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ABSTRACT

The purpose of these lessons is to provide learning experiences which facilitate junior high and senior high school actors' mastery of stage movements when working with scripts. Suggested exercises include practice in finding motivation for actors' stage movements, acting a scene (from "West Side Story"), and interpreting and acting scenes of choice from recommended sources. Criteria for evaluation of learning progress are delineated. (KS)

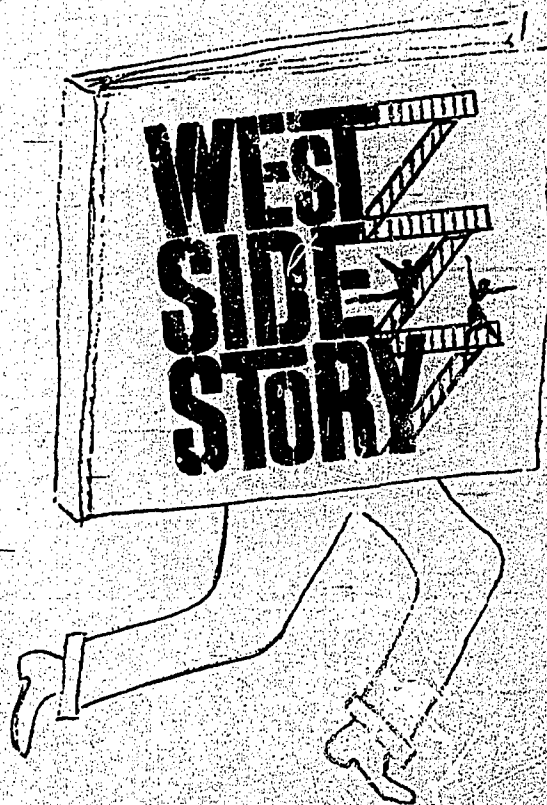
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STAGE MOVEMENT WITH SCRIPTS

TAP* 211

Booklet No. _____



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August, 1974

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STAGE MOVEMENT WITH SCRIPTS

INTRODUCTION

Once an actor knows some fundamentals about such things as stage areas, strong and weak stage positions, "sharing" and "taking" scenes, etc., he needs to learn to what degree all this information will influence his movement when working on stage with a script.

PRE-- EVALUATION

1. The purpose of a pre-evaluation is to help the learner discover how much he already knows and how much he needs to learn. If the pre-evaluation is extremely easy for him, then perhaps he should skip the learning package and try a more difficult one.
2. This package (TAP 211) is designed as a sequel to TAP 210. If you found TAP 210 instructive and useful, there is no need for you to bother with a pre-evaluation. Go right on to Lesson One.
3. If you are among the few who found TAP 210 too easy and uninformative or if you skipped TAP 210 because you were able to complete its pre-evaluation with 100% accuracy, you may also find this package too elementary. As a test of your ability do Activity #2 of Lesson One and Activity #8 of Lesson Two and show your work to your instructor who will then judge whether you need to complete other activities in this package.

LESSON ONE: FINDING MOTIVATION FOR MOVEMENT

PURPOSE:

There are times when movement on stage seems advisable either because a given "stage picture" becomes static or because the entrance of a new character will be more effective if the arrangement of characters currently on stage were different. At moments like these the actor must search his resources to make that move seem meaningful rather than mechanical. This lesson provides some means of developing those resources.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Given a specific scene and three different stage positions for the actors at three different moments in that scene, the learner will be able to suggest plausible motivation for the actors to move to the pre-set positions. He will suggest the motivation either by acting out the scene or by writing precise stage directions for other actors to follow.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The term motivation may be new to you though you have already been working with the concept in TAP-210. Another TAP deals with the concept in greater detail, but here is a definition for now: Motivation means that a character has a reason (MOTIVE) to move from one area on stage to another. It is not sufficient for the actor to move because the director told him to or because the change in position "looks" better; the actor must know WHY the character he is portraying would be drawn to the new area or would want to move away from the old one.
2. The activities in this lesson often prescribe how and/or where the actors should move. This is, by no means, a particularly desirable procedure when doing scene work; it is nice to allow an actor freedom of movement. But sometimes prescribed movement is necessary and the following exercises help the actor develop useful techniques for smoothing out some clumsy movements on stage.
3. As in TAP 210 and Lesson Two in this packet, it is expected that three actors will be working together on the activities. Sometimes this will mean acting together, sometimes (such as in Activity #2) it will mean sharing ideas before working independently, and sometimes it will require that one person observe while the other two read through a two-character scene. If all three learners want to act a scene, perhaps, you can work up two performances of it.
4. The learner must complete Activities #1, 2, 3 and 5. Activity #4 is recommended but not required.

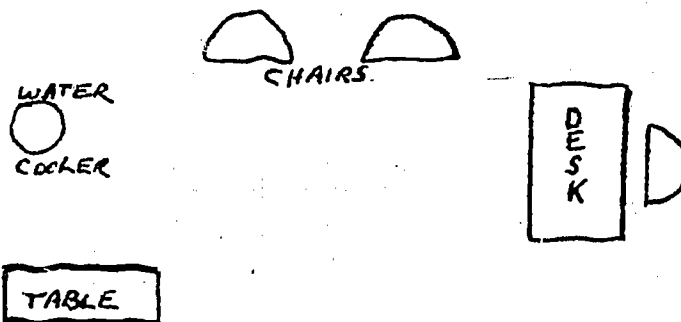
5. Copies of the Student Handbook referred to in Activities #2,3 and 5 are available in the Drama Resource Area.

