

Destiny Arts Center's

Youth ON THE Move!

A teacher's guidebook
to co-creating original
movement/theater
performances with teens



BY SARAH CROWELL with Maura Wolf, Naomi Katz, and Simón Hanukai

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This guidebook was designed for performing arts educators who work with teenagers. It is a guide to collaborating with youth to create original movement/theater performances that give the young people an outlet to talk about important personal, social and political issues.

The guidebook is based on the process of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, a unique dance/theater/martial arts troupe that has been running out of Destiny Arts Center since 1993. Destiny is a violence prevention and arts education organization based in Oakland, California. The Center has provided after-school, weekend and summer programs for youth ages 3–18, in dance, theater, martial arts, youth leadership, self-defense and conflict resolution, since 1988.

The guidebook is accompanied by two videos. *A Place Named Destiny* is a documentary that follows the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company during the process of creating a show called *Soul Dust*. *Vision to Action* looks at the power of the performing arts as a tool for social change. Both videos are a combination of interviews and powerful footage of the youth in rehearsal and on stage.

"I saw the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company do their thing and they were dazzling! A combination of wonderful talent, high energy, and social consciousness."

— HOWARD ZINN, historian, activist and author of *A People's History of the United States*

"The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company is a politically astute, talented and visionary group of young people who combine political activism with cutting edge cultural expression."

— ANGELA DAVIS, author, scholar and activist

"Destiny is dynamic visual diversity: rhythms, colors, voice, dance, expression, emotion, flight and all of the characteristics we know as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity. How lucky we all are that an agency and community such as Destiny exists. My hope is that the Destiny movement will spread across our country."

— RANDOLPH CARTER, Director, Office of Diversity & Multicultural Services, National Association of Independent Schools



www.destinyarts.org

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ARTS CENTER



With additional support from the Ford Foundation.

DESTINY ARTS CENTER

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Youth on the Move: A Teacher's Guidebook to Co-Creating Original Movement/Theater Performances with Teens

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Chanel Baty
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

The Guidebook & Videos

A Summary

The Guidebook

We have designed this guidebook to share the process that the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company uses to create movement/theater pieces as a collaboration between high school students and professional artists, in hopes that this process will help to design, expand, transform and/or improve a high school level performance program that you already run or want to create. The guidebook is formatted so that each chapter represents a distinct phase of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company 5-month process of forming a group, creating and producing a show, and debriefing the experience. While we will offer some suggestions about how to do things, the guidebook primarily describes the process through which we created our show for a 5-month period starting in December 2003 and ending in May 2004.

Video: A Place Named Destiny (70 MINUTE DOCUMENTARY)

We highly recommend that you and your students watch this documentary as it gives a personal context in which to understand the various exercises and lessons in this guidebook, and inspires both teacher and student to begin the creative process. It follows the process of creating the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company show, *Soul Dust*, which was performed in the spring of 2001. The film premiered in June 2002 at the Mill Valley Film Festival in the San Francisco Bay Area. Watching it offers insight into the lives of some of the company youth and demonstrates their personal journeys as they work together to create the show. Watching the film makes this curriculum come to life.

Video: Vision to Action (SHORT PROMOTIONAL VIDEO)

This short piece features current Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company members and professional artists and educators talking about how the performing arts are an important instrument for personal transformation and social change. The interviews are combined with exciting footage of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company in rehearsals and performances.



photo by Catrina Marchetti

About Destiny Arts Center

*Destiny Arts Center exists to end isolation, prejudice
and violence in the lives of young people.*

Destiny (De-Escalation Skills Training Inspiring Nonviolence in Youth) Arts Center is a unique arts organization devoted to the safety, creativity and empowerment of young people. Through a deep-seated philosophy of nonviolence, Destiny uses martial arts, dance, theater, youth leadership, conflict resolution and self-defense training in after-school, weekend and summer programs, as methods to motivate youth to discover themselves and one another as significant, powerful and peaceful people. Our multicultural community allows youth to come together in an atmosphere of love, inspiration and respect that celebrates and transcends different backgrounds and experiences.

Destiny Arts Center was founded in 1988 as a violence prevention program in a public elementary school that served 30 youth. Today the Center serves over 250 youth per year in onsite and outreach programs, and another 12,000 youth and adults through performances and workshops throughout the Bay Area and nationwide. Over the years, Destiny has become a potent manifestation of both arts education and youth development in a community-based setting.

About the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company

The work of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company (DAYPC) inspired this guidebook. The Company is a multicultural group of teens that have auditioned annually since 1993 to create original performances, in collaboration with professional artists, that combine hip-hop, modern and aerial dance, theater, martial arts, song and rap. The productions are a dynamic, creative forum for young people to express their fears, hopes and strategies for confronting challenging personal and social issues, including racism, sexism, homophobia, violence, poverty, and the environment. The DAYPC gives youth opportunities to bear witness to the crucial power of art and culture as mediums for self-expression, agents of solidarity and means of working toward peace.

Members of the Company live in the context of an urban culture that is focused more and more on wasteful consumption, high-speed digital communication and fast-paced media, and less and less on storytelling, creating art and nurturing connections between people; in a context where young people feel increasingly alienated from each other and the generation that is their mentors; in a context where low-income, low-performance schools are removing the arts from the academic school day in order to improve test scores; in a context where gun violence, the knowledge of environmental destruction, and the direct experience of racism, sexism, homophobia and poverty confront them every day.

As an antidote to the pressures they confront daily, the Company members develop a powerful command over their bodies and their movement technique so that they can express themselves without words. They develop writing and theater skills so that they can express themselves through poetry, storytelling, monologues and scene work. They learn to work together in an environment that values genuine self-expression and true collaboration. They develop strength and flexibility in their bodies and minds so that they can make art that speaks authentically about themselves and their world.



What People are Saying about the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company

“I saw the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company do their thing and they were dazzling!
A combination of wonderful talent, high energy, and social consciousness.”

—**HOWARD ZINN, HISTORIAN, activist and author of A People's History of the United States**

“The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company is a politically astute, talented and visionary
group of young people who combine political activism with cutting edge cultural expression.”

— **ANGELA DAVIS, author, scholar and activist**

“Destiny is dynamic visual diversity: rhythms, colors, voice, dance, expression, emotion, flight
and all of the characteristics we know as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity. How lucky we
all are that an agency and community such as Destiny exists. My hope is that the Destiny
movement will spread across our country.”

— **RANDOLPH CARTER, Director, Office of Diversity & Multicultural Services,
National Association of Independent Schools**

“Destiny Arts youth explore the issues of discrimination (on all levels) and human violence,
with a depth of thought, feelings and vision for the future that is truly inspirational.”

— **NANCY NADEL, Oakland City Councilwoman**

“Thank you Destiny Arts for providing the direction and support for these students to get them
to this level of performance. I know you must be proud of each one of them — I know I am!”

— **SHEILA JORDAN, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools**

“I was amazed at the talent and profound insight of these young people and how well they
articulated issues they care about through dance, music and spoken word. The combination
of politics and funk was both exciting and inspiring!”

— **PETER BRATT, Director/Screenwriter**

“In these times, young people are hungry for the integrity, humanity and spiritual connection that is lacking in the world around them. Destiny Arts creates a strong link for people to remember their connection to their ancestors and recreate a responsible mindful way of being for generations to come. Our future looks hopeful.”

— **LAKOTA HARDEN, Native American dancer and activist**

“Fantastic! With so much negative press around young people these days, it’s so inspiring to see such a motivated and talented group. What’s particularly impressive is that we got to see not only their skills and talents, but we also got a rare insight into what goes on in their hearts and minds. And it’s really encouraging! If only Destiny were a required program in the schools!”

— **JONAS MOK, Executive Director, World PULSE**

“Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company vividly demonstrated hip hop may be the coolest way to bring kids of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds together to advance the values of a multiethnic, multicultural society.”

— **ANN MURPHY, Oakland Tribune**

“No matter what work I choose to do in the future I know for a fact my choice will have been affected by the time I have spent in the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company. DAYPC is a multiracial, economically diverse group of teens who come together to create a show using dance, martial arts and theater. The performance not only tells our stories, but also promotes peace in the community as well as the world at large. Destiny has forced me to evaluate the way I look not only at the world but also at myself and I think I have grown immensely from the experience.”

— **KENDRA STATON, Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company member, 2002–2005**

“We are living at a time where the vision and creativity of young people is essential to the sustainability of our communities. It is these voices that give us hope and that will carry our species forward into a more enlightened age. Destiny provides a rare experience for young people that they will carry forward into the rest of their lives, while being able to touch so many with their great work.”

— **ALLI STARR, DIRECTOR, Co-Founder of Cultural Links, Art & Revolution, and Dancers Without Borders**

“Through this performing arts group I experienced dance, theater, meditations, writing, and martial arts with a positive message, and, most of all, a sense of community that I had never felt before. We addressed issues that many thought we were too young to comprehend. We stunned audiences with our opinions and managed to be heard in a society that doesn’t want to listen. We are impacting the world.”

— **SAM MENDE-WONG, Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company member, 1993–2000**

Acknowledgements

“...We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, bound in a single garment of destiny.”

