PUTTING SHAKESPEARE ON THE HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

by

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“Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines” (3.2.1-4). William Shakespeare himself gives direction in acting from these lines in Hamlet, exemplifying the importance of Shakespeare’s plays is conveying the language to the audience. Performing Shakespeare on stage is an educationally beneficial and enriching experience for high school students. However, high school theatre teachers are apprehensive to direct Shakespeare due to the extra time involved and the students’ fear of Shakespeare’s plays. To assist theatre teachers, the following is a guide on how to produce Shakespeare on the high school stage from preparation to production. This guide will help the theatre teacher become a competent Shakespearean director and teach high school students the rewards of learning the language skills and team building required in Shakespeare’s plays.

Play selection is the first step in preparation for the director and the following are some important questions to ask when selecting a Shakespeare play. Do I like the play? The director has to enjoy the play, think it’s good and worthy of producing. Directors are likely to spend the next two to three months analyzing, designing, rehearsing and producing the play, therefore, the more the play is liked the more likely the production process will be exciting and enjoyable. Also, if the play is not considered “good” in the director’s opinion, or by literary standards, then they should ask themselves why they are doing the production. Shakespeare is known as the greatest playwright, but the director themselves needs to believe the play is good, if no one likes or even knows Troilus and Cressida then do not produce it.

Another question to ask is will the audience appeal to the play? With a Shakespearean play why spend the time and money producing a play that the director, the students, and the audience will not attend or enjoy? The audience has to be thought about and considered
especially in a high school setting when budgets are low or operated on ticket funds. Do not immediately think that audiences will automatically not want to see a Shakespearean play, "Shakespeare is a worldwide cultural phenomenon, a brand-name, a logo, an image that appears on T-shirts and credit cards, a mainstay of theatre, film and video production, a compulsory component of education, a label that sells thousands of books, a household name" (Proudfoot 1). It is not too much to assume that everyone over the age of fourteen has heard of Shakespeare, therefore producing a well-known Shakespearean play, chances are an audience will be interested in seeing a production.

High school directors must ask, "what the students will learn from the production?" As with any play, students learn ensemble building skills and with Shakespeare they also learn "a way to explore language. Their exploration leads them to create their own figurative speeches and present fully understood Shakespearean presentations" (Sugarman 7). The audience can always tell when an actor does not know what they are saying, especially with Shakespeare, they will not understand or be confused with the action on stage. In table working the script, I will explain how to analyze, cut, apply scansion, and decipher the language, which is key in directing Shakespeare.

As the director, ask if your school could produce this play? Meaning what is your theatre space, budget, student actors and whether you “have the experience, the intelligence, the imagination, and the skill to deal with the script, to translate it to your actors, and to solve the technical problems with the production” (Grote 7)? This last question is often what causes apprehension in high school theatre teachers from doing a Shakespeare production. However, all these questions are questions that a high school director has to ask themselves about any play whether the play is written by Arthur Miller or Shakespeare. Not only is producing Shakespeare
in the high school benefiting the student, the community, but also the teacher as a director, it causes them to grow as director differently than they would have directing a contemporary play.

Now, in choosing a Shakespeare play, some good play selections for the high school setting are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. “Of the tragedies, I’d start with *Macbeth*. It goes right to the point, and it’s the shortest. Start with these. Your audience needs to develop a gradual appreciation for the man’s mind before it’s ready for *Hamlet*” (Peithman 16). These are the most produced and popular plays that will appeal to many different audiences and most students will have seen the play as a movie, read it in English class, or at least heard of the play before.

Once the play is selected, decide which edition to use, the first step is to:

“Read it several times using different editions, which you can find at your library or bookstore. Look at the following: The Arden Shakespeare, The New Folger Library Edition of Shakespeare’s Plays, The New Penguin Shakespeare, The New Variorum Shakespeare and The Newly Revised Signet Classic Shakespeare Series. Samuel French, Inc. publishes acting editions of the best known Shakespearean plays and also vocal music for some of them.” (Novak 10) The main difference between most editions is punctuation and footnotes; however, in reading an old edition, chances are it will be missing some scenes or dialogue. It is my belief to choose an edition based on the footnotes, when working Shakespeare in a high school setting, good footnotes will save time answering many questions.

After deciding which edition to use, thoroughly read the play slowly and analyze the play’s plot and sub-plots. Watch any live productions of the play, movies, and read reviews of
other school or professional productions. This is very important for a Shakespeare production because his plays “change, never stay still, constantly move. They’re living” (Maher 145). Evaluate what other directors have done in the past; decide what worked and what didn’t to help form a production concept. If you are new to directing read Appendix A, there is a list of books on basic script analysis and directing that will be helpful.