6. When you are ready for a post-evaluation, arrange a time and place for it with your instructor.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Do the following improvisational exercise with two other actors:

- A. Set up an acting space with a desk, a small table, a water cooler (you may wish to use a chair to represent "water cooler") and two chairs in addition to the one at the desk. From a top view the area might look something like this:

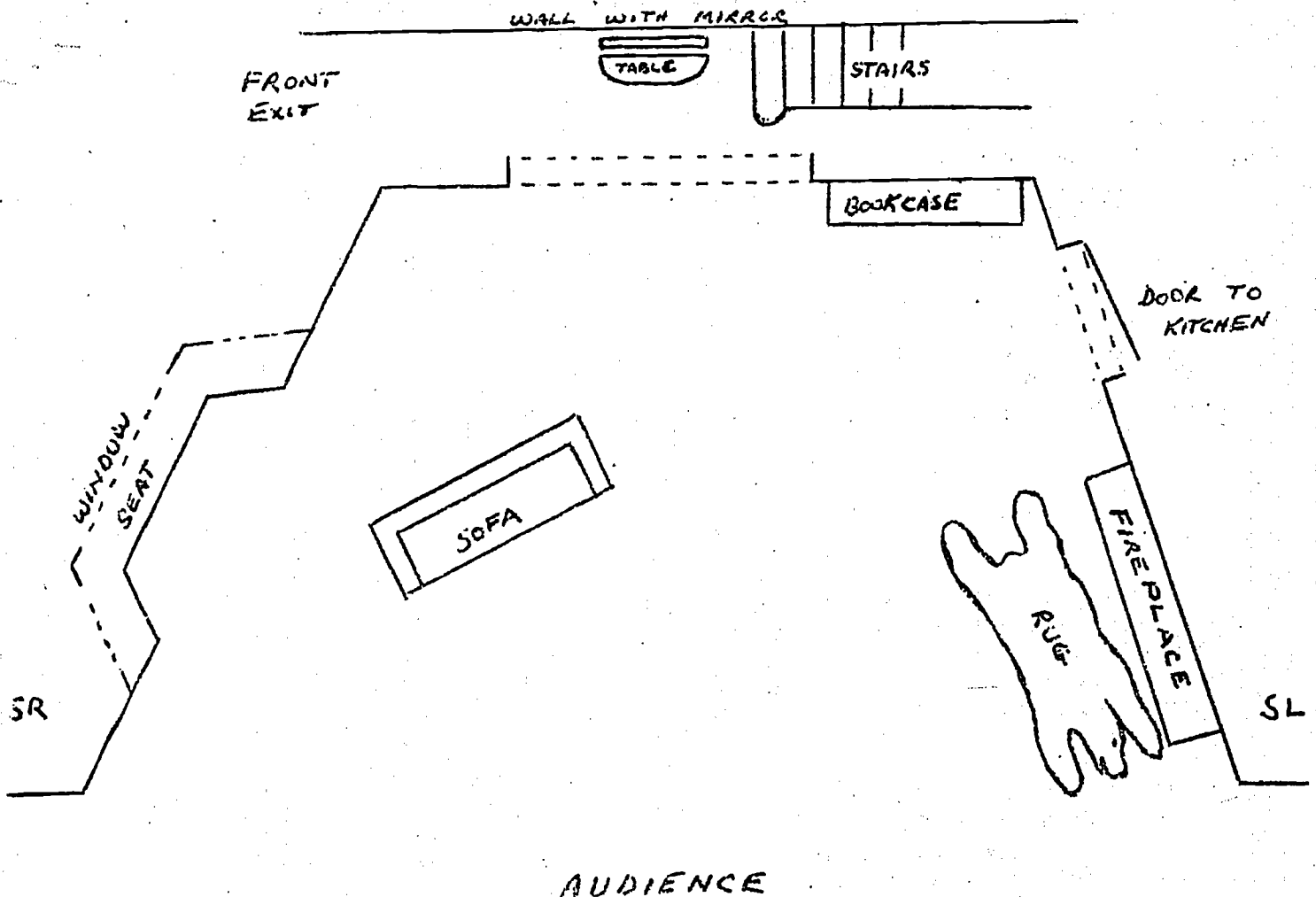


In addition agree on the location of two doors and a window (which will be pantomimed in your improvisation).

- B. Next, decide what this area represents. Some possibilities are: the waiting room for a doctor or dentist's office; an employment agency office; the reception area outside an executive's office.
- C. Having given your acting space an identity, decide on the identity of the three characters who will meet or come together in that space. Some possibilities are: two patients and a receptionist; two job applicants and an employment counselor; an executive, his secretary and a client; three burglars.
- D. Improvise a scene in which at least one of the characters is striving to overcome an obstacle of some sort. All three characters must enter into the conversation two or more times.
- E. Repeat the above improvisation, but this time each character must make contact with (touch in some way) a new piece of furniture or door or window immediately before or immediately after he speaks. Of course this will create some artificial movement, but as you are doing the exercise see if you can discover a possible reason (other than "I have to touch something new") for the character you are playing to move to a new location.
- F. Exchange roles and try doing the exercise outlined in E again.

The reason for doing this improvisation may not be immediately apparent. However, you should begin to understand its value if and when you do Activity #4.