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

I stand in deep gratitude to all of the people who have made this project possible — to the huge, incredibly supportive Destiny Arts Center family, a wild and wonderful intergenerational community of warriors for peace.

You are the writers and editors of this guidebook, who worked overtime to make sure that the heart and soul of the work was not lost on the page.

You are the artists and educators who have had the courage to truly collaborate with young people, to guide them gently and powerfully to their own truths.

You are the youth who have had the courage to get up on stage and speak and move your stories, so that your communities can know who you are and what you care about.

You are the Company alumni who have come back to volunteer year after year in whatever ways are needed. You come with your parents, your friends and your children. You come with your memories, your enthusiasm, and your appreciation for the way that the productions have evolved.

You are the lighting, sound, set and costume designers, the backstage crew, the set builders and painters, the photographers, the American Sign Language interpreters, the graphic designers, the set builders and painters, the publicity managers, the videographers, the ushers, the lobby and house managers. You are the ones who have baked cookies for the bake sales, torn the tickets, passed out the programs and cleaned up when the show was over.

You are the Destiny staff members who have stopped everything to work the long hours it takes to put on the Company productions. You are the Board of Directors who have made sure that the Company continues to be funded year after year.

You are the parents and caregivers of the youth, who have supported them through the sometimes-arduous journey of creating the Company performances that, you understand, transform their lives. You have made sure that they are in rehearsals and script-writing sessions. You have driven them from place to place constantly. You have cooked, cleaned, decorated, made costumes and sold tickets. You have come to the shows and cheered for all the youth with the loudest voices.

You are my family, who has wholeheartedly supported me to be an artist through the thick and the thin. You are my partner who has held me and loved me through the bitterness and the sweetness of the creative process. You are all my bright and shining lights.

You are the ones who are named below and the ones who are not. All of you are part of the inescapable network of minds, hearts and bodies who have made the work of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company possible. Thank you with all my heart!

— Sarah Crowell, April 2005

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Maura Wolf, Writer/Educator

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Mrunalini Iyer, Advocate and Community Friend

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Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company Co-Artistic Directors 1990–2005:

Kate Hobbs, Naomi Bragin, Simón Hanukai

The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company members who participated in the creation of the 2003/2004 production, *INSight* and whose words and ideas are part of this curriculum:

Lindsay Ducos, Chandrika Francis, Amalia Mesa-Gustin, Arienna Grody, Rhummanee Hang,

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The Destiny Junior Company members who also participated in the creation of segments of the 2003/2004 production, *INSight*, and whose words appear in the *INSight* script (found in the Appendix):

Abbey August, Molly Billick, Miranda Buxton, Navarra Buxton, Katiana Carey-Simms, Giana Cirolia,

Lena Greenspan, Kimisia Harper, Rose Huey, Eden Lani-Castro, Zakiya Mowat, Zoe Statman-Weil.

Guest artists and choreographers who have shaped the way each DAYPC show (1993-2004) has looked and felt over the years, and who have given the process and the performances texture, depth and range:

The All Nation Drummers, George Anzaldo, Caprice Armstrong, Chanel Baty, Gilbert Blacksmith and the Medicine Warrior Dance Troupe, Wilma Bonet, Janine Bruno, Sarah Bush, Rashidi Byrd, Liza Cirolia, Anthony Daniels, Paula Dewart, Naomi Diouf, Doralynn Folsé, Schuyler Fishman, Suzanne Gallo, Paul Ginocchio, Rennie Harris, Roland Jackson, Krissy Keefer, Caroline King, Rami Magrone, Leah Malberg, Jill Parker, Rashad Pridgen, Jay Pugao, Soyinka Rahim, Jen Resnick, Sonya Richardson, Amelia Rudolph, Kyla Searle, Alice Taylor, Evelyn Thomas, Kimm E. Ward, Cory Wechsler.

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Jeffrey Adams, Jenny Bachofner, Edythe Boone, Annemarie Brown, Susan Carpendale,

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Deb E. Taylor, Jules Tortolani, Michael Velez, Dana Watson, Sarah White.

Introduction

The Power of Performance

BY SARAH CROWELL

I cannot remember a time when I didn't want to dance, sing and tell stories. In all of the home movies from my childhood I am spinning, kicking, belting out a tune, and smiling ear to ear as I put on a show. I can see myself getting the neighborhood kids together to create choreography with them. I am teaching the moves to the music, handing out the costumes and making sure everyone comes to rehearsals on time. I am setting up chairs and getting the parents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents to sit in the audience and pay attention. I am cueing up the music and inspiring my performers to do their best. I am twirling in my favorite tutu and bowing to the applause.

I feel like a big kid now. The stakes are higher, the audiences are bigger, the tickets are more expensive, but otherwise my life is the same. I bring young people together to create a show that means something to them. I build an environment that is safe, encouraging and disciplined. I make sure that the production aspects of the show are smooth and professional so that the performers' talent and skill can shine. I invite their families and communities to witness what we have created together.

As a child, performance was a natural and joyful expression of my love of life. As a teenager, dance and performance were my means for survival. By then I was living with my single mother who was struggling to make ends meet. Life was tough. I did well in school, but I just couldn't figure out the high school social scene. During those years, I spent hours playing solitaire in my room by myself or writing angst-filled poetry while sitting on the roof of my house. I wasn't into boys. I wasn't into partying. My clothes weren't cute enough to make me popular on the weekends. But, no matter how bad things got, I had dance.

In dance class I felt free. I fit in. I had goals that I knew I could meet. I could work on touching my toes, getting into the splits and hitting that double pirouette, even if I couldn't deal with the way the girls in school talked about me behind my back. In dance class I felt beautiful, disciplined and had a purpose in life. Even if I wasn't the best in my class, I still loved to be pushed to master a new move. Every bead of sweat that rolled down my body released me from another day of high school torture. And then there was performing. The costumes, make-up and rehearsals on stage were like heaven to me. The smell of the moldy dressing rooms and rubber dance flooring were like Thanksgiving dinner feast smells. When the lights hit and the music was playing, I was on air. I was on stage and could disappear from the harshness of my reality. I could be totally myself without having to be in my life. And people would applaud and tell me that I was okay just the way I was.

At the same time that I was discovering my dancer self, I was learning about the world around me. I was fascinated and intimidated by history and politics. I was infuriated by the injustices that I began to understand, and moved by the stories of people struggling to make the world a better place for everyone.

My family was always fighting for social justice. My mother worked with women's groups to fight against sexism and racism. My father was involved with the peace movement, dealing with issues from environmental justice and nuclear disarmament to global monetary policy. I was passionate about the same issues, but I didn't know how to mix the seemingly self-centered world of the performing arts with this growing fervor to be an agent of social change. I felt split between my obsession with my body and getting it to look and move the way I wanted it to, and the global struggle for peace and justice.

In my adult life I was able to bring those two parts of myself together. At 25 I moved from the East Coast to the Bay Area and began to work with Dance Brigade, formerly the Wallflower Order Dance Collective, a feminist dance/theater company that does work with a social/political message. The work was exhilarating. Finally I was able to blend my passion for justice with my passion for dance and performance. Through Dance Brigade I worked collaboratively on choreography and theatrical pieces that told stories about issues that were important to me.

We created shows like *Pandora's Box*, which was an exploration of women's history and the rise of patriarchal society, and *Good-bye Columbus*, which told the stories of America's colonized people. Dance Brigade also created and produced a Bay Area holiday favorite, *The Revolutionary Nutcracker Sweetie*, which was a political spoof on the Nutcracker Suite and used a community cast of about 70 dancers, musicians, acrobats and aerial dancers. The show had a dance piece that was dedicated to the freedom of South Africa, a piece about the extinction of different animal species, and a Sugar Plum Fairy who touted the values of Mao Tse Tung's *Little Red Book*. These experiences laid the foundation for my dance and theater work with young people.

I have no doubt that the work I do now with youth is a tribute to my struggling, open-hearted, shut down, glorious, miserable, passionate adolescent self, who wanted to be loved and understood for who she was, and who desperately wanted to make a difference in the world. I want to share the power of discipline, the art of dance, and the feelings of exhilaration and empowerment I experienced when I was on stage. I also want to give young people an outlet for their passion for social justice — an outlet that was not offered to me as a teen, but that would have made a great difference in the way that I viewed myself as an artist. I want to transmit to them the knowledge that performing arts can be a powerful instrument for social change as well as personal transformation.

There are so many teens that need an outlet for self-expression and a community that recognizes their value. They need a place to shine. There are so many young people who need to know they can have impact on a world that often seems like it's spinning out of control. I know that having a strong sense of self-esteem and feeling we can have an impact on the world in a meaningful way are directly connected. That's why I'm so excited about sharing the work of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company.

Through the process of co-creating and producing movement/theater pieces about their own lives, young people increase their self-esteem, their self-acceptance and their courage to tell their truths. Through the process of developing their own script they also clarify their values, and develop their critical thinking and performance skills.