In analyzing the script think about production concept and what time period and location to place the play, most Shakespearean plays are universal and can be placed in any time at any location with a few alterations to the script. For example, I produced *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the time period of Ancient Greece and *Romeo and Juliet* in the nineteen-fifties Italian Mafia, chose a time period and location that will reflect the overall message, and meaning of the text, and appeal to the students and audience members. Updating Shakespeare into a time period different than classical Elizabethan England increases the interest of high school students in the production. For instance, when I directed *Romeo and Juliet* I advertised the Italian mafia concept and had over fifty students audition; I even had a student tell me that if we would have done the old tights version of Shakespeare he wouldn’t have auditioned.

Shakespeare productions in the past have varied from detailed realistic settings, wooden scaffolding structures, metal framework set pieces, or even the simple use of curtains to change locations from one location to the next as is necessary for most Shakespeare plays. For example, Hopkins production of *Hamlet* in London used “curtains closed off the archway for Ophelia’s mad scene; a figured curtain at the proscenium line was used for front scenes” (Kennedy 144). A great aspect about staging Shakespeare is the various staging that can be incorporated, with any budget Shakespeare can be done on a bare stage or multi-leveled structure. “Shakespeare is done so often that many directors feel it necessary to set the play in a place and period other than the
one originally intended” (Peithman 16). This does not have to be the case; Shakespeare can be produced traditionally or non-traditionally.

During this time evaluate the budget for the show, whether there is no budget, little budget or function on ticket sales you can produce a Shakespeare play. One major benefit of producing a Shakespearean play is that there is not royalty fees, this can save roughly two hundred dollars on budget because Shakespeare’s plays are public domain. The budget could dictate the production concept, a larger production can cost more money than a smaller production, figure out the budget before finalizing a concept.

When I produced *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* I used only lumber from storage to build trees, tree stumps and various different level platforms, spent roughly one hundred dollars on fabric and had a parent sew chitons and togas for the actors. Props cost around two hundred dollars for vines, swords and fairy wings. Borrowed costumes from the University of Central Missouri and a donkey mask from Raymore-Peculiar High School at no cost. Scripts cost was around thirty dollars and school printing services printed the tickets and programs with paper we bought for fifteen dollars. Therefore, total cost for the production was roughly three hundred and fifty dollars and with ticket sales, the production made twice that amount.

While reading the play, decide where to put the intermission. The intermission can vary in many ways. One way to look at intermission is to place it where there is happiness for the central characters in the play, such as placing the intermission after Romeo and Juliet get married. Or place the intermission at the highest point of action during the play, such as the moment right before the play’s climax. “For one intermission, look for a good place to stop about half way through the pay or just a little longer. Try to end the first part on a minor climax or where something vital is happening, so the audience will want to come back for the second
part to see how it is resolved” (Novak 20). Another technique is to place two intermissions during the play; this is often done for *Hamlet* due to the length of the script. In doing two intermissions, place one around one third of the way through the play, and the second one about two thirds of the way through. Do keep in mind having two intermissions gives audience members two opportunities to leave during the performance. I think splitting the play to have the longer portion at the start “since audiences generally can take more of the play before intermission than after” (Homan 2) is best and is usually located around the third act.

In casting, read through the play carefully, “imagining all the while how you would cast each one with the actors available to you and how the play would look on your stage” (Novak 9). While reading picture specific lead characters, how should they be portrayed, are they male or female, can gender be changed of some characters without changing the storyline? During this time create character biographies to either use when casting the show or give to students prior to auditions so they understand the characters and roles available, see Appendix B.

After you have selected a script, analyzed it, it is now time to cut the script. First and foremost do not cut famous lines:

“You risk upsetting audience members. At the very least, the evidence of your tinkering will be obvious to many. If you are unsure which lines are famous, the Folder editions list most of them in the back of their scripts. Or simply look through *Batrlett’s Familiar Quotations*, which lists the famous quotes play by play.” (Pietman 41)

These famous lines are important to keep in the script because they are a trademark for Shakespeare; and *Romeo and Juliet* would not the same without the line, “O Romeo, Romeo!
Wherefore art thou Romeo?” (2.2.33) Alter the scripts, but do not make it a completely different play.

“The question of whether to perform Shakespeare’s plays in their entirety or in edited versions seemed primarily a question” (Piethman 31). I think that it is necessary that the text is cut for a high school environment; especially if the location or time period is changed it will be important to alter specific sections. Some examples of different approaches to concept and cutting Shakespeare’s text are:

“An Othello that incorporates a chorus that fills in the blanks make by the cutting. The chorus members are the Fates who weave the web that Iago creates. A cutting of Love’s Labour’s Lost focuses on the wooing of the princess, takes place in a corporate board room, and is staged as a soap opera. A series of short scenes from different plays are stitched together as pickup lines in a 1920s speakeasy. At a local high school Shakespeare festival, one group reset The Taming of the Shrew as The Taming of the Brute – Petruchio became Patricia and Kate became Nathaniel. The last speech was great when done by a guy.” (Peithman 31)

Due to Shakespeare’s plays being on public domain we can be creative when altering the script and changing the setting. In altering the script, relate the play to a contemporary or local event that the audience can connect to; this is great for theatres that have an audience that does not usually attend Shakespeare productions. See Appendix D for an example from A Midsummer Night’s Dream cutting.