2. Locate a copy of Drama, Student Handbook in the Resource Area and turn to page 57. Read the detailed description of the set for Act One of The Son on page 57 and 58. Then fill out and label the ground plan below with additional furniture mentioned in the description. (If "ground plan" is a new term for you, read page 56 of the same book.)



When dealing with a script, one of the first things an actor must do is visualize the setting of a particular scene he will be performing, and sketching in a ground plan is a useful way to understand more clearly whatever information the author gives in his opening description.

3. Read the entire scene from The Son (pages 57-59) in Drama, Student Handbook. You will note that at the top of page 57 the text explains that the scene is from an acting edition of the play. Acting editions of plays are provided by most script supply houses like Samuel French and Dramatists Play Service. The stage directions are quite detailed and are often a description of how, where, and when the actors moved in the Broadway production of the play.

The fact that specific actions and movements are included in acting editions of plays does not make them "right" and all other actions "wrong". In fact, many actors and directors strive to avoid following the stage directions provided in acting editions of plays; they want to create their own characters and their own impressions of the play. However, reading the printed stage directions carefully may give the actor some insights about the way the character he's portraying feels and what kind of movement seems appropriate for the character. The fact that Mrs. Reed is pacing at the opening of The Son, for example, establishes that she is nervous. So does her drumming her fingers. But there are other things an actress could do to show nervousness: rub her palms, pick dirt from her fingernails, etc.

As an exercise in finding motivation for movement take the short scene from The Son and plan out the movement of the two characters so that one or both of them touch or use three of the following objects on a stage set up according to the ground plan you drew for Activity #2.

The window
The kitchen door
One set of bookcases
The stairs

There is nothing special about these objects except that they are not referred to by the printed stage directions describing the movements of Doris and Carson. Therefore, the exercise forces you to discover some different movements for the actors. However, you are not prohibited from using some of the movements described in the printed directions (e.g. pacing, looking at a watch, etc.).

This exercise may be completed in one of three ways:

- A. With script in hand, act out* your revised movement for the scene with a fellow student. Find an audience of one or more people (your instructor, fellow students, etc.) and have one member of the audience fill in the blanks of the following sentence.

I observed _____ and _____
walk through a scene called The Son. The movement in their scene was
different from the acting script which I was asked to read.

Signed _____

- B. With script in hand, act out* the scene before a videotape camera and recorder. Bring the tape with you to your post-evaluation.

*Since the focus of this exercise is on movement it is possible and permissible for two men to do this reading or two women. It is not necessary to have a man and a woman.

- C. Write out the scene from The Son using your own stage directions to replace the ones in the acting script. Remember to include movement to or near three of the following objects: window, kitchen door, bookcase, stairs.

If this activity seems difficult to complete, go on to Activity #4 and then come back to Activity #3.

4. Improvise the Doris - Carson scene without a script; just approximate what it is they say. But, as in Activity #1, make it a rule that each time before a character speaks he must make contact with a new piece of furniture or object in the room.

Then repeat this exercise using the printed script (but not following the printed stage directions). Remember, as in Activity #1, see if you can discover a possible reason (other than "I have to touch something new") for the character you are playing to move to a new location.

Obviously this exercise causes the actor to move about the stage much more than is necessary or desirable. But what it also does is force the actor to discover new possible relationships between the character he is portraying and objects in the room. Perhaps one or two of these relationships will be worth developing and using in a final presentation of the scene.

5. This activity will serve as a post-test to determine how well you can meet the performance objective of this lesson. The following dialogue is the opening scene of the one-act comedy "The Marriage Proposal." The entire play can be found in Drama, Student Handbook beginning on page 64.

Using the ground plan on page 63 of Student Handbook either act out this brief scene (script in hand) or write precise stage directions for other actors to follow. Your only restriction involves the three speeches that are boxed in on the script below. In each case you are to arrange it that sometime during the boxed in speech the speaker will either be sitting on the window seat or standing near it.

There is no hidden reason in the script why the speaker must be by the window during these speeches. It is just a mechanical problem for you to solve with well-motivated movement.

Again, this scene may be acted by two women or a man and a woman; your emphasis should be an effective stage movement rather than the accuracy of your casting.

THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

by

ANTON CHEKHOV

CHARACTERS

STEPAN STEPANOVICH, landowner

NATALIA STEPANOVNA, his daughter, twenty-five and unmarried

IVAN VASSILEVITCH, a neighboring landowner, healthy but worried about his health.

SCENE: Stepan's living room. IVAN enters, wearing a white tie and tails.

STEPAN (rising). Ivan! Come in, come in! (Squeezes his hand.) What a surprise to see you here, my boy, how are you?

IVAN. I'm all right, not too bad. How are you?

STEPAN. Getting by, getting by. Please sit down. You've been forgetting your neighbors haven't you, dear boy? I haven't seen you for ages. But why are you wearing evening clothes? Gloves, stick, hat? Are you going to a funeral?

IVAN. No, no, I'm just coming to visit you, my dear Stepan Stepanovich.

STEPAN. But why are you wearing tails, old man, it isn't New Year's Eve, you know?

IVAN. Well, it's like this. I have come, dear Stepan Stepanovich, to trouble you with a small request. I have come, as I have come before, more than once, as you know, to seek you assistance, which, as you know, you have more than once--May I have some water, please?

STEPAN (to himself). He wants to borrow money! Fat chance! (to Ivan) Yes, dear friend, go on, what can I do for you?