As the director of youth-authored performance work, my job is to teach the necessary dance and theater skills so that my students have access to the art forms in meaningful ways. As we co-create the scripts, my job is to ask a lot of questions, listen carefully for the answers, both hidden and

explicit, and then to carefully craft a show out of the words, stories and experiences of the youth. My job is to steer the process when it gets stuck. Often teenagers get lost in their own personal stories and forget that there is a whole context to their experiences. They both influence and are influenced by this context. I can guide them to see their connection to the world around them. Once the youth become passionate about an issue they can get stuck being angry about it. However, their anger can be positive if it does not remain stagnant. My job is to guide the anger into strategies for action. I am not just a director; I'm a coach, showing the youth ways out of places that may keep them hopeless, angry and alone.

There are a hundred stories I could tell about young people's transformations through the performing arts style that I have developed in collaboration with many professional artists since 1993. I tell many of them in this guidebook as I unfold the process of creating the performance piece. I share stories about young women who feel torrents of self-hatred about their bodies, discuss these feelings through dance and theater, and find peace in knowing that their stories touched the lives of many young women just like them. I share stories of young black men who talk about what it's like to feel that people are afraid of them as they walk in the world and how they long to be free from other people's fear. You've perhaps witnessed a student stand in front of his peers and tell them a truth that he is afraid to tell. By finding the courage to tell it anyway, the student has been changed forever.

In addition to all of the emotional and intellectual benefits of performance, this work also strengthens the physical performance capabilities of young people. By setting the bar high and supporting them to reach it, young people can strengthen and stretch and learn to move together as never before. This process opens a new door — if they are given the opportunity to perform with their minds, bodies and spirits fully engaged, anything is possible.



Jamila Jackson, Caitlin Hutcherson and Sarah Crowell
Photo by Schuyler Fishman



Simón Hanukai and Sarah Crowell
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

How to Use this Guidebook

This guidebook includes:

- A phase-by-phase, session-by-session account of how we created *INsight*, the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company show that premiered in the spring of 2004.
- Measurable Outcomes for each phase of creation and suggestions on how to determine whether you are meeting these goals.
- Reflections called Journal Notes from the teachers and observers about things that happened during the process of creating the show, and why they happened in this way. These notes include stories about the process of creating performance pieces of this nature over a 12-year period, with particular emphasis on the stories from the process in Spring 2004.
- An Appendix that consists of audition materials, sample documents that we give to students and their parents/guardians, a list of the California Performing Arts Content Standards that relate to the curriculum, the script of the DAYPC show from 2004 called *INsight*, detailed descriptions of group bonding games, meditations, and dance, choreography and theater exercises, and sample evaluation and publicity materials.

Use this guidebook...

- as a step-by-step guide to creating a show that integrates movement and theater.
- as a template for creating work collaboratively with youth.
- to give greater depth of understanding to a collaborative process that you have already developed.
- to develop a performing arts program with a focus on autobiographical material.
- for the games, exercises and meditations in the Appendix.
- for the journal notes that give useful tips about running a youth company in which youth write their own work.

The Phases

The process of creating an original movement/theater show, in the style of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, usually consumes five to six months from start to finish.

There are six distinct phases of development for the group that are included in the curriculum. The first four phases happen before a full piece is created:

1. Setting a Tone: Promoting and Holding Auditions (1 session)

This chapter gives detail about recruiting, auditioning and selecting a performance group.

2. Building Trust: Group Bonding (10 sessions)

This chapter gives a session-by-session account of building an inspired, committed group.

3. Getting Creative: Generating Written Material and Choreography for the Show (13 sessions)

This chapter gives a session-by-session account of the process of creating movement and written material that will be used to shape the performance piece.

4. Putting the Pieces Together: Finalizing the Script and Choreography (15 sessions)

This chapter gives an overview of the process of pulling together and editing the written material and choreography from the previous phase and creating a cohesive show. In this section, the sessions are grouped together rather than laid out one by one, since most of this phase involves rehearsals that are generally repetitive.

After the piece is created the final two phases of the process occur:

5. Putting on the Show: Production and Performance

This chapter gives an overview of all aspects of putting together the production once the show has been created. This phase is not broken down into sessions because it is a guide to producing a show with attention to professional detail, including lighting, sound, costumes, etc.

6. Debriefing the Whole Process: Reflecting and Affirming (1-4 sessions)

This chapter gives examples of our self-reflection about the process of creating and performing the show, once it is over. In this phase the group also deepens their appreciation for another and the process.

The Sessions

The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company sessions are divided up into rehearsal and script-writing sessions. All company members also take at least three one and a half-hour movement classes per week as a requirement for participation in the group, which must include two hip-hop classes a week and at least one other class in either modern dance or martial arts. These classes happen at different times from the rehearsal and script-writing sessions.

This curriculum gives an outline of each rehearsal and script-writing session, directing you to the Appendix for detailed instructions of most of the exercises and meditations included in the session. There are some exercises that are detailed within the session outline. These are used only once or twice during the 5-month creative process. The exercises that appear in the Appendix are repeated often and can be replaced with similar exercises from the same category.

As the process of creation unfolds, especially during phases 2 and 3, the material gleaned from rehearsal sessions is used in script-writing sessions, and the script-writing sessions define how the rehearsal sessions are planned. In this way there is a dynamic relationship between the two processes.

Rehearsal sessions

Rehearsal sessions happen twice a week. Each session is 2-3 hours long and includes the entire group working in a space that is appropriate for moving around freely. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory.

During this time youth are doing group bonding exercises, playing theater games, having group discussions, writing material that will be used by the script-writing group to create the script, making up dances and dance/theater pieces, refining performance technique, and rehearsing for performances.

Script-writing sessions

Script-writing sessions happen once a week, usually on Saturdays. Each session is 3-4 hours long and ideally happens in a space that is different from the regular rehearsal space. The group sits in chairs around a table in a smaller, cozier setting, and they may have snacks together. Script-writing sessions include a small subset of the larger group, approximately 4-7 participants, who volunteer to give extra time to the script-writing and editing process.

During this time the group is doing group bonding exercises, developing writing and storytelling techniques through simple written and verbal games and exercises, discussing themes and theatrical mechanisms for the show, looking through and editing material that was created in the rehearsal sessions, and putting together a show that has a beginning, middle and end that is cohesive. The script-writing process at Destiny Arts Center is focused on developing interesting and authentic autobiographical material and combining that with fictional characters and scenes. The process also trains the students to become editors. It is not really about teaching specific writing techniques.

The Flow of Each Session

Each rehearsal and script-writing session is split up into the following sections. Where the curriculum lists specific theater exercises, group bonding exercises, dance and choreography exercises, and mediations, you may choose to substitute other exercises from that category in their place. The Appendix includes many more exercises than are listed in each session.

Opening

This is a short, powerful activity to bring students into the space to get them focused. Usually, it includes a meditation of between 30 seconds and 2 minutes, and an overview of the day.

Warm-ups

Warm-ups can include group bonding games or short simple theater, dance or choreography exercises. The main purpose of the warm-up is to create the optimal environment in which to do the focus activity or activities to follow. For example, if the focus activity requires high energy, the warm-up is high energy. If the focus activity requires more reflective energy, the warm-up focuses on grounding the group. If the focus activity is in partners, the warm-up activity can be in partners.

Focus Activities

This is the core part of the rehearsal and can include a combination of long meditations, group brainstorm, involved theater, dance and choreography exercises, rehearsal of previously created choreography, etc.

Debrief

A debrief is a series of questions the instructor asks the students at the end of a focus activity or the end of a rehearsal or script-writing session. The questions are meant to prompt thoughtful answers while allowing the students time to reflect on their experiences. It's an opportunity to do a deeper investigation as a group into what is happening, or what just happened, and how to find meaning in it. You may need to ask a number of questions to get the group to answer. Be patient. Keep asking. Also be open to sitting in silence sometimes to give the students time to think about their answers. Some days the focus activity, especially when it involves guided meditations followed by writing, will take the students so deep that they may have a hard time sharing right away.

Possible debrief question:

- **What just happened?**
- **How did you feel doing what we just did?**
- **Does anyone disagree with what just happened?**
- **On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable were you with what we just did? Why?**

Often, to go deeper with a debrief, you need to ask probing questions that get students to justify or describe their response in greater detail. For example, a student might witness a theatre piece by another student and say that they found it “weak.” You want to know more, “What about it did you find weak? Was there any strength to it? Could you imagine something else that might have happened to strengthen it?” This is an opportunity to expand students’ critical thinking, processing and reflective capacities.

Closing

A simple closing is introduced that will happen at every rehearsal session. The one we use is that the group gets into a circle and puts their fists into the center. The leader says “1...2...3...” and the group says “hey!” in a loud, enthusiastic voice as they raise their fists into the air. This officially ends each session. You may choose whatever closing ritual you like to mark the end of each session. The key is to do the same thing every time. Youth get attached to the ritual and it makes them feel that they are complete.

There are times when the closing includes another element before the ritual ending. We often “give props” before we do our regular “1... 2... 3... hey” thing. “Giving props” is a colloquialism for telling people what you appreciate about them. We include a number of different ways that we do this in the session outlines and journal notes.

The closing for a script-writing session can either be the same or different from the closing for the rehearsal sessions.

Setting a Tone: Promoting & Holding Auditions

Intention

The intention of this phase is to recruit, audition and select a diverse group of hard working, committed young performers who are talented movers, engaging actors, and enthusiastic group collaborators.