In cutting the script first eliminate, metaphors, similes, and allusions that are repetitive. Shakespeare wrote in a poetic form that was directed to an illiterate audience with no scenic elements, therefore Shakespeare had to give verbal imagery to create the setting and would
repeat phrases many times in different ways. Also eliminate anything unnecessary for plot development, in many of Shakespearean tragedies there are short scenes with minor characters, such as maids, servants, and cooks; these scenes are used as comic relief, these are unnecessary to the plot and can usually be cut.

With cutting also keep in mind the possibilities to cut more during the process or add back sections that were cut prior. When directing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, prior to casting the show I had cut about half of Helena’s first soliloquy, since this was the first Shakespearean production for the entire cast. However, the student that was cast as Helena was an extremely talented and hard working theatre student and asked me if she could add the rest of the soliloquy in, I agreed since she was willing to learn it and thought it was important for her character. In the end it was a wonderful moment and she did an excellent job in performance, and I was very happy that it was added back in. Always keep in mind that the script can be changed constantly, even during the rehearsal process.

After cutting the script, prepare the rehearsal schedule, begin by cutting the script into french scenes, character’s entrances and exits, to eliminate students sitting around at rehearsals doing nothing, see Appendix C. Have the rehearsal schedule ready to hand out to the cast with their scripts on the first day of rehearsal. With french scenes, organize “and number them. Anytime a character enters or exits, that should be the start of a new section. This way you can give the kids a grid with the section number each character appears in. It makes scheduling rehearsals a little easier as you can mix and match which section you can do depending on which kids are available for rehearsal” (Ceraso 69).

When preparing a rehearsal schedule, work in extra time for the production due to the challenges that Shakespeare presents such as language, music, and stage combat. “The total
number of rehearsals will vary depending on the difficulty of the play and the skills of the actors” (Novak 36). I suggest adding at least one extra week for the high school setting to spend extra time table working the script and working in special requirements of the production, always allow one or two “TBA” rehearsals, where you can fit in any scenes, fights, songs, or dancing that hasn’t been fully worked or polished, refer to Appendix E. When it comes time for auditions, about two weeks prior to the audition, make an announcement through the school’s announcement system, whether it be the intercom or Channel One. Create a flyer stating what the auditions will be for, when and where all auditions are, where scripts available for check-out can be located, and audition application instructions. With Shakespeare, have scripts available for the students to check out and prepare for auditions, this allows for the director and students to have successful auditions. If there are no scripts yet, you could supply them with copies of french scenes that have been cut for auditions, or copies of the script. If it is an audition where students need to come with a prepared monologue; state that clearly in the flyer as well. I would suggest not having prepared auditions, since the students would have to prepare a Shakespeare monologue, some will struggle with preparing a Shakespeare monologue on their own and get discouraged and never audition. Have scripts and audition applications available for students to check-out or pick up during this time and in a location that they can easily find. Also prepare and cut scenes from the play for auditions and callbacks prior to auditions. When it comes to auditions plan to have at least three days of auditions and perhaps four if needing special auditions. Special auditions are auditions involving singing, dancing, sword fighting or stage combat. If the Shakespearean play has sword fighting, or other special
requirements a three day audition process is imperative. If the director is choreographing your sword fighting, which most likely they are, read Lane’s *Swashbuckling: A step-by-step guide to the art of stage combat and theatrical swordplay* prior these auditions. The first two days of auditions involve cold readings and prepared monologue auditions, if you decided to do a prepared audition. The third day of auditions should be callback auditions, where specific actors are invited back for another audition. Post this list at the start of the day that callbacks happen.

When casting a Shakespearean play keep an open mind, some students will not get the language in five minutes working out in the hallway but will eventually. Therefore, look and listen for potential, since language is a large part of a Shakespeare production. “Ideally, they look for performers who already know how to build a character, control their nerves, speak clearly, and so on, because such actors minimize risk and simplify the rehearsal process” (Grote 103). As a director, make a list of characters in the play with notes on what you want for each role to have at auditions to reference while students are performing, refer to Appendix B.

Casting is an important part of directing a production, so take time, consider what is known about each student and their abilities and try to come up with the best cast possible. Ask the following questions: who is the best actor for this role? Who will work hard to produce a great play? Are they reliable? Who will work well with others in the cast? How will they handle Shakespeare’s language? Once the director has these questions are answered for each student who auditioned then start casting.