IVAN. Yes, well, the fact is my dear Stepanich...Excuse me, please, I mean my dear Itchanstep...Oh Lord, I'm so confused as I'm sure you have noticed... In an case, and to make a long story short, you're the only person in the world who can help me and of course I don't deserve your help in the least, and I have no right to expect anything from you.

(Pause)

STEPAN. Yes? Well, go ahead, spit it out. What is it?

IVAN. Spit it out? Yes right away. I'll tell you right away. You see, to be perfectly frank and come to the point, I have come to ask for the hand.. that is, as regards Natalia Stepanovna, your daughter, I want to marry her!

STEPAN. (Joyfully). My dear, dear fellow! Say it again!

IVAN. I respectfully request the honor...

STEPAN. Ivan, you're a prince, a genius! I am overwhelmed etcetera, etcetera. I have been waiting and waiting for this day. (Tearfully) I have always loved you, dear Ivan, as if you were my own son. May God grant you His Love and Mercy, etcetera. But why am I standing here like a fool? I'm delirious with joy, out of my head with happiness...I'll go get Natalia, etcetera and so forth.

IVAN. Dear Stepan, will she accept?

STEPAN. Why of course, dear boy, of course. She's mad about you, like a lovesick cat. I'll be right back. (leaves)

POST-EVALUATION

1. Set up a time with your instructor for your post-evaluation.
2. Bring with you your ground plan from Activity #2 and some evidence that you have completed either A, B, or C of Activity #3.
3. Be prepared to present and discuss your solution to the problem posed in Activity #5.

LESSON TWO: ACTING A SCENE

PURPOSE:

The piano player learns scales, chords, etc., so that he can feel confident about playing an entire song or musical composition. The baseball player welcomes instruction on gripping the bat, the proper batting stance, etc., because he looks forward to using that information in a game. Likewise, the actor does the kind of activities you have done in TAP 210 and Lesson One of this package with the main objective of putting it all together and moving about a stage in a scene from an actual play. This lesson gives you that opportunity.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

The learners will perform two brief scenes from the musical play West Side Story before their instructor. The movement in each scene will help the audience focus on the most important character or action at particular moments during the scene and will seem to come from inner needs of the characters rather than from the external needs of a director striving for a pretty stage picture.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. This lesson again calls for the participation of three actors even though all but one of the scenes you may choose contain only two characters. You are to choose two scenes so that, through rotation, all three actors perform in at least one scene and two of you have the opportunity to be observer-directors.

2. Specially marked copies of West Side Story are available in the Drama Resource Area. You are to select two of the six brief scenes which are outlined with red borders on the following pages:

<u>Pages</u>	<u>Act and scene numbers</u>	<u>Types of characters</u>
145-148	Act I Scene 2	2 Men
150, 151	Act I Scene 3	2 Women
159-161	Act I Scene 5	1 Man 1 Women
		1 Offstage Voice
181, 182	Act I Scene 7	2 Women 1 Man (Extra)
198, 199	Act II Scene 1	1 Man 1 Women
220, 221	Act II Scene 5	2 Men

3. One reason that the required selections are short is to reduce the problem of memorization. You are expected to memorize your parts, but the emphasis of this lesson is on movement not memorization. You should be able to memorize the scene during the process of rehearsal or with very little outside effort.

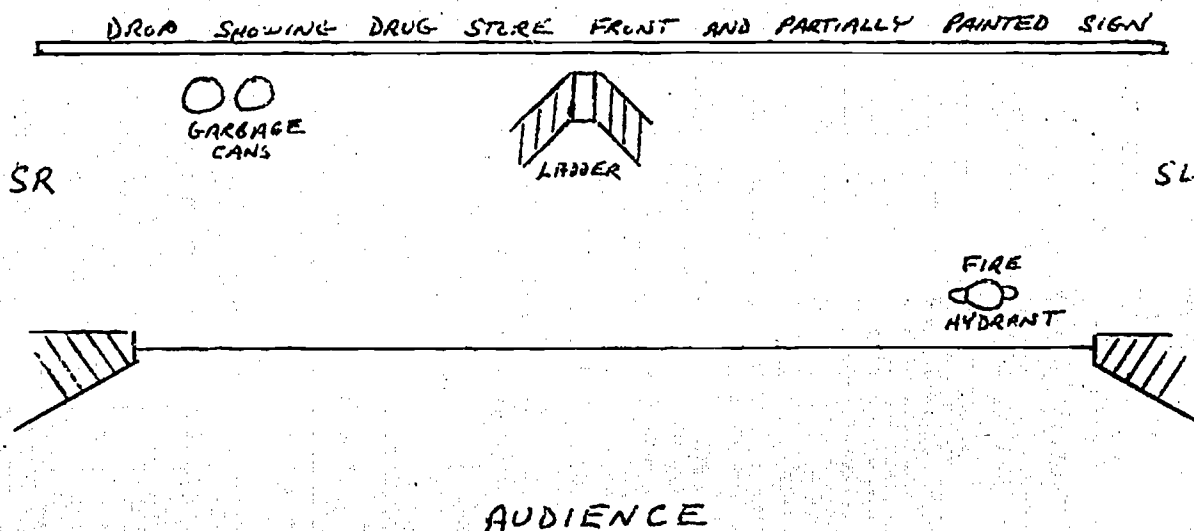
4. Of the activities listed below 1 and 8 are optional but strongly recommended. You must complete two of the activities numbered 2 through 7.
5. Once you believe your two scenes are ready for performance, arrange a time and place where you can present your finished product to your instructor and invited guests.
6. Please complete and turn in the evaluation sheet on the last page of this package. It asks you to assess the effectiveness of all five lessons in TAP 210 and 211. It is not required that you sign the evaluation sheet.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Since the characters you will be portraying are all featured characters in West Side Story, they appear in a number of scenes throughout the play. It would be helpful if you would read (or re-read) the entire play so you will have a more complete picture of the personality of the character(s) you will be portraying. Pay particular attention to the description of your character the first time he (or she) appears in the play. And as you read on think about how your character usually moves: excitedly? dreamily? wearily? or what? Even when you're only performing a brief scene from a play, you can learn a tremendous amount about playing the characters in that scene by studying how they behave in other scenes