Introduction

The process of recruiting, auditioning and selecting is a crucial phase in this work. The more deliberate we are at this phase, the easier the entire process of creating the show. If you get the “right” group they will work well with each other and have the talent and commitment to see the show to the end. If you get the “wrong” group you may struggle with lack of commitment, lack of group cohesion or extreme discrepancies in the physical and social abilities of the youth. This can make the process difficult and painful for the youth as well as for the adult facilitators.



Cast of "Walk...Don't Walk" - Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company 2002/2003
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

In the introduction phase the following occurs:

Recruiting

What are you looking for?

As we begin to recruit we are intentional about who we are looking for so we can reach out to those students. Destiny Arts Center is committed to having performance troupes that are diverse in every way possible. We are looking for ethnic, socio-economic, racial and cultural diversity. We want both boys and girls. We want performers with different body types and different life experiences. We are looking for sophisticated talent and performance experience as well as raw talent that has the potential to develop under our direction. As we plan our recruitment, we consider youth who are already taking class at Destiny and those who are coming to Destiny for the first time. Then, we ask ourselves what the holes are. Who is not represented in this group? If we are low on boys, we do heavy recruiting that targets boys in local schools. We send out male staff and male students who can show that it is “cool” for boys to be in the group. If we are low on African Americans, we recruit in local schools that have a high percentage of African American students.

Recruiting Ideas

Getting teenagers’ attention can be tricky. Word of mouth is by far the best tool for recruiting teens. If one of their friends thinks that the experience has value, they are more likely to give it a try. We create flyers (see Appendix page 97) for past company members to distribute at school. We post flyers in local schools and community organizations that may have youth who would be interested. We speak with teachers at local schools who know about our work and can let their students know



Company members in dance class.
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

about the opportunity to audition. We ask teachers if we can make 5–10 minute presentations in their classrooms about the company and the auditions. We ask if we can get the names and phone numbers of the youth who say they are interested so that we can call them to remind them about the audition when the day is coming closer. We bring company members to perform at school assemblies, and then we pass out flyers and answer questions. Most importantly, when we go out into the community to recruit, we are enthusiastic and we bring accurate, easy-to-read support materials.

Auditioning

We pick one night and host all auditions together. We invite a panel of judges to join us in deciding who makes it into the group and who doesn't. Holding auditions all on one night is easier for everyone. The more youth there are (to a point) the more the audition is like a show, in which students need to perform. The audition is a great experience for all participants, so we encourage whoever we can to be there. When students walk in they sign in and get a number. (see Appendix page 98 for Sample Audition Sign-in/Evaluation sheets) They are asked to remember the number. We don't give out written numbers as we have found this tends to make young people more nervous. Once they have their numbers, the youth are asked to enter the studio and warm up. They are told that the audition starts as soon as they walk into the room. We tell them that we are looking for discipline, high energy and professionalism.

A note about audience presence during the audition: Parents/guardians, family and friends are allowed to sit and watch the audition at Destiny, if space allows. We set up chairs and instruct them when it's appropriate to applaud and when it's better to stay quiet. The company is a resource for the community and so we feel that the audition process should be public as well.

Creating Standards

During auditions we set a tone of excellence, collaboration, and creativity. Many of the young people who show up for auditions will be in the troupe, so it is critical that things get started on the right foot. We set a powerful tone primarily by demonstrating every activity the way we want to see the youth demonstrate it to us — with full expressive energy. We also create a fun environment so that the students aren't too intimidated to relax enough to show their talent. We do this by modeling that it's okay to be yourself, to make jokes and be goofy, and to make mistakes.

Selecting the Company

We've learned a few really important things about selecting a company. It is essential that we choose a trusted panel of judges to watch the audition. Panel members **MUST** take copious notes during the audition process in order to capture the strengths and weaknesses of each student who auditions. It is crucial that we meet with the panel immediately after the auditions to make a final decision about who will be in the company. Finally, we must make sensitive phone calls to students and their adult guardians in a timely fashion to give them clear feedback about how they did.

Choosing a Panel of Judges

When we select a panel of judges, we choose a mixture of people including choreographers and theater artists who will be working with the company, old company members, and other trusted Destiny instructors. An ideal number of panelists is 5. Anything over that makes the decision making process overly labored.

Taking Notes

The Sign-in/Evaluation sheet includes an area for panelists to write their thoughts about the performance of each student in the different areas of expertise. It's extremely important to remember every student and the particular qualities that stood out about each one. We make special notes about youth we have never met so that we can identify them later on. For example, we may write a note like "girl with over-sized red T-shirt" or "boy with large afro" next to the names of students we don't know so that we remember who they are. We call each young person and their parent(s)/guardian(s) after the audition to inform them about whether they got in to the group or not so it is essential to know who each youth is and to remember something about their performance.

Group Decision-Making Process

The panelists should plan to meet directly after the auditions for at least an hour, after all of the students and their guardians are gone. Panelists look carefully over the notes on each student and discuss each one thoroughly. They consider each student's talent in every artistic area under review. They consider the combination of young people and how they may work together, based on each one's strengths and weaknesses. They consider diversity on every level. In the end, the artistic directors make the final decision.

Calling with the Results

This is the hard part. The audition is thrilling. All of the students are full of nervous, excited energy and hope that they will be chosen to be part of the company. If the audition is facilitated well, the youth are cheering for one another and the atmosphere is light and supportive; everyone feels like they have given their best. All of the panelists love young people and see each student's unique, individual potential, so making a decision about who will actually become part of the company is tough. Calling the students and their parents/guardians is a delicate and crucial moment in



Rashidi Omari, audition panelist
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

the process. We call each student and speak with his or her parent and/or guardian first. In this way we are building a support network for those who did not make it into the group and getting support for the big commitment of those who did. It is very important to have a positive relationship with the adults in the company members' lives from the beginning. We open the phone conversation by saying whether the student has been accepted into the group. That's what they have been waiting for. No need to beat around the bush. Then we discuss what the panel felt the student did well, what stood out about the young person's talent in any number of the areas considered. We then give them feedback about what they might improve. Finally we talk either about their responsibilities as a company member or the possibilities of improving technique in a class setting.

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: The group that shows up at the auditions is diverse in every way.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Look around.
- Collect demographic information when signing in students.

2. Outcome: A core group of youth at the audition is upbeat, energetic, and hard-working.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- There is a high percentage of youth in the audition who maintain a good attitude and 'give their all' no matter what, perform with a smile on their faces and look like they're having fun. The youth are probably nervous so it's up to you to make them feel comfortable enough to let loose.
- You notice a number of youth who have the ability to energize others with their enthusiasm.
- There is a high percentage of youth who bounce back quickly after making mistakes.

3. Outcome: A core group of youth at the auditions are talented movers and engaging actors.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- There is a core group of youth who are proficient at learning dance combinations and performing them, especially without watching others. There's a difference between just doing a combination and actually performing it. While it is important to find students who are skilled dancers and can remember moves well, it is also (perhaps more) important to find students who are good performers and can engage the audience while they are moving. Applying this same idea to acting, it is important to find students who can breathe life into a character when they read a monologue.
- There is a core group of youth who are creative "freestylers," who are comfortable expressing themselves through improvisation.

4. Outcome: A core group of youth at the auditions work well in a group setting.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- There is a core group of youth who visibly support their peers (by applauding for each other or smiling at each other) even though they are in a competitive setting.
- There is a core group of youth who are really having fun with the other youth, and are willing to get creative together.

Audition Day Schedule

A schedule of the audition follows. We use the flow of activities to warm up the body and the creative mind. The pace of the audition is a mix of slow and fast, as we want to make time for everyone to settle in and then move quickly through a series of activities.

Introductions and Overview:

- A director welcomes everyone and talks briefly about Destiny Arts Center and the history of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company. He or she makes it clear that being a part of the company means being committed to a rigorous rehearsal schedule as well as being committed to talking, writing and performing about social and political issues that affect them as young people. It is explained that past company productions have brought up issues around race, sexuality, gender, violence, war, poverty, religion, stereotypes, identity, the educational system, family etc. and that the group will be asked to reflect on many of these issues as they create a performance piece together. They are also told that the company productions bring up important social and political issues as a way of offering the audience a chance to think and have conversation about them, and not to try and convert them to a particular point of view. Some of the audiences will be youth who can relate to their issues. Some will be adults who may not understand what youth are going through or how passionately they feel about what is happening in the world. In the end the performances address all of the issues with a sense of vision, optimism and hope.
- Each panelist introduces him/herself and gives a brief background of his/her experience at Destiny.
- A director gives an overview of what the audition process will be like and what the panel is looking for from the students. We are looking for students who:
 - are willing to take risks, even if it means that they may look silly to their peers
 - perform at a high level physically
 - are extremely expressive in body and face
 - are open-hearted and willing to share who they are with the panel and the other youth
 - are encouraging to each other
 - work well in groups
 - are technically proficient in hip-hop and modern dance
 - are willing to take risks as actors involving voice projection, articulation, use of face and body while reciting text
- A director reviews the commitment and responsibilities of company members if they are chosen to participate in the group.