Always begin casting by casting the principal roles first, then the supporting roles, and then lastly the smaller or walk-on roles. With a Shakespearean play this is important due to the language, typically Shakespeare’s plays have many roles of different sizes, and casting the play from the largest role to the smallest ensures that the best actor will be cast in a lead role. This
process allows for you to cast the best actor possible for the best role for the student. During this process remain open to casting to type, against type, gender casting and color blind casting. The Shakespearean production is a learning process for each student and therefore you should not cast the show according to the student’s skin color or appearance, cast the student that is best for the role.

Once you have selected the play, made preliminary cuttings, held auditions and cast the production it is time to move into table working. Table working is the process in which you direct the actors into what is cut from the production, what each line means, analyzing the scenes and teaching scansion. This is an important part of rehearsing a Shakespearean play because each actor has to understand what they are saying or the audience will not understand. This process is best done at the start of the rehearsal period, see Appendix E, since this is an imperative part of comprehension for the dialogue and therefore the scene, the characters, and the action of the play. I prefer to pair up table working a scene with blocking the scene, so half the time is sitting and working the script and the second half is getting the actors up and blocking the scene, this helps in keeping the actors energized and focused.

The following is a week by week process of producing a Shakespearean play. I created this order specifically for Shakespeare, giving extra time to table work the play a week separately than blocking and special needs for Shakespeare, such as fighting, singing, and dancing. I created this set up from my own experience directing Shakespeare in a high school setting, it is possible to change and create a system that works for your students and school, but if it is your first attempt at Shakespeare I think it will provide a helpful outline in creating your rehearsal schedule.
Week one would start with the table working process in which the cast gets together in a circle and each day read one act of the play, stopping after every scene to discuss what the scene was about and what type of character development happened. During this time it is also good to “work on the meanings of words and scenes with those playing speaking roles; try improvising some difficult sections” (Novak 38). In *Romeo and Juliet* we used improvisation during this process and it helped the Friar and Nurse find the humor in their characters. Also allow students to say “hold” and stop while were in the middle of a scene for definitions to certain words, or they can write questions as they read, to ask at the end of the scene.

Week two involves blocking the scenes, since the script was previously broken into smaller french scenes, always work the entrance of the characters first. Explain to the students how important entrances and exits are to stage movement and explain the terminology used for blocking the scene. There are two types of blocking, pre-blocking and organic blocking. I prefer pre-blocking, especially in a high school setting, high school actors do not understand the impulse or motivation that drives a character to move from one location to the other, the director is responsible for giving them that information. Although watch their body language during a scene and if you notice them twitch or switch position, that is usually a sign that they felt the need to move and just did not realize it or they were told to stand there and so they did.

If choosing to go with organic blocking, blocking each scene at the spur of the moment, during rehearsal; always know where you want them to go at the end of the scene or a general location for the character to end up. With this in mind organic blocking can go smoothly, a chaotic, unorganized rehearsal is never good. A positive aspect of organic blocking is that the students have more input on the production. If you decide to organically block begin by “telling an eloquent story at the start of the rehearsal which creates a frame of mind, a tilt to the
collective imagination of all those involved which makes it inevitable that whatever invention is
thrown up with that group will be bound to enrich and enlarge the comparatively space and
simple idea that you had up until then” (Berry 37).

With blocking overall think of Shakespeare as a musical and create final tableaus especially if there are scene changes. Work on what stage focus is with the students, “the biggest weakness of our young actors is that they don’t understand how to help the director create focus onstage. You can learn to keep still and allow focus to happen. Listen to your fellow actor intently” (Maher 140). I recommend pre-blocking the show, blocking movements prior to rehearsal. This creates an organized rehearsal and therefore time efficient. These are aspects of blocking that the director will have to teach students at the start of the rehearsal process.

The third week of rehearsals should be working on characterization, teaching students how to act Shakespeare, and special rehearsals, in which blocking is worked and perhaps changed, acting elements are added to each character and music, dancing and fighting rehearsals should begin. Always keep in mind that blocking can change from the beginning of the rehearsal period till the end, even if it was pre-blocked, no blocking should be set in stone. An actor could develop their character differently than was imagined and therefore changes the motivations for their movements.

During this part of the process the director needs to know the show upside down and inside out, as much as possible. Although even the best Shakespearean scholars can struggle with deciphering Shakespeare, so do not stress if this is your first Shakespeare play, it is a learning process for the students and the director. “There are some things in Shakespeare where you have to take a deep breath and just go ahead and do it, even if you don’t understand it. Inevitable, once you are in performance, it will all click. If you’ve done everything you can
think of doing and it still isn’t making sense – well, Shakespeare wrote it, so there must be a rationale. You simply allow him to point out the solution in good time” (Maher 178). I have found moments that could have been created or relationships that could have been played, during the production of the show, just note those in your memory and learn from any and all mistakes.