Since West Side Story is a musical play, you may wish to listen to a recording of the songs as well. A copy of the record is also available in the Drama Resource Area.

2. The first scene from West Side Story you might choose to prepare for performance is in Act I Scene 2 on pages 145-148. Read the scene carefully and decide at what points Riff should be the center of focus and when the focus shifts to Tony. Use the following groundplan for the setting of the scene and plan out (through rehearsals) a performance of the scene.

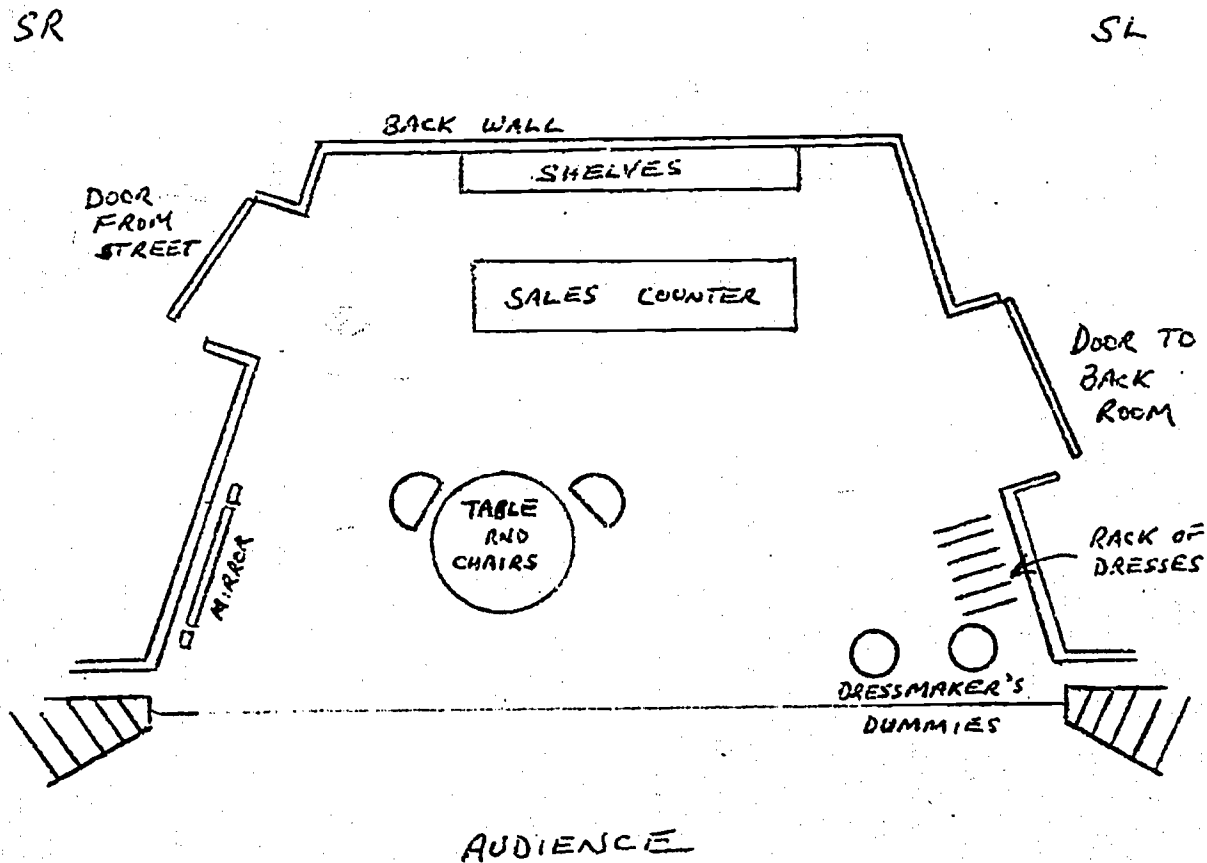


You may wish to use an actual ladder in performing this scene but the rest of the scenery can be suggested by boxes and curtains.

Remember, your main objective is to invent effective stage movement to accompany this scene. And to be effective the movement should have clear motivation.

Since at the end of this scene Tony sings "Something's Coming," you may wish to play that song from the recording as a conclusion to your performance.