Dance Warm-Ups

The auditions start here! Warm ups are intentionally simple, but they cover the entire body. The focus is putting the students at ease and setting a professional but fun tone. The young people auditioning are given a mixture of stretches, aerobic exercises and hip-hop and modern dance phrases.

Teach Hip-Hop Combination

A short choreographed piece is taught in simple chunks with plenty of repetition and time to ask questions. We teach approximately 8 counts of 8 of material that shows off footwork, floor work, hard-hitting isolations, and a sense of individual style. With multiple lines of dancers we rotate lines from the back to the front to give everyone a chance to be near the teacher and panelists in the front of the room.

Perform Hip-Hop Dance Combination (in groups of four)

The students are split into groups of four according to the numbers they were given when they signed in. That means numbers 1 through 4 would be group #1, numbers 5 through 8 would be group # 2 etc. We allow each group to perform the combination at least twice. In the second round of performances the students are asked to do a short improvisation at the end of the combination. They are instructed that they should make up dance moves as they go along that they think will show off their talent in hip-hop that they may not have been able to demonstrate in the choreographed combination given. The instructor demonstrates an improvisation with high energy so that the youth understand what is expected of them. In this way you may catch some talent that was not revealed in the choreographed routine.

Teach Modern Dance Combination with Improvisational Element

Students are asked to remove their shoes and are given a couple of minutes to stretch out on their own. Then a short modern dance combination (about 6 counts of 8) is taught in simple chunks. The choreography highlights lyrical expression, extension of lines, precision of movement, turns, flexibility, modern dance floor work, jumps, leaps and dramatic performance style.

Perform Modern Combination (in groups of four)

The students get into their original groups and perform the combination at least twice for the panelists. In both performances the students are asked to add a short improvisation at the end of the combination that best expresses who they are. The improvisation continues until the director of this section signals for the students to stop.

Journal Note:

A parent's perspective on auditions

BY HELEN GREENSPAN

Once again, the process of these auditions blew me away. It is amazing the way the kids put it out there, but even more amazing, the thing that leaves me all watery-eyed, is the amount of support and love that is generated within the community for each person – new, old, bold, shy, it doesn't seem to matter. I sat there last night and realized I had never seen anything like it. I wanted to call this new friend of mine who is a filmmaker and say, "Get over here quick! The world has to know this is possible!" Destiny really is the remedy for the girl-eat-girl mentality which is so pervasive now in our culture, not to mention all the boy/girl crap which completely seems to take away the potential for male and female youth to be friends with each other. I thank you, and everyone there, for continuing to hold this space for our children. I mean this from such a deep place. Thank you.

Theatre Warm-ups

The group comes back together in a circle and is asked to switch gears and move into the theater section of the audition. The group is led through some short, but lively theater games to get them warmed up. The following are three games we used. Any simple group bonding or theater games would be appropriate here.

- **Repeat Name and Movement** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 114)
- **Chocolate Bunny** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 126)
- **Sound and Movement Circle I** (see Theater Exercises page 129)

Practice and Perform Short Monologues

Monologues that were written and performed by DAYPC students in previous shows have been typed up and printed onto small slips of paper. We choose about six short pieces and make multiple copies of each one. They are passed out randomly to the students. The students have three minutes to look over the monologue. We let them know that they will be performing the monologues and that they need to decide the following about the character they are portraying: where are they? who are they? and what are they doing? Many of the monologues bring up issues very specific to the author of the piece. In this way the youth auditioning automatically get an inside look at the author as well as the depth of the company process when they read and perform the monologues. Memorization is not necessary. If time allows, they can do the whole monologue; if not they can choose whatever shorter section they like from the longer piece and perform that. We are looking for voice projection, word annunciation, nuances of character and emotional range. (see Appendix page 99-100 for a sample list of monologues used in the 2004 Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company audition)

Group Skits

(see Theater Exercises page 132)

Snack/Break

Destiny Arts Center staff provide a light snack of fruit and water to the auditioners. The break goes for about 10 minutes.

Individual Performances

The audition flyer indicates that students may bring in a short theater monologue or dance piece of their own to perform. This is not mandatory, but is encouraged. Students who are watching the soloists are instructed to give enthusiastic support to the students performing. Applause and cheering are welcome!



Emily Schmookler
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Closing

The group gets back together in a circle. The artistic directors thank the students for their courage. Each panelist says something that reflects how they felt about the audition. This is always positive. The positive affirmations from all the leaders is extremely important not only to raise the morale and self-esteem of the students who just gave so much of themselves in the audition, but also to lay a positive foundation for the year. The artistic directors let the students know that they will be called, on a certain predetermined day, about whether they made it into the group or not. A Rehearsal and Class Schedule (see Appendix page 101) is passed out to all students who auditioned. The sheet gives information about what rehearsals will be like if the student gets into the company and what technique classes are available to them if they don't. We always encourage the students to participate in some way at Destiny Arts Center. We remind them that they have a chance to hone their dance and theater skills in technique classes if they are not chosen for the group. The audition finally ends with everyone standing in a circle and putting their fists in the middle. A leader says "1, 2, 3" and everyone is instructed to shout "hey!" as they raise their fists to the sky, in a team sports fashion. "Good luck to everyone!"

Journal Note,

The Power of Modeling

BY MAURA WOLF

Half a dozen parents lined the outside of the dance floor looking on when I arrived at the Destiny auditions. They were quietly watching their daughters and sons move from one part of the audition to the next. When I got there they were in the middle of doing a choreographed routine in groups of 4. Each group would come to the center of the floor, and when the music came on, they danced their piece and then the whole group erupted with applause. The judges huddled for a few minutes after each group performed. At one point Sarah stopped the flow of things to demonstrate how it feels when a performer has eye contact with the audience. She danced the piece they were dancing while looking down, without any engagement with them as an audience. Then, she danced the same piece looking straight into their eyes, modeling what it looks like to go "full out" and engage your audience. The students were captivated and at the end, erupted in applause. You could tell they understood something new about engaging an audience by seeing it modeled.

Later in the audition the students were doing monologues based on previously written stories from company member's lives. One student began in the back of the room huddled in a crumpled ball and then launched into "You better take care and watch what you do. You better watch. I'm your future. Indistinct, but I'm there. It's an existence that happened because of you. And you and you, and yeah you. (screaming) But where are you? I need your mind that thinks for yourself." The combination of the content and the way it was performed left everyone speechless. You could feel the energy in the room shift. It opened up a new door of possibility; a peer had modeled a new level of performance. It is important to seek out kids in the audition whose energy is contagious and can infect a large crowd, as this is what performance is all about.



Cast of "INSight" - Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company members 2003/2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Building Trust: Group Bonding

REHEARSAL SESSIONS 1–8

SCRIPT WRITING SESSIONS 1–2

Intention

The intention of this phase is to build a positive, inspired, cohesive, hard-working company whose members are committed to and enthusiastic about creating a show together.

Introduction

It is crucial to carefully design the first major phase of the program so that the group bonds, and sets healthy norms for relating to one another both on a personal and creative level. If the group feels connected the participants will be willing to disclose information about themselves, participate actively in group discussions, and take risks to be creative in ways that they may never have tried before. The style of show that the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company produces



Group bonding
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

depends on the vulnerability of the students as they create movement and written material. In order to do this comfortably we need to provide an environment in which company members feel safe and supported by both the directors and their fellow company members. This includes building a group whose members are committed to doing their best and are responsible to one another as well as to the directors.

In this phase the following occurs:

- **The group agrees to follow the company's ground rules, and rehearsal and performance schedule.**

Since our show is created during after-school hours this agreement is really important. Students are required to take at least three technique classes a week and participate in two two-hour rehearsals per week. During the first few weeks of rehearsal we schedule a parent/guardian meeting where the company members and their caregivers sit together and the directors go over the guidelines. Everyone is free to ask questions. Both the caregiver and the student then sign a commitment that states that the student agrees to abide by the guidelines, and the caregiver agrees to support his/her child in following the guidelines. We schedule this meeting during the last hour of one the company rehearsals.

- **The students get to know each other** by playing bonding games, dancing and moving together as a group and in partners, meditating and writing together, and engaging in lively group discussions.
- **This phase also marks the beginning of the script-writing sessions, where the students begin to learn how to write the script.** Script-writing sessions happen on Saturdays for three hours with a subset of between four and seven members of the full company. This group volunteers to spend extra time looking through and editing material that the larger group has written, working with storyline and theme material, etc. This group is a dynamic one that will end up having heated discussions, spending a great deal of time creating scenes and characters and writing and re-writing the script until it is in the final phase when the artistic directors make the final editing decisions.



Jaime Phillips and Jamila Jackson backstage
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

- **This is the phase where rituals for the rehearsal and script-writing sessions are created.** Students are introduced to opening and closing rituals that are an important part of creating and maintaining consistency and a sense of group unity.

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: Students understand what is expected of them for the year and feel invested in fulfilling their commitment.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students and their parents/guardians sign their contracts and turn them in to the directors.
- Students make sure that their parents/guardians attend the parent/guardian meeting.
- Students come to rehearsals on time or call if they are going to be late. The instructors keep records of this on attendance sheets for each rehearsal.
- Students come to all rehearsals or call if they are not going to make it. The instructors keep records of this on attendance sheets for each rehearsal.
- Students follow all of the expectations listed in their contracts without complaining about them.