When it comes to acting, creating a collaborative environment for acting in high school is imperative, the students have to feel like they can open up and ask questions about their role:

“I am often asking students in rehearsals, ‘Could it mean this?’ Then I have to stop and think why I sense that. I found myself answering one actor with ‘because Shakespeare doesn’t write that way.’ This fellow had decided that some phrase had started a new topic which was completely divorced from what came before. In Shakespearean dialogue, everything that is spoken comes, in some way, from what has been spoken before. Nothing is a complete change of subject – it generates emotionally from what has been stated previously.” (Maher 178)

With acting it is important that the student has some ownership to the role, during the table working process you analyzed the script and discussed some characterizations. By this time in the process each actor should have made their character choices to show during rehearsals. Help them move along in building their character during this time by asking questions which prompt them to think about their character further such as, why does your character say that? Are they telling the truth or lying? What does your character feel when they say that line, what is the subtext?

Analysis of characters involves investigating the script for each character’s goals, objectives, choices, appearance and intelligence as with any play. The major difference about directing a Shakespearean play is the necessity to understand the character’s language as well,
“allowing the characters to speak with and in their own voices is the reason for the Shakespeare Paradigm: why does this particular character say these particular words, at this particular moment, in this particular order” (Fantasia 151)? This is an important part of Shakespearian character analysis because Shakespeare wrote in a style of language that has to be deciphered differently than modern texts.

Investigating the diction of Shakespeare’s plays is perhaps the hardest part of analysis because you must analyze the dialogue and sentence structure, which is written in blank verse, called iambic pentameter, and prose. “On the page they look daunting, those solid blocks of Shakespearean verse and prose – so unlike the to-and-fro dialogue of modern plays” (Brine 105). Shakespearean plays differ greatly from the language we experience on a daily basis; there is a rhythm and pattern to every line. The important thing to focus on as a high school director with diction is to define the subtext of the language and this can be done by defining the Shakespearean language to modern day language, there are many texts that will do this for you that you can purchase for relatively cheap. Also look at the “figures of speech such as the simile . . . the metaphor . . . the personification . . . and the allusion or reference” (Novak 16) in the dialogue, and with Shakespeare there are many of these figures of speech. Most of these are repetitive and can easily be cut from the script. See Appendix F for a list of Shakespearean acting books and find one that works for the students.

In coaching high school actors in Shakespeare, the scariest aspect for a high school director is tackling the word SCANSION. “Scansion is the science, or perhaps the art, of “scanning” the poetic text to find the appropriate speaking meter” (Cohen 143). Scansion does not have to be used, however it does help keeping the Shakespearean text from sounding
rhythmical and it helps the actors and the audience understand what is being said. Scansion can be taught to the students in three easy steps, stress, unstressed, and verse foot.

Stressed and unstressed refer the emphasis put on certain syllables of text, if using the scanning marks, which are slash marks or dips above each word, I prefer to have the students underline the stressed word, all those slash and dips can be exhausting and scary for high school students to comprehend. To stress a script, “the stress is determined by the part of speech: ‘Impact’ stressed on the first syllable is a noun; stressed on the second syllable it’s a verb. And sometimes the stress is determined by the word’s meaning: the noun ‘content’. . . according to contextual emphasis. ‘I want to go to bed’ is normally stressed ‘i WANT to GO to BED,’ because ‘want,’ ‘go,’ and ‘bed’ are operative words of the sentence” (Cohen 145).

The last step of scansion is the verse foot, which is the easiest part of scansion, is the “combination of stressed and unstressed syllables . . . thus stressing the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth syllables” (Cohen 146). Here is an example from Cohen’s *Acting in Shakespeare*, the uppercase is stressed and the lower case is unstressed and the | marks indicate the foot:

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“can NOT | a PLAIN | man LIVE | and THINK | no HARM
he MIGHT | have TOOK | his ANS | wer LONG | aGO” (Cohen 146).
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This is the simplest way to scansion the script, there are many Shakespearean acting books that give different techniques, and depending on the verse you may have to use a different technique, refer to Appendix F for Shakespearean acting books, many of these have chapters over scansion. I have found in my experience that providing the students with the knowledge of scansion and then giving them some scenes to work on as homework, so other aspects of the show can be worked during rehearsals. I used scansion in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and I did not teach
my students scansion in *Romeo and Juliet*, in reflection I did those students a disservice by not teaching them scansion and I think *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was a better production because of it.

Next in the acting process is to mark the script with the students for pauses and inflections, work and collaborate on this task together do not just simply give them the answer. It needs to be collaborative because, often times students will surprise directors with a great ideas. As the director,

> “Challenge the kids to take this work seriously, but consider that little value is gained by mining the child’s psyche to create deep, dark emotional effects in the acting. We have found that the key to truthfulness with players of this age is to give them very strong dramatic situations, making sure they have as much information as possible, and then set them on a course of clear, direct action. They readily respond to strong emotions (anger, frustration, fear) and almost always embrace humor. Enhance these natural traits.” (Ceraso 11)

Give them a large amount of time to build their character, meet with lead characters periodically about their development to make sure they stay on tract.