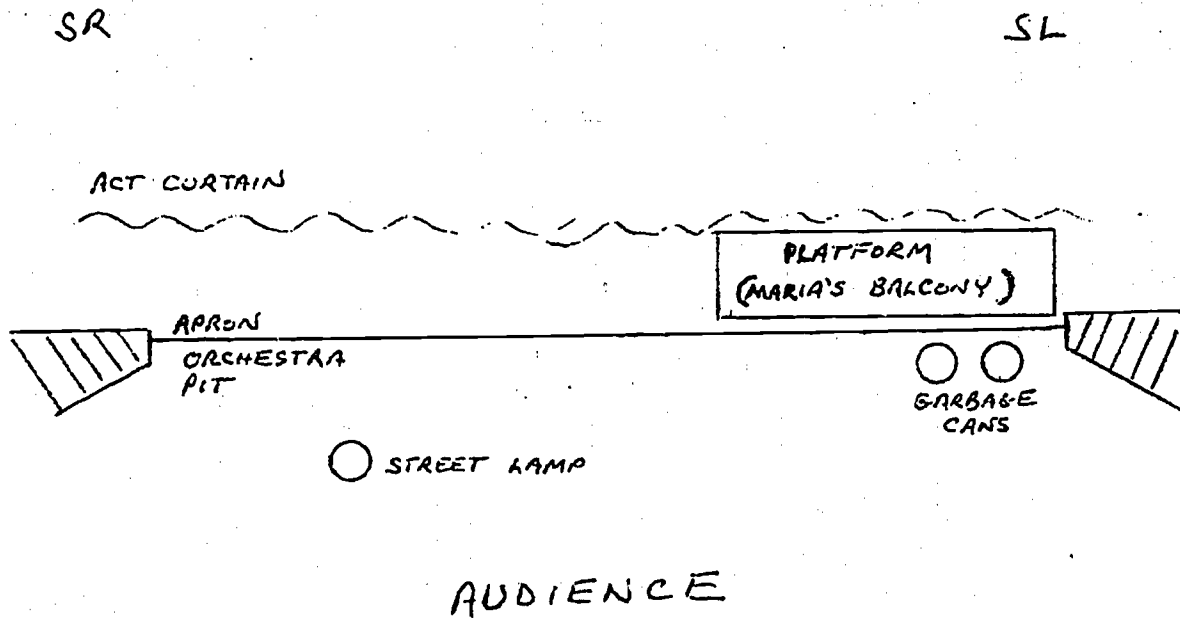
3. The next scene you might choose from West Side Story is in Act I, Scene 3, and it begins on page 150. Read the scene carefully and decide at what points Anita should be in sharpest focus and at what times Maria should dominate the scene. Use the following ground plan for the setting of the scene and plan out (through rehearsals) a performance of the scene.



Of course, you do not have to set up all this scenery, but you can suggest the dimensions of the bridal shop with curtains, boxes, the backs of chairs, etc.

Remember, the main objective is to invent effective stage movement to accompany this scene. And to be effective the movement should have clear motivation.

4. Another scene you may choose is located on page 159 and comes from Act I Scene 5, West Side Story's equivalent of the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet. The "balcony" in this case is a fire escape and you may wish to represent the fire escape landing with as high a platform as you can locate. Or perhaps you might like to find an "on location" spot around school (a stair well, a bay window, some bleachers, etc.) where you can present the scene. If you decide to use a regular stage, try setting it up according to the following ground plan and play the scene using both the orchestra pit and stage apron:



Read the scene carefully and decide at what points Tony should receive the greatest focus and at what points the focus should shift to Maria.

Since at the end of this scene Tony and Maria sing "Tonight", you may wish to play that song from the recording as a conclusion to your performance. Remember, your main objective is to invent effective stage movement to accompany this scene. And to be effective the movement should have clear motivation.

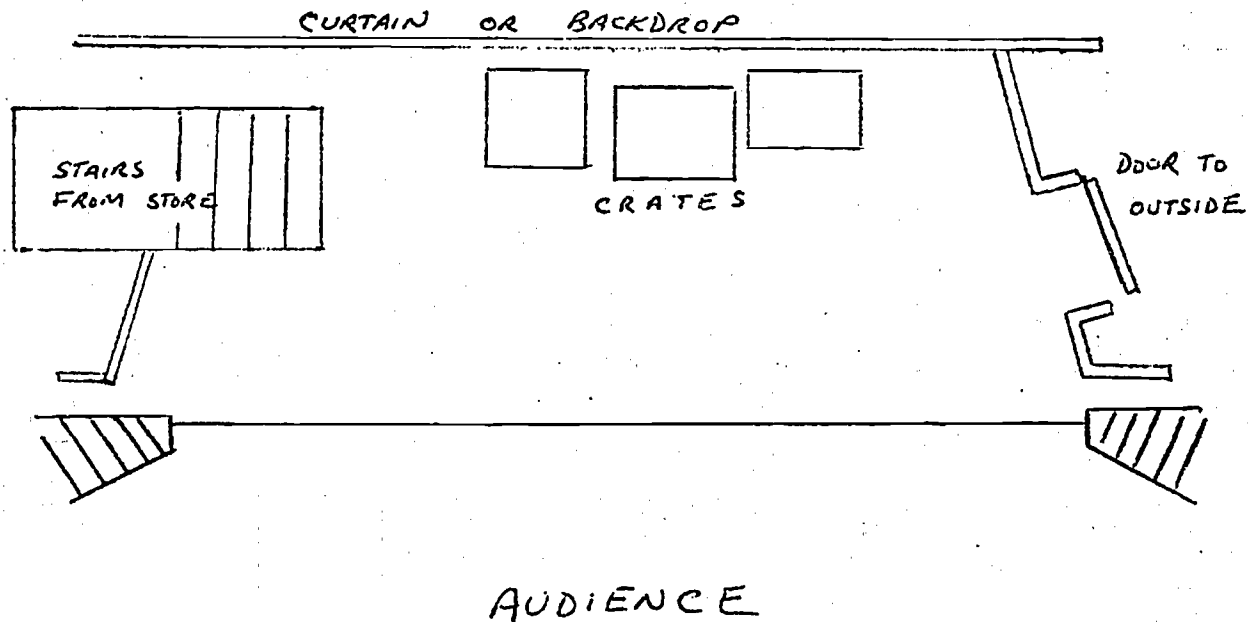
5. A second bridal shop scene in West Side Story follows the "balcony" scene and begins on page 181. If you choose to do this scene, you will note that you will need a third actor to play the role of Tony; this could be done by a boy or a girl. Read the scene carefully and decide which character is in greater focus during different parts of the scene. Use the same ground plan that appears under Activity 3 and plan out (through rehearsals) a performance of the scene.