2. Outcome: The group members feel positively connected to each other and work well together.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students greet each other by name.
- Students maintain eye contact with one another for increasingly longer periods of time.
- Students become increasingly more comfortable with closer body contact with their peers.
- The group laughs together more and more often.
- Peers hang out with other students that they didn't know in the beginning of the phase.
- Students are more and more willing to do the exercises that the directors give them no matter how silly or how deep.

3. Outcome: Students are inspired and committed to working hard in rehearsals and encourage another to do their best.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students are attentive when instructors and/or peers are speaking or demonstrating movement in front of the group.
- Students are willing to do all of the movement exercises no matter how physically challenging or silly they think the exercises are.
- Students regularly break a sweat during dance practice.
- Students push themselves past what they think are their limits, with encouragement from instructors and peers.
- Students applaud each other when they perform dance routines in small groups for one another or when individuals perform material they have written.
- Students sometimes go beyond what is expected of them. For example, they bring in material that they have written outside of script-writing sessions, or choreography that they have prepared outside of dance rehearsals.

Session Outlines

Rehearsal Session #1

OPENING

- **Welcome and Congratulations to all Company members**
- **Short Meditation — Short and sweet with a welcome** (see Meditations page 106)
- **Establishing expectations and group norms**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Copies of the expectations for each student with their names on them.

SET UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The instructors go over a set of predetermined written expectations that the students must follow if they want to be part of the group. They are listed on a sheet called Expectations of all Company Members (see Appendix page 102) and are reviewed in detail. We usually go around the circle and have each company member read at least one expectation out loud. The instructors review the rehearsal and script-writing schedule, as well as the performance calendar for the year. Instructors then briefly describe what the flow of each session will be and what the flow of the entire process will be, from the first rehearsal through the final performance and debrief.

The instructors talk to the group in depth about the optional script-writing sessions that happen once a week on Saturdays for three hours, and encourage interested students to participate. This group starts meeting after a few weeks of rehearsals so that the larger group can bond before we break out into a smaller group. This group is ideally smaller than the whole company (4–7 members) and is responsible for taking written material that the group has created in rehearsals and editing it into a workable script.

The instructors also go over how they will keep order in a lively rehearsal setting. The following exercises are introduced and practiced in the first session and repeated regularly during the course of the entire process.

Transitional Breaths

Throughout a session we regularly invite students to breathe in and breathe out together. This usually marks a transition from one thing to another. It allows time for people to let go of whatever came up for them in the activity we were just doing so they can be present for the next activity.

Group Clap

If the room is too noisy to get the group's attention with a verbal request, the group leader will clap out a short predetermined rhythmic pattern that the students repeat. After they repeat the clapping pattern they are instructed to become quiet. If the room is particularly noisy, we will do a number of rhythmic clapping patterns that the students repeat as they get into a circle. This allows us to get everyone together in a fun, non-condescending way.

WARM-UPS

- **Repeat Name and Movement** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 114)
- **Express Yourself** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116)
- **Am I...?** (see Theater Exercises page 129)

- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Clap Circle** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 122)
- **Touch, Don't Get Touched** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 124)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Sound & Movement Circle 2** (see Theater Exercises page 129)
- **Meditation — Climbing the Mountain** (see Meditations page 106)
- **Developing Personal and Group Goals**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Blank paper and pens or pencils for each student and instructors, butcher paper taped to the wall, magic markers.

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room seated on the ground in a place where they will not be tempted to talk to anyone else.

DESCRIPTION: Each student gets a piece of paper and is allowed 10 minutes to write out what they saw/experienced in the guided mediation as well as their goals for the year as company members. There is a list of questions at the end of the “Climbing the Mountain” meditation that guides the writing exercise. When the writing is complete, they share in a circle. The instructor writes the goals on the butcher paper and puts them into categories to get a sense of what the students’ collective goals are. This year we found that the biggest shared goal was to have powerful group bonding. Goals that tied for second were: creating a great performance, educating audiences through the performance work, and improving their own individual dance and choreography skills. You may choose to have the students hand in their writing, keep it until after the performances, and then bring it out as part of the debriefing process. This way, everyone gets to see if they met their goals. I make sure to keep the goals in mind and guide the group toward them all the time. I periodically remind the students about their goals to reinforce the fact that the direction is coming from them and not from me, the authority figure.

- **If you really knew me...** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 123)

Journal Note:

The “If you really knew me” game

BY SARAH CROWELL

It's always a little tricky when you do “If you really knew me...” early in the year with a group. You want them to get to get to know each other and begin sharing deeper information about themselves, but you don't want them to go too far. When I start this exercise I begin by saying something like, “If you really knew me, you would know that blue is my favorite color.” On the second round I will say something like, “If you really knew me, you would know I'm biracial,” to model revealing somewhat deeper information. One year a student revealed in the first session that she had been anorexic the year before. The group was touched by her honesty and responded by giving very intimate details about themselves. By the third round of the exercise everyone was crying. At the time the group was willing to go to that level, but because the safety of the group hadn't been established yet, they were left feeling vulnerable and shy with each other for many weeks afterward. I now take the exercise much more slowly and repeat it throughout the year, getting to deeper information each time. This enhances, rather than compromises, the safety of the group.

DEBRIEF: The group debriefs the “If you really knew me” exercise with the following questions: How was that exercise for you? What was it like to talk about yourself with people that you may or may not know very well? What was it like to hear people share? Did you think it was a valuable exercise?

CLOSING: A simple closing is introduced that will happen at every rehearsal. The group gets into a circle and puts their fists into the center. For example, the leader says “1...2...3...” and the group says “hey” in a loud, enthusiastic voice as they raise their fists into the air. This officially ends the rehearsal.

Journal Note:

Holding youth accountable to group norms

BY SARAH CROWELL

Holding youth accountable to the norms that I set forth in the beginning of the creative process is one of my most important jobs. I reinforce these norms constantly. In the first rehearsal I bite the bullet and let the kids look bored so I really have the time to go over each one of the guidelines carefully. I let the youth read them out loud to the rest of the group and then ask for clarification questions. I'm very serious when I go over the expectations so that the youth know I mean business. The written rules are not negotiable. One of my rules is that youth cannot curse or use vulgar language in rehearsals or on stage. This can get tricky as teens get older. Their writing often begins to contain curse words in it that they feel express their point in the most authentic way to them. Of course, I encourage all my students to be authentic. I still don't let them curse on stage, though. They can write the words and share them with me, but they have to edit them if they want to perform them. I've had students accuse me of censorship when I've told them that they can't curse on stage. I just tell them that I have a hard line about that, and if they want to work with me that's what they'll have to deal with. I let them know that we are performing for mixed-age audiences and that cursing would be inappropriate. I am often flexible with students about other rules that they have broken, if they give me a good explanation, but this is my hard line issue. In the end students respect me for holding them to it, even if the battle is tough. The directors always have the final word about what material gets in the show, even though the process is collaborative. I make this very clear at the beginning of the process. As long as we maintain this rule, we can settle any controversies without having to go through an extensive collective process. Much of my decision-making is consensus based, but it's always good to know who has the final say.

Another hard line issue for me is that students have no bellies showing during performances. The girls always want to show more skin than I'm comfortable with. While I celebrate their emerging sexuality and encourage the girls to love their bodies, no matter what shape or size they are, I stick to the rule about bellies. I tell the girls that they don't have to sell their sexuality to honor it. One year I had a knockdown, drag-out argument with one of my students about it. The costumes that she chose for her piece were very revealing and I told her she had to change them. I let her know that I wanted her to express her strength, poise and technique rather than selling her sexuality on stage. She was angry at me for weeks about it. Then, about a year later, after she had been in college for a semester, she emailed me and thanked me for holding that line with her. She said that my values had followed her into her college life and that they informed the shaping of her own values. Without giving any real detail she expressed that she was using what she had learned from me in her daily life, and I suspected that the attention that I spent on bringing forth her strength, as a balance to her emerging sexuality, was part of that.

Journal Note:

Instructors doing the exercises

BY SARAH CROWELL

As the group wrote their goals for the year, so did I. This is what I wrote.

I want to:

- inspire the youth to be themselves in their movement and in their theatre.
- co-create, with my co-director, an atmosphere of safety, support and fun so that the youth can really take their performance to a higher/deeper level.
- open my heart to loving each student.
- co-create the best, most inspired, most creative, most thought and emotion-provoking Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company show to date.
- be completely present in mind, body and spirit for every rehearsal

When everyone shared their goals in the group, I shared my goals as well. This way, I did not set myself apart from the group and recognized my need to set goals.