Shakespearean acting creates a new challenge for student actors and even some experienced actors. Encourage students to look at how other performances of that role have been done in the past, especially if they are struggling with a certain scene or moment of the character, but they must still make that moment they’ve borrowed their own. Kevin Kline explains the concept as such, “Now, if the idea resonates, then it’s yours, you are now the author. If it doesn’t, it will always look or feel alien. You can steal from other actors? Of course. We’ve been stealing from the generations that have preceded us, especially when you play a classic part.
You’ve confiscated it, appropriated it. If a line reading or piece of business is merely borrowed, that’s no good. You must make it yours” (Maher 4). Explain the concept of stealing or borrowing from other performances to the student actors as such, because whether you tell them to or not they will watch other performances on their own and take ideas, which is fine, but they must translate those ideas into their own character and take ownership.

Week four is the student’s off book rehearsals, before tackling lines due, start the week with a full run-through of the play, by this time you have analyzed the script, blocked, worked, and added emotion to the scenes, this full run-through helps the director look at the whole production and note what needs worked, where actors are slacking and what blocking isn’t going to work.

Prior to off book rehearsals go over some memorization techniques with the students and understand that memorizing Shakespeare is much more challenging and difficult for a high school student who has never used language in that style. A helpful tool in memorization is defining the language which is why table working a Shakespearean play is an important part of the process, the students have to know what they are saying in order for them to process the lines into memory. I encourage and expect my students to memorize their lines exactly how they are written because it is imperative. If they don’t, the rhythm of the language and style of the verse will sound sloppy. Because of the style Shakespeare wrote it is imperative that they memorize the script word for word. With memorization I first explain to them that memory takes time, and emphasize that they cannot start learning their lines an hour or two prior to rehearsal.

The fifth and sixth weeks of rehearsals is finishing off book rehearsals and beginning polishing rehearsals. After off book rehearsals and before polishing rehearsals it is important to mention to the students to keep working on memorizing lines and working on character. The
goal of polishing rehearsals is to focus on cleaning up problem blocking and to work relationships between characters, and if students are calling for line every page they are not giving any characterization, then polishing rehearsals are pointless and might as well be called working rehearsals.

This can often be the long, tiresome and “the exhausting rehearsal process of finding what has been so carefully calculated in the language as effect; on the other lies the turning of those calculated forms into the illusion of something spontaneous” (Brown 145). Continue working on the language with the students but be adding scenic elements to the rehearsal process. Also, during this time focus on those problems noticed during the full run-through and on special requirements such as stage combat and music.

Week seven is the start of technical rehearsals, “the cast should be solidly prepared – lines, memorized, scenes blocked, and characterization under control – before technical rehearsals. The focus on running techs can distract from performers, neither director nor performers can expect a great deal of work on acting during techs” (Catron 192). Take notes on acting and technical aspects during this time, expect students to work on their notes outside of rehearsal time, but remain open for conference and guidance.

With a Shakespearean production, you want to put focus on the Publicity Crew, this is the crew that is going to get the word of mouth out to the public. Structure you publicity where it teaches your audience what the play is about, what time period and location you set it in, and do not be afraid to put “William Shakespeare” on the poster, remember he is a “household name” and most people will be intrigued about a civil war take on Shakespeare.

With publicity, you will want to open box office before and after school for students to purchase tickets during tech week. Tickets are also available for purchase during lunch at the
special events table. This all depends on the set up of your school and theatre. A great technique is to use the “town crier” effect and have some actors sign-up to walk around in costume telling other students to come see the show and buy tickets. I would also offer a special student priced tickets to increase ticket sales with students, since most English teachers will promote extra credit for attending the play.

It is apparent that Shakespeare takes extra preparation and rehearsal time, but the production aspects of Shakespeare are very similar to any number of other plays. The benefits for the students are numerous from language skills, to character building, ensemble and team work. Shakespeare “is the greatest English writer and the greatest playwright of whom the world has record. We owe him our devotion, and in preserving and reperforming his plays we serve him” (Berry 5). No matter the play that is choosen, there will be challenges and difficulties with any production, therefore there should be apprehension with directing any production. Don’t let the language or the production concept scare away the life enriching experience for the students, the audience and the director.
BOOKS ON DIRECTING AND SCRIPT ANALYSIS:

*Exit, pursued by a bear: Shakespeare’s characters, plays, poems, history, and stagecraft*

  by Louise McConnell (A book of definitions)

*Directing Shakespeare* by Sidney Homan

*Ms – Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* by Elizabeth Schafer

*Swashbuckling: A step-by-step guide to the art of stage combat and theatrical swordplay*

  by Richard Lane

*The Empty Space* by Peter Brook

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Authorized Acting Edition* by Peter Brook

*Shakespeare’s Othello: The Harbrace Theater Edition* edited by John Russell Brown

*Shakespeare’s Women: A Playscript for Performance and Analysis* by Libby Appel
*_How to Approach W. Shakespeares’s Plays*_ by Marie Publications (version for each play)