Remember, your main objective is to invent effective stage movement to accompany this scene. And to be effective the movement should have clear motivation.

7. A final two character scene in West Side Story occurs on page 220. Read it carefully and decide at what points the focus shifts from Tony to Doc and vice-versa. Use the following ground plan for the setting of the scene, and plan out (through rehearsals) a performance of the scene:

SR

SL



Remember, your main objective is to invent effective stage movement to accompany this scene. And to be effective the movement should have clear motivation.

8. All the selections mentioned in Activities 2 through 7 are quite short. You might consider typing out your own copy of the scenes you will be acting in. There are three possible benefits from this activity: 1) The copying process will slow down your reading of the scene and by so doing may allow you to note some subtle effect of the author's choice of words or stage directions. 2) Copying the scene may prove an aid to memorization. 3) When you are finished, you have a script you can mark, noting crosses, small adjustments in movement, words which should be stressed, reactions to the other character's lines, etc. This is called an acting script (or prompt script in the hands of the director or assistant director).

If you choose to make a prompt script, show it to your instructor following the performance of your scene.

POST-EVALUATION:

1. Your post-evaluation will consist of your performing the two scenes from West Side Story you have chosen to prepare. Arrange an appropriate time for the performances with your instructor.
2. At that time you should also bring with you your copy of this packet (with all necessary blanks filled in) and any other materials you may have collected or created in the course of doing these lessons.
3. Also please detach this sheet, fill out your evaluation of this packet and TAP 210, and turn in. You do not have to sign your name to this form, but, please its your opinion we're interested in, so make your comments without talking over the questionnaire with others.

EVALUATION OF TAP 210 AND 211

1. Were the instructors for acting the shadow scene with the "Hello's" and "Good-bye's" adequate?

_____ yes _____ no

Suggestions:

2. How well did you enjoy doing that scene?

_____ a lot! _____ some _____ not much _____ not at all

3. Did you get tired of running through the scene titled "A Family Difference"?

_____ no _____ a little _____ yes, a lot!
 _____ yes, but I felt it was worthwhile doing that often.

4. How useful did you find the information about stage movement you were asked to read about in a acting or directing textbook?

_____ very useful _____ fairly useful _____ not very useful
 _____ I knew most of it already

5. Which lessons do you feel were helpful in preparing you so that you had an easier time rehearsing and performing your scenes from West Side Story?

_____ All of them	_____ TAP 210 Lesson Three
_____ TAP 210 Lesson One	_____ TAP 211 Lesson One
_____ TAP 210 Lesson Two	_____ None of them

What additional preparation do you feel you needed? (Write comment on back)

6. What changes in the lessons would you recommend?

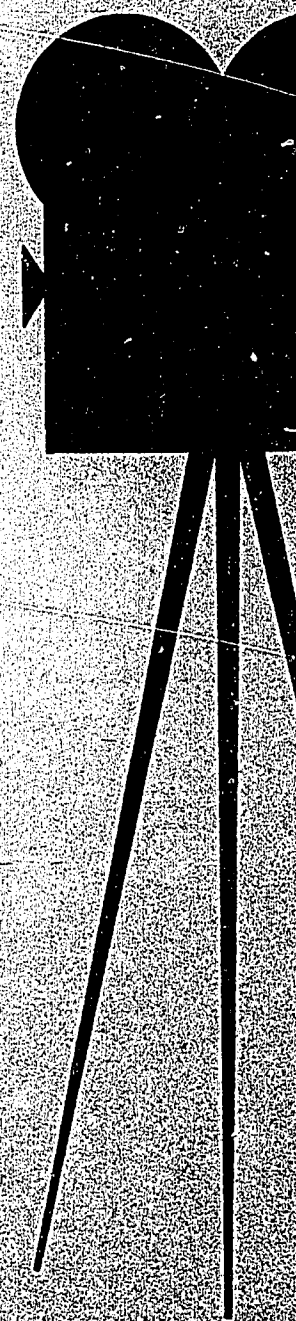
7. How would you rate these two packages? _____ No Good _____ Some Good

_____ OK _____ Good _____ Very Good

(Optional) Signed _____

MORE WORK V

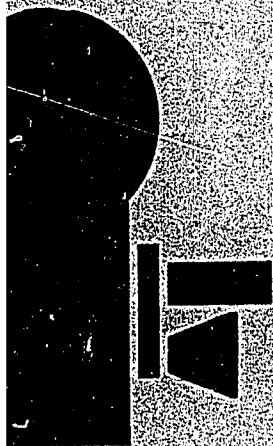
TAP*



CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL
Clayton, Missouri 63105

WITH SCENES

212



*Theatre Arts Package ©

Written by:
Alan Engelsman
August 30, 1974

MORE WORK WITH SCENES

PURPOSE:

Having had a taste of creating movement and interpreting brief scenes from West Side Story (in Theatre Arts Package #211), most actors will want to go on and try the same process with slightly longer scenes of their own choosing.