I carefully choose which exercises I will participate in and which I will simply witness and guide. I've found that it's important to do both. In the beginning of the group bonding process I participate in more exercises than not, so that the students connect with me and I with them. In my many years of working with teenagers I have found that if I strike a balance between divulging information about myself and holding strong boundaries with students I get the best results. In my experience, teens respond to me with more authenticity both in their artistic self-expression and in rehearsal settings, if I'm real about who I am. If I'm too stiff, my students can't relate to me. On the other hand, I'm also a strong proponent of keeping very clear boundaries with students of any age. They don't need to know everything about me. I'm responsible for holding space for their emotional, physical and spiritual development. It's not about me! When I let the youth know who I am without giving real intimate information, I get the best response from them. A number of years ago, I was talking to a student in the company and she said: "Sarah, I like that I know some stuff about you because then I feel like I can trust you, but I don't know too much. That works for me." That helped to confirm what I had understood to be true for years.

Rehearsal Session #2

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Ball Toss** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 114)

WARM-UPS

- **What's in a Name** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116)
- **Movement Telephone** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)
- **Choosing Sides** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Group Poem** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 124)

For this rehearsal we followed the instructions for the Group Poem exercise in the Group Bonding section of the Appendix. We were bonding as a group and also preparing for a performance piece that we were creating for a show called Dance is ... Social Change that

included youth artists from all over the Bay Area. We eventually created a dance/theater piece called *Social Change* is... out of the written material from this exercise. Here are the statements that we created especially for this rehearsal:

1. *We need social change because...*
2. *...needs to change*
3. *...needs to change*
4. *...needs to change*
5. *I need to change... (something for myself)*
6. *I am ... (one word or short phrase saying something good)*
7. *My community is... (one word or short phrase about something good)*
8. *My world is... (one word or short phrase saying something good)*
9. *I'm confused about...*
10. *One thing for sure is...*

- **Share out: Each student reads his/her poem out loud.**

A Social Change Group Poem

We need social change because the world is a mess and our youth are growing ignorant.

Poverty ... needs to change.

Homelessness ... needs to change.

Hate... needs to change.

I am... enthusiastic.

My community is... diverse and beautiful.

My world is... ENORMOUS.

I am confused about the choices we make as a society.

One thing I know for sure is that I love myself no matter who cares.

- **What is Social Change... Brainstorm**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Blank paper and pens or pencils for each student and instructors, butcher paper taped to the wall, magic markers.

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room seated on the ground in a place where they will not be tempted to talk to anyone else.

DESCRIPTION: Give each student a few minutes to write down his or her definition of social change. On the same piece of paper have each student answer the question: What things do you think need to change? Give the group about four minutes in silence to write their answers to the question. Then get student volunteers to write on the butcher paper in the front of the classroom. Have the volunteers write “Social Change” in the center of the paper and make a circle around it and then have people read out their definitions. The volunteers write the definitions on the paper with lines going from “Social Change” moving outwards to the definitions like a web.

When everyone has shared on this theme, on another piece of paper, have the students list the things that they think need to change. After all of the responses are on the page, ask the group to look at all of the work that they have done. Ask them if they have any other ideas to add to the lists they have created. You may choose to do a very short debrief of the brainstorm by asking if they thought the questions were valuable and how. This may spark more meaningful discussion that can also be recorded.

- **Create a Handshake** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)

DEBRIEF: Question — What was your favorite moment in the rehearsal? (Everyone answers this question around a circle). Note: You may want to remind the students about the exercises that they did throughout the rehearsal before asking what was their favorite, because they may only vividly remember the one they just did.

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Journal Note,

Doing a performance in the group bonding phase to inspire the group

BY SARAH CROWELL

This year we chose to create a mini performance in the first four weeks of class as a tool to encourage group bonding. We did this because it is a great way to get the group excited and invested in the whole process of performance. When they can dive right into all the elements of the show – script-writing, choreography, and performing – they get a taste for what is possible if they really put all their energy into the program. They also get to see some of the places that may become challenging both for individuals and the group as a whole. As a teacher, if you watch the process carefully, you can notice the places to spend more time when you go back through the process of creating the longer performance piece. For example, if the group wants to rush to practice moves without discussing and debriefing group dynamics you can point out the impact of miscommunication on the performance as a result. If you choose not to develop a small show during the group bonding phase, spend more time in each class creating small performance opportunities so that students can enjoy the thrill of performing while they are doing the hard work of practice and preparation.

Journal Note,

Looking for performance material early

BY SARAH CROWELL

During the “What’s in a Name” warm-up exercise, one of the students talked about her name in a way that we immediately noted as potential performance material. She said that she had a Cambodian name (her given name) and an American name. For the first part of her childhood she was called by her American name. When she reached her early teens she decided that she wanted everyone to call her by her Cambodian name. She shared this in a fairly nonchalant way, but the story was poignant and obviously important to her. **LOOK OUT FOR THESE MOMENTS.** If you’re not vigilant they will get past you. Teenagers tend to downplay things that are really important, so I try to write down as much as possible. I always take notes during all group shares and discussions. This way I don’t forget anything. I also ask students questions during group shares that will help flesh out the detail in the story right then and there. When this young woman talked about her name I asked her to expand on the details. This gave the story life and revealed its theatrical potential. I then asked her to write the story down into something more extensive that could be used in the show. She eventually wrote and created a whole movement/theater piece that appeared in the show. See page 76 in Chapter 4 for detail about the creation of the piece.

Rehearsal Session #3

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Finish the Phrase** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 127)
- **Mirroring** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 140)
- **Weight Exchange** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 141)



Mirroring exercise
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Across the Floor Fun** (see Theater Exercises page 131)
- **The Machine** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 126)
- **Review, memorize and stage “Social Change is...” section of the show**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20–30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: A pen or pencil for each student.

SET-UP: The directors have organized and typed up all of the definitions of social change, from the previous rehearsal’s writing exercise. Then they made them into short statements that finish the sentence “Social Change is...,” chose one statement per student, and put them into an order that flowed well. They passed out the copies of the written material to each student.

DESCRIPTION: Each student picks one “Social Change is...” statement. They can take a few minutes to modify the statement in whatever way they like, but it must maintain the integrity of the original statement. Priority is given to students who wrote their own material. They are asked to memorize the line they have chosen as well as the lines that come before and after theirs. The directors then block the scene in collaboration with the performers. This means that

they work together to create movement and action with the spoken word segments that is interesting and that augments the written material. (See Dance and Choreography Exercises page 142 for ideas about how to create and block movement with text.)

The “Social Change is...” Script

Jamila: Social change is peace.

Marisa: Social change is equal rights & opportunity for everyone.

Arienna: Social change is a transformation in the way we relate to one another on an individual, interpersonal and global level.

Mariana: Social change is when people come together to create a world where everyone can survive.

Jaime: Social change is people educating each other to make a change.

Angelina: Social change is a change or improvement in the human race, which we need.

Amalia: Social change is acceptance of all people by all other people.

Zeneta: Social change is a better world.

Rhummanee: Social change is the awakening of sleeping minds.

Chandrika: Social change is the common goal of justice and the willingness to act on your beliefs.

Lindsay: Social change is reevaluating the reason those less fortunate remain at the bottom.

Lisie: Social change is raising awareness between different types of people.

Dessie: Social change is change, period.

- **Owning the Space** (see Theater Exercises page 133)
- **Run the “Social Change is...” dance/theater piece again**, after doing the Owning the Space theater exercise
- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 158)

Note: An alternative to this would be to run a piece of choreography that the group is learning in dance class as a way to break up the rehearsal session and give the students a chance to move their bodies.

DEBRIEF: Question — How was the rehearsal for you in five words or less? (Everyone answers this question around a circle)

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Journal Note,

Getting students to feel comfortable touching

BY SARAH CROWELL

Dance requires that people touch. Sometimes touching is uncomfortable, especially for adolescents, and especially if the students don't know each other or they are shy. Teenagers can get a little skittish with the whole touching thing, so you have to take it in stages. I start by having the students just face each other without touching first, as in the MIRRORING exercise. Then I have them touch hands and lean into and away from each other, as in the WEIGHT EXCHANGE exercise. Then I have them build more physical trust by doing the variations on the TRUST FALL exercises. This way, over a number of rehearsal sessions, the students are preparing to work together and create choreography that may have partner work in it. By the time they get to that stage they are comfortable enough with each other to be free in their creative process.

Rehearsal Session # 4

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Weather Report** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 117)

WARM-UPS

- **Touch — Don't Get Touched** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 124)
- **Choosing Sides** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Words Free-Write**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10–15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Blank paper and pens or pencils for each student and instructors.

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room seated on the ground in a place where they will not be tempted to talk to anyone else.

DESCRIPTION: Instructors read the following words, one by one, slowly and students write reactions to the words in whatever style they want — poetry, prose or random words. Give about 30 seconds for each word. Words you might include: Unity, Friend, Hate, Mother, Father, Change, Home, Homeless, Food, Race, Religion, Freedom, Sex, Family and Destiny. Have students share at the end.

- **Share out: Anyone can read what he or she wrote out loud.**
- **Review, memorize and stage “One thing I know for sure...” section of the show**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20–30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: A pen or pencil for each student.

SET-UP: The directors have organized and typed up all of the statements that start with “One thing I know for sure” from the group poem that was written in session 2. Then they made them into short statements, chose one statement per student, and put them into an order that flowed well. They passed out the copies of the written material to each student.

DESCRIPTION: Each student picks one statement. They can take a few minutes to modify the statement in whatever way they like, but it must maintain the integrity of the original statement. Priority is given to students who wrote their own material. They are asked to memorize the line they have chosen as well as the lines that come before and after theirs. The directors then block the scene in collaboration with the performers. This means that they work together to create movement and action with the spoken word segments that is interesting and that augments the written material. (See Dance and Choreography Exercises page 142 for ideas about how to create and block movement with text)

The “One Thing I Know For Sure...” Script

Jamila: One thing I know for sure is that I’m loved exactly as I am.

Chandrika: One thing I know for sure is that the world needs to change.

Mariana: One thing I know for sure is that our spirits will guide us.

Lisie: One thing I know for sure is that peace is necessary.

Zeneta: One thing I know for sure is that I'm against the war on terrorism.

Marisa: One thing I know for sure is that we'll die someday.

Lindsay: One thing I know for sure is that I'm still alive.

Amalia: One thing I know for sure is that someone will always be there for me.

Jaime: One thing I know for sure is that with a little effort and confidence the world can, and will, change.

Rhummanee: One thing I know for sure is that I make an effort to learn about different people.

Kendra: One thing I know for sure is that we're gonna make it no matter what.

Angelina: One thing I know for sure is that everyone can change.

Dessie: One thing I know for sure is that I will make a difference.

Arienna: One thing I know for sure is that the fight is not over.

- **Owning the Space** (see Theater Exercises page 133)
- **Run the “One thing I know for sure...” dance/theater piece again**, after doing the Owning the Space theater exercise
- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
Note: An alternative to this would be to run a piece of choreography that the group is learning in dance class as a way to break up the rehearsal session and give the students a chance to move their bodies.

DEBRIEF: Giving Props (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!



Simón Hanukai with Jamila Jackson, Chanrika Francis and Lisie Rosenberg backstage
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Rehearsal Session #5

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Movement Telephone** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)
- **Clay Objects** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 126)
- **What are you doing?** (see Theater Exercises page 133)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Trust Walking/Running** (see Group Bonding page 119)
- **Trust Falls in Partners** (see Group Bonding page 117)
- **Group Poem** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 124)

For this rehearsal we followed the instructions for the Group Poem exercise in the Group Bonding section of the Appendix, completing the following statements. These statements were designed especially to get the students to go deeper and reveal more about themselves.

1. When I was younger... (briefly describe a painful experience)
2. I couldn't believe that it was happening to me, but...
3. I felt like...
4. I wanted to...
5. I needed to...
6. It made me weaker because...
7. It made me stronger because...
8. It made me different because...
9. One thing I know for sure...

- **Share out: Group poems are read out loud.**

PRACTICE FOR PERFORMANCE

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: The students go to their places for the beginning of the piece.

DESCRIPTION: The instructors have the students run all of the dance and theater material that they will be performing soon. The performance piece is a combination of the “Social Change is...” and the “One thing I know for sure ...” dance/theater pieces sandwiched between one hip-hop dance and one modern dance that the students learned in class. The entire program is practiced at least twice in order to help the students remember the pieces and to improve their stamina.

DEBRIEF: **Giving Props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1... 2... 3... hey!

Journal Note:

Holding the space

BY SARAH CROWELL

In the last rehearsal we did a random poem exercise that was designed to deepen the vulnerability of the students. The random poem above was a series of questions that the students were asked about a particularly painful situation. They were to write a brief version of the experience and different feelings it raised. That day I was really distracted. I had a grant deadline, some staff issues and a few parents with questions that needed to be dealt with. During the writing exercise, I left the room, and had Simón, my co-artistic director, facilitate the exercise. At the very moment that the group was about to share their writing, Simón was called to move his car. He left before I returned. When I did return a few older students were facilitating the sharing of their poems with the group, but they seemed less willing to share than usual. They were irritated and testy. When I put the pieces together I realized that we had introduced an exercise that required quite a bit more vulnerability than we had previously asked from this group, and we were not present for the youth. Hello! How could I have missed this?

Then I remembered my own rule about these kinds of things. Any time I did an exercise that required going deeper, I would make that time totally sacred. I would make sure that I was in the room for every part of the process, even the part where they were writing quietly. I would make it a point to be completely present. My eyes would be open – not staring at the kids, but gently focusing on and scanning the room as a whole. I would have an air of quiet contemplation and respect for the seriousness and vulnerability of the situation. In the rehearsal I had broken my own rule, and I had lost the group.

In the ensuing rehearsals both Simón and I spoke openly about our error with the students and made sure to encourage them that we would be more present in the future. The students relaxed after this conversation, and we continued to go deeper as a group.

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #1

Reminder: The script-writing group is a small subset of the larger company, approximately 4–7 participants, who volunteer to give extra time to the script-writing and editing process. They meet on separate days from the regular rehearsal sessions for 3–4 hours.

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Welcome and introduction to the script-writing process**

The instructors welcome the group and congratulate them on choosing to spend extra time learning how to write and edit the script for the show. They review what the process will be over the next few months. This includes talking about what writing a script entails: learning to edit material that is already written, learning to place the material in an order that makes sense, taking autobiographical stories and translating them into interesting theater pieces for the stage, creating characters and scenes, and understanding theatrical mechanisms and their use in the context of creating a dance/theater production.

- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Share a family story**

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together.

DESCRIPTION: Each student is asked to share a short story that is often told about him or her by his or her family. If they cannot think of a family story, they can tell a funny childhood memory.

- **Create a character**

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor explains that each person is going to create her own fictional character by answering the following questions. Each person gets five minutes to answer the questions about her character. As they are answering the questions the students are imagining that they are the character. The instructor encourages the students to create a character that is very different from them.

- What is your character's name?
 - Who are your parents?
 - Where do you live?
 - How old are you?
 - How would others describe you?
 - How do you spend your free time?
 - What's your economic situation?
 - What do you like?
 - What are you afraid of?
 - What is something you want to do later in life?
 - Describe a scar you have.
 - Describe a time when someone was nice to you.
- **Share out: Each student introduces himself or herself as the character.** For example, I could introduce myself in this way: My name is Harriet Smith and I am 80 years old. I live in Nigeria and other people describe me as the leader of the tribe. The more the group gets into their characters as they describe them, the better.
 - **Act out your character.** The instructor chooses a "setting" and each person interacts with the others as if they are the character they created. For example, the "setting" could be a therapy group, a bus stop or a dinner party. The instructor may have to role model to get things moving.

DEBRIEF: Questions — How did it feel to act out your character? How did it feel to interact with the other characters? What did you learn about yourself and each other?

CLOSING: Go around the circle and say one word or short phrase to describe what you want to get out of writing a script together.

Rehearsal Session # 6

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Weather Report** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 117)

WARM-UPS

- **Choosing Sides** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 125)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Rehearsal for performance** — The company was contacted to do a 15-minute performance called “Dance is Social Change.” at a local theater. We decided to use this opportunity to create performance material together during the group bonding phase. Most of this session is dedicated to rehearsing the piece.
- **Student Feedback — Refining the Piece**

During this part of the session, students who have been in the performance troupe previously coach the rest of the group as they practice for the performance. One advanced student at a time sits out and watches the group run the piece. They are then given a few minutes to give constructive feedback. The group then repeats the piece using the feedback they’ve just received.

DEBRIEF: Question — How was it to hear feedback from your peers? How was it to give feedback to the group? How do you think you did in rehearsal today in five words or less? (Everyone answers this question around a circle).

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!



Amalia Mesa-Gustin and Mariana Martinez backstage
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #2

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Write a story about your week**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor asks the students to sit quietly and close their eyes. The following guided contemplation can be used verbatim to prepare the students for the writing exercise: “Take a moment to contemplate your week. Look back at what happened each day. Remember interactions you had with other people. Remember what you did at home, at school, out in the world. Remember how you felt about it all. Remember the high points and the low points, the sweetness and the bitterness.” Have the students do a free write after the contemplation. They can write for 10–15 minutes about their week. Tell them to bring out the details. They can write poetry or stream of consciousness, whatever they choose.

- **Share out: Students who are willing share their writing.**

- **Group Brainstorm — What is important to you?**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone, butcher paper, markers.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together. The butcher paper is up on the wall.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor starts by reminding the group that the show they are working on is going to be about what is really important to them. The show is going to be about what makes them angry and what brings out their passion for justice. It will be a montage of words and images about their fears, their hopes, and their dreams. Then the instructor asks everyone to think about the following categories of questions and asks the group to respond to them one at a time. The answers are recorded on the butcher paper. You may choose to title each question or series of questions that is written on the butcher paper. Questions:

- What makes you angry? Be specific. Talk about school, personal relationships, family, homelessness, racism, the state of the city that you live in, etc.
- What makes you sad?
- What makes you afraid?
- What gets you most excited during group discussions at school?
- Who are your heroes? Who do you look up to and why?

DEBRIEF: Questions — How was it to participate in the group discussion? Did you feel that the group honored the group discussion guidelines? How did you feel about your own participation in the discussion?

CLOSING: Go around and say one word or short phrase to describe how you feel the session went today.

Rehearsal Session #7

OPENING: *Short Meditation* (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Follow the Leader** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Silent Conversations** (see Theater Exercise page 130)
- **Vocal Warm-ups** (see Theater Exercises page