

# Rehearsal to Performance Strategies

*from One-Act Plays for Acting Students by Norman Bert*

*“Every rehearsal should be a performance and every performance just another rehearsal.” Stanislavski*

## **Productive Rehearsal Attitudes:**

- For every rehearsal, class session or independent study session, commit yourself to concentrating on performance-level work.
- Never permit yourself to just “walk through a scene” - instead, act it either physically or mentally.
- Never comment when you make a mistake – breaking character during rehearsals builds bad habits that may haunt you in performance.
- Work on characterization in every rehearsal – aim to learn something new about your character in each class and/or rehearsal session.

## **Rehearsal Objectives/Strategies:**

### **Introduction to the Play**

- Begin a play by reading straight through the script individually. Read aloud to help you feel its rhythms and get immediately in touch with its characters. Think about characterization but don't try to “figure out” any one character yet.
- Next, analyze the play in detail.
- Read through the play as a group.
- After the first group read through of the play, share individual responses to the script.
- Write down your responses from the group discussion in a log book dedicated to the current play production. Note any different interpretations by the other actors.

### **Scene Work/Initial Blocking**

- Designate a student leader for your group, if you don't have a director
- Each rehearsal should begin with a warm-up/improvisation led by the director or student leader.
- Actors read through the scenes designated for the scheduled rehearsal.
- After the read-through, actors put down the scripts and pantomime through this scene(s) – no talking. Create a “rough” set of chairs, tables, etc. to define the space for this scene.
- After the pantomime, discuss who is doing what to whom and identify any intentions so far in the characters. Discuss what is different at the end of the scene from the beginning of the scene.

- Then, re-read the same scene(s) using any of the pantomime moves integrated in the read through.

### **Scene Work/Characterization/Blocking**

- Time + Place = Intention Analysis - For the next level of scene work, each actor reviews their lines for the scheduled scenes and imagines “where” your character has been just before his/her entrance and “what” your character has been doing the “moment before” in considerable detail. Then write down what you feel is your character's “intention” given his/her history of time and place at every given moment in the scheduled scene(s). Write in any notes in your log book or on your script to assist your understanding of your characters movements and/or intentions.
- As you block the scenes, the director or student leader should ask questions about intentions for each entrance and how and when these intentions change. Blocking is created by a clear understanding of intentions.
- After this rehearsal, create a full characterization analysis for your role.
- Memorization of lines is much easier once you know the intentions behind the lines. As your blocking becomes more secure, you should work on being “off book” for those scenes for which you have a clear understanding of your character's movements and intentions. Memorize and run lines (in character) before each of the subsequent rehearsals for scenes that have already been blocked.

### **Dress Rehearsals/Performance:**

- At this stage, actors work with props, sets and any special costume pieces that need practice.
- Actors should be running scenes “off book” and asking the prompter for lines when needed.
- Avoid breaking character when things go wrong; continue with a non-interrupted run-through. Mention any troubles to the director during the scene briefly, but try to keep the scenes moving contiguously. After the run-through, the director and actors will debrief discussing ways to improve the scenes and trouble-shoot any other problems.
- Dress rehearsals are important to the timing and rhythm of the performance. Making sure you are in “performance” mode during dress rehearsals is key to building self-assurance for opening night.
- The success to a good opening night is a rested and well-rehearsed actor. Trouble-shoot the difficult moments in the play by running small portions of scenes with fellow actors. Make sure to get plenty of rest and nutritious, protein-rich food to supply the demanding mental and physical capacity required of an actor during a performance.