PRE-EVALUATION

1. The purpose of a pre-evaluation is to help the learner discover how much he already knows and how much he needs to learn. If the pre-evaluation is extremely easy for him, then perhaps he should skip the learning package and try a more difficult one.
2. This package (TAP 212) is designed as a sequel to TAP 211. If you found TAP 211 instructive and useful, there is no need for you to bother with a pre-evaluation. Go right on to the Performance Objective and the Activities following it.
3. If you found TAP 211/^{too easy} and if, after reading through this package, you believe you are ready to take on a more ambitious project, see your instructor. You might alter the performance objective to do a full one-act, a particular style of acting, or some other more demanding variation.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Two learners will perform a 5 to 10 minute scene that they choose from one of several recommended or approved sources. The performers will have memorized their lines and will be able to explain how their stage movement was intended to enhance the meaning of the script.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Note that the performance objective limits the scene you perform to one involving two actors. It seems like a logical progression to gain experience dealing with a two person scene before tackling more complex scenes with several characters. Another advantage is that two people can more readily arrive at mutual concensus than three or more people and they are less likely to be frustrated by the failure of one member of a group to show up.
2. Do as many of the following activities as you feel are necessary to meet the performance objective.
3. When you believe you have met that objective, schedule a performance time and place with your instructor and select an appropriate audience. See Post-Evaluation.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Select a partner and together select a scene to perform. There are many scripts you may browse through in the Drama Resource Area. Some of the most likely books you might begin with are:
28 Scenes for Acting Practice
30 Scenes for Acting Practice

32 Scenes for Acting PracticeGreat Scenes from World Theatre Vol. IGreat Scenes from World Theatre Vol. IIPlay Readings by Louise FrankensteinAn Actor's Workbook by Kahan

Remember, though, you are to choose scenes that have only two characters. Beginning on page 257, the book Basic Drama Projects provides several short two person scenes. Some other longer plays that contain a number of scenes involving only two actors are:

Our TownThe Glass MenagerieA Streetcar Named DesireThe Bald SopranoDeath of a SalesmanThe Zoo StoryAntigoneThe Fantasticks

2. Begin your interpretation of the scene you have chosen by reading the script on stage. Perhaps you can move randomly as you read and begin to discover what basic props, scenery, lighting you may want. If your setting is indoors, where will the doors be? Windows? Furniture? You should plan on doing your scene with a minimum of technical support, but you need to begin by formulating some idea of a ground plan. Use the space below for sketching out a basic ground plan.

3. Review the techniques for the interpretation of a script that were suggested in Lesson Three of TAP 210 and in both lessons of TAP 211. Keep a record below of some of the activities you adopted from these earlier packages.

We did an exercise similar to the one suggested in the following Activities:

_____ from TAP _____

_____ from TAP _____

_____ from TAP _____

_____ from TAP _____

4. If memorization is in any way a stumbling block for you, it may be helpful if you read Chapter 16 in Basic Drama Projects, pages 99-103. Or page 128-129 of Introduction to Acting by Kahan.
5. When you feel you are close to meeting your performance objective; arrange to have your scene videotaped or ask a friend to watch your scene as a "student critic" and attempt to get some useful feedback from one or both of these sources. Continue practicing; consolidate your strengths and try to overcome your weaknesses.

POST-EVALUATION:

1. The post-evaluation will consist of a performance of your scene before an audience of ten or more persons including your instructor. The audience may be Theatre Arts students, an appropriate English or history class, or a random group responding to a public announcement; you make the choice.
2. The audience should be encouraged to make positive observations about your performance. They should be encouraged to phrase their observations somewhat as follows:

"When you did _____ (such and such) _____ and moved to _____ (such and such) _____, I thought you were trying to suggest _____ (such and such) _____." Your instructor will help structure this part of the post-performance commentary. If your audience picks up a lot of things that you intended them to, that would be a sign that your performance was successful.

3. The audience should also have a chance to ask some brief questions phrased somewhat like the following:

"What were you trying to suggest when _____ (such and such) _____?"

Then you as actors should have a chance to respond and check by the expression on the questioners' faces whether your explanation is satisfactory.

4. After the audience has left, meet briefly with your instructor and compare some of your impressions about the performance with his.
5. Please complete the package evaluation on the following page.

REVIEW OF PACKAGE TITLED MORE WORK WITH SCENES

When you have completed the following statements, please place this sheet in the box of your instructor. Your opinion will be appreciated, so do not ask a friend for help. It is not required that you sign this review.

1. I anticipated this package would take me _____ school days to complete.

2. The actual time it took me was _____ school days. I would explain the difference between the estimated and actual time it took me as follows:

3. Of the activities I did I felt the most difficult was:

The most useless was:

4. Some problems I had while completing this package were as follows:

5. I would recommend the following changes in the wording or requirements of the lessons:

6. I would rate this package (circle one):

No	Some	OK	Good	Very
Good	Good			Good

(Optional) Signed: _____