*A Lifetime with Shakespeare: Notes from an American Director of All 38 Plays* by Paul Barry

*Directing Shakespeare in the Contemporary Theatre (The Theatre Student)* by Frank Alonzo McMullan

*_How to Master Shakespeare’s Diction – A Comprehensive Dictionary*_ by Marie Publications

*The Conceptual Design in Shakespeare’s Comedy: An Analysis of Comic Form* by Rose A. Zimbardo

*Shakespeare on the Double!* by Mary Ellen Snodgrass (version for each play)

**APPENDIX B**

**CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES FOR CAST:**

_Theseus:_ Male, Age 35-45 years. The Duke of Athens, commanding presence and voice.

_Egeus:_ Male or Female, Age 40-45 years. Father or Mother of Helena, very distempered.

_Lysander:_ Male, Age 20 years. One of the lovers, speaks his mind and carefree.

_Demetrius:_ Male, Age 22 years. One of the lovers, conservative, strict adherence to rules.

_Philostrate:_ Male or Female, Age 30 years. Master of Revels, uptight but funny.

_Hippolyta:_ Female, Age 20 years. Quiet, unhappy with Theseus, but does what she’s told.

_Hermia:_ Female, Age 18 years. Shorter than Helena. Free spirited, defies authority.

_Helena:_ Female, Age 18 years. Taller than Hermia. Conservative, obsessed over Demetrius.

_Quince:_ Male or Female, Age 33 years. Director of the Actors, serious.

_Snug:_ Male or Female, Age 24 years. First time performing, scared, acts as the lion.

_Bottom:_ Male, Age 27 years. Acts as a professional actor, big/over-the-top.
Flute: Male, Age 20 years. Plays the female role, but doesn’t want to. Speaks falsetto.

Snout: Male or Female, Age 31 years. Play with a lisp or ignorant but funny. Plays “Wall”

Starveling: Male, Age 40 years. Serious, fat, wants to finish rehearsing to eat. “Moonshine”

Oberon: Male, Age 25. Strong, fit and in charge, does not like to be disobeyed. Bi-polar

Titania: Female, Age 25. Strong female, doesn’t care what Oberon thinks.

Puck: Male or Female, Age 15 years. Athletic and lots of physicality in movement.

Peaseblossom: Male or Female. Age 15 years. Fairy. Needs to sing Titania to sleep.

Cobweb: Male or Female. Age 15 years. Fairy. Dance and aerobic.

Moth: Male or Female. Age 15 years. Fairy. Sings with Peaseblossom.

Mustardseed: Male or Female. Age 15 years. Fairy. Lightweight, sits on Bottom.

Other Fairies: Male or Female. Age 15 years. Dance and aerobic movements.

APPENDIX C

MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM
SCENE BREAKDOWN:

Introduction & Transitions:
Oberon Titania Puck All Fairies
Scene #1 – pages 1-8:
Theseus Hippolyta Philostrate Attendants Egeus Hermia
Lysander Demetrius Helena
Scene #2 – pages 9-11:
Quince Snug Bottom Flute Snout Starveling
Moth Puck Oberon Titania All Fairies
Scene #3 – pages 12-18:
Moth Puck Oberon Demetrius Helena Puck
Scene #4 – pages 18-20:
Oberon Demetrius Helena Puck
Scene #5 – pages 20-25:
Titania Oberon Puck All Fairies Lysander Hermia
Demetrius Helena
Scene #6 – pages 26-29:
Quince Snug Bottom Flute Snout Starveling
Puck
Scene #7 – pages 29-31:
Bottom Titania Titania’s Fairies
Scene #8 – pages 31-35:
Oberon  Puck  Demetrius  Hermia

Scene #9 – pages 35-41:
Oberon  Puck  Demetrius  Lysander  Hermia  Helena

Scene #10 – pages 41-45:
Oberon  Puck  Demetrius  Lysander  Hermia  Helena

Scene #11 – pages 46-49:
Titania  Bottom  Oberon  Puck  Titania’s Fairies

Scene #12 – pages 49-52:
Theseus  Hippolyta  Attendants  Lysander  Demetrius  Hermia  Helena  Egeus

Scene #13 – pages 52-53:
Quince  Snug  Bottom  Flute  Snout  Starveling

Scene #14 – pages 54-57:
Hippolyta  Theseus  Lysander  Demetrius  Helena  Hermia

Philosote  Attendants

Scene #15 – pages 57-66:
Hippolyta  Theseus  Lysander  Demetrius  Helena  Hermia

Quince  Snug  Bottom  Flute  Snout  Starveling  Puck

APPENDIX D

CUTTING THE SCRIPT:

Words enclosed in {} replace the word(s) cut from that line.

ACT I – SCENE 1 – ATHENS
THE PALACE OF THESEUS

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and ATTENDANTS.

THE. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! She {prolongs} my desires,
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

HIP. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our {solemnities}.

THE. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the port and nimble spirit of mirth;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp. [Exit PHILOSTRATE.]
Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
{public festivity}

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

EGE. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!
THE. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

EGE. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch’d the bower of my child: {heart}
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in beauteous youth:
With cunning hast thou filch’d my daughter’s heart; {stolen}
Turn’d he obedience, which is due to me,
To subborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provide in that case.

THE. What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

APPENDIX E

MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM  TENETIVE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

September,  24  5:00-6:00  MANDATORY Meeting – Schedule & Scripts
     25  6:00-7:00  Tablework & Block Scene #1
                     7:00-8:00  Tablework & Block Scene #2 and #6
     26  6:00-6:45  Tablework & Block Scene #7 and #11
                     6:45-7:30  Choreograph Introduction & Transitions
                     7:30-8:30  Tablework & Block Scene #3
     27  6:00-6:45  Tablework & Block Scene #5
                     6:45-7:30  Tablework & Block Scene #4
                     7:30-8:15  Tablework & Block Scene #8
                     8:15-9:00  Tablework & Block Scene #9
     28  NO REHEARSAL – HOMECOMING

October,  1  6:00-6:45  Tablework & Block Scene #10
     2 UCM WORKSHOPS – NO REHEARSAL
     3 TEACHER WORKDAY – NO SCHOOL – NO REHEARSAL
     4  6:00-7:00  Tablework & Block Scene #13
                     7:00-8:00  Tablework & Block Scene #15
     8  6:00-9:00  Full Runthrough – All Cast
     9  6:00-9:00  Work Introduction, Transitions, Scene #3, #7, #11
     10  6:00-9:00  Work Scene #1, #12, #14, #4
     11  6:00-9:00  Work Scene #15, #2, #6, #13
     15  6:00-9:00  Work Scene #5, #8, #9, #10
     16  6:00-9:00  TBA – Work Scenes, Introduction & Transitions
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>LINES DUE: Scenes: #3, #7, #11</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>LINES DUE: Scenes: #1, #12, #14, #4</td>
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<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>LINES DUE: Scenes: #15, #2, #6, #13</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>NO REHEARSAL – FALL CHOIR CONCERT</td>
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<td>NO REHEARSAL – PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES</td>
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<td>LINES DUE: Scenes: #5, #8, #9, #10</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>Full Runthrough – All Cast</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>6:00-7:30</td>
<td>Polish – Act I</td>
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<td>7:30-9:00</td>
<td>Polish – Act II</td>
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<td>November, 1</td>
<td>6:00-7:30</td>
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<td>7:30-9:00</td>
<td>Polish – Act IV</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4:00-7:00</td>
<td>Shoot Commercial for Channel 1 – All Cast</td>
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<td>6:00-7:30</td>
<td>Polish – Act V</td>
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<td>7:30-9:00</td>
<td>Polish – Introduction &amp; Transitions</td>
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<td>Full Runthrough – ON STAGE</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>Full Runthrough – ON STAGE</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>1ST TECH – Lights &amp; Sound</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>2ND TECH – Lights &amp; Sound &amp; Costumes</td>
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<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>3RD TECH – Lights &amp; Sound &amp; Makeup</td>
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<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>4TH TECH – PARENT’S NIGHT &amp; PHOTO CALL</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
<td>FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>6:00 CALL</td>
<td>PERFORMANCE &amp; STRIKE</td>
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**APPENDIX F**

**BOOKS ON SHAKESPEAREAN ACTING:**

*Mastering Shakespeare: An Acting Class in Seven Scenes* by Scott Kaiser

*Will Power: How to Act Shakespeare in 21 Days* by John Basil

*A Shakespearean Actor Prepares* by Adrian Brine and Michael York

*Who’s Who in Shakespeare: The characters, proper names, and sources of all the plays and poems* by Francis Griffin Stokes

*All the Words on Stage: A Complete Pronunciation Dictionary for the plays of William Shakespeare* by Louis Scheeder and Shane Anne Younds

*Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice: An Actor’s Guide to Talking the Text* by Kristin Linklater

*Exposed by the Mask: Form and Language in Drama* by Peter Hall

*Acting Shakespeare* (DVD)
Playing Shakespeare (DVD)

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach (A Theatre Arts Book) by Patrick Tucker

Acting Shakespeare by John Gielgud

Speaking Shakespeare by Patsy Rodenburg

Clues to Acting Shakespeare by Wesley Van Tassel

Playing Shakespeare: An Actor’s Guide by John Barton

Shakespeare’s Words: A Glossary and Language Companion by David Crystal

Acting Shakespeare and His Contemporaries by Kurt Daw

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Ceraso, Christopher, and Michael Bernard. The Teen Acting Ensemble, a Companion to 52 Pick-up: a Practical Guide to Doing Theater with Teenagers Modeled after the


