performance approach that the earlier (1984) teaching issue dealt with more fully: "Rereading these essays in 1989, after having been invited to contribute to the present issue, I was immediately struck not only by the overwhelming consensus that the *\*right way\** to teach Shakespeare was through performance and classroom workshops, but also by the almost total absence of literary theory and cultural politics" (*\*King Lear and the Politics of Teaching Shakespeare,\** *\*SQ\** 41, 139). This critique is vital to remember in using the performance approach. Analysis of student performances needs to consider, especially with these open-ended scenes, that the meaning is not coming from the text, but from the students' own minds/interpretations. So the choices made need to be placed in a political/critical framework. Are the choices being made classist? sexist? Make clear the underlying assumptions which undergird the choices made in blocking the scenes?

For example, in this instance, what kind of privileging is given to Parent, to Duke, to men? Ann Jennalie Cook, in *\*Making a Match\**, would start with the Parent: "These casual or arbitrary consents, so seldom noted today when parents' opinions count but little, may well represent instances of unreality or subversion for Shakespeare's audience. Whether sons and daughters did so or not, they were expected to obey their superiors, not simply follow their own wishes" (98). This might result in one kind of staging in which Hermia would go to her father to ask forgiveness.

The scene could also be done by moving all four men away from the ladies entirely, and huddling with a whispered conference about what to do with the women. Theseus' concluding lines would then be spoken aloud. How else is one to play "and like a sickness I did loathe this food?" Could Demetrius say that aloud in Helena's presence? Is it a sexist scene?

Consider how the scene fits in context. For example, "Come, my Hippolyta" was how Theseus got Hippolyta off stage in 1.1. Why does he summon her in this way in this scene too? Is she distant from him? Or subservient, a defeated enemy, ordered about?

Consider as well the silence of Hermia and Helena. Why are they silent in this scene~ Hermia spoke up for herself in 1.1. And in all of act 5 they are silent as well. But it begins here. On the other hand, the men are so facile in giving these explanations of the irrational shifts they have gone through~but the women have been faithful and consistent. What happens when they suddenly get what they have striven for?

With an open-ended scene it is necessary to react to the students'

performance, and to show them how they have contextualized the scene themselves. Then make clear how other starting assumptions would result in different conceptions of the scene. Key is to see the gap between contemporary and renaissance ways of viewing these issues.

### Alternative Approaches to Selecting Scenes

TRY SCENES FOR WHICH YOU ALREADY HAVE WORKED OUT THE SOLUTION:

TRY OTHERS THAT ARE OPEN-ENDED FOR WITH NO RIGHT SOLUTION. LOOK FOR THE JUSTIFICATIONS OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES.

1. Start with Audrey Stanley scenes that require lots of extras, and change the meaning when they are added. e.g., Paulina with baby to Leontes with surrounding lords.

2. Scenes that require props to make sense:  
The York Crucifixion

3. Scenes with two players, one of whom speaks at great length, while the other has but one sentence replies.

The hardest scene to stage in all of Shakespeare, I think, is \*The Tempest\* 1.2. Prospero goes on and on. How does Miranda react. Why does he keep asking if she's listening? Why does he go on and on and on and on? Stage it to figure out why. For your solution to this staging problem sets up all the rest: our view of Prospero.

3A. \*The Alchemist\*

Celia and Corvino 2.5. Here is another scene where the whole meaning of the play stems from acting out the scene. In this case, for the first time, we are introduced to an innocent person. Previously, the fox preys on the birds of prey, so no one can be hurt. But it all changes with the introduction of (St. Ce)Celia. Corvino yells at her, and she just takes it. He yells for 28 lines, and then she has one. He then continues, draws his sword, and she has two brief speeches to try and calm him. He cuts off her second, and continues for twenty five more lines, to the end of the scene.

To the actors: for an actor with a long speech, the temptation is first to dash through it, figuring it will make as little sense to the audience as to him. WRONG. Second step, take it slowly, as if it made sense. WRONG. The key is in the silent character. Celia. How does she react to each accusation, phrase, sentence? It is that which must motivate the next.

Try with the whole class: one person, teacher, perhaps, read the long speeches. Ask each student to react as a Celia. What are the key lines that trigger reactions? Then think of the audience. How does Jonson want them to react to this sudden shift of tone?

3.B. Henry IV and Hal 3.

4. TO SHOW HOW STAGE DIRECTIONS ARE EMBEDDED IN TEXT

Silence: e.g., Claudio when he gets Hero. "Speak, Count, it is your cue." Then his response, "Silence is the Perfectest Herald of Joy." Or stage Orlando's silence after the wrestling with Celia and Rosalind.

5. REVERSAL OF AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS: IN STAGING:

Kenneth Burke in \*Counterpoint\* talks about the appearance of the Ghost in Hamlet 1.4. We know they are all there to see the ghost, and yet we wait and wait, and finally when Hamlet forgets about it, and begins a long and philosophical disquisition, it comes and takes us, and him, by surprise. Burke's notion of form, of course, is the arousing and fulfilling of

expectations, and he uses this moment to illustrate it.

For tragedy, we need both sympathy for, and detachment from the characters. When Juliet awakens in the tomb, we feel sorry for her, and know she will kill herself. But she can't! How are we supposed to respond when she first tries kissing him to get poison from his lips. Then tries to get the dregs out of the poison bottle? I was on the floor laughing when I first saw this in Zeffirelli's film~and so when she grabbed the dagger and stabbed herself I was all the more shocked, for I had expected it, but it came unexpectedly.

#### 6. OR TO FIND CONFLICTING STAGE DIRECTIONS: QUARTO VS. FOLIO

After the opening lines of Theseus and Hippolyta, enter Egeus, Hermia and Helena, Demetrius and Lysander. Folio omits Helena: what different effects?

7. WHO HEARS WHAT? TWO (OR MORE CHARACTERS ARE ON STAGE, WITH A THIRD PERSON WHO MAY OR MAY NOT OVERHEAR THEM TALKING. STAGE THIS ONE TWO DIFFERENT WAYS. In \*The Duchess of Malfi\*, Bosola is on stage, doing a soliloquy on the trick of the apricots to find out if the Duchess is pregnant, the Antonio Delio and enter, on a half line! with Delio saying, "And so long married? You amaze me." But Bosola cannot overhear this! How is it staged? Then consider the optional scenes where someone may overhear or not:

7A. In \*King Lear\* Gloucester and Kent speak of Edmund, \*There was great sport at his making.\*

How close is Edmund? Does he overhear these comments, or is he called over afterwards? Try it both ways to see what works best.

7B. How close is Ophelia? Does she know of the whole plot of overhearing by Polonius and Claudius, or is she off to the side, simply taking directions? Try it both ways.

#### 8. SPEECHES WHICH JUMP WITH NO TRANSITION:

\*Othello\* 3.3 This is the key reversal, where Othello turns from loving Desdemona at the start to kneeling and swearing eternal vows with Iago. But after Iago's brief hints ("Ha! I like not that") Othello meets with Desdemona, and she begs him to see Cassio, he concludes her appearance with these three lines:

I will deny thee nothing!  
Whereon I do beseech thee grant me this,  
To leave me but a little to myself. (100-02)

Why does he switch from offering her everything, to suddenly sending her away (so he can be with Iago to be further tempted)? Why the change? Try different ways to stage this. Then look at videos, to see how they solve the problem. Eg, the one we just got from the RSC and Lois/Garry rings a bell, as if to remind him he has something else to do. (Is this a little external???) Note also, Des's lines end in a seven syllable line, and Othello's starts with seven syllables. What happens in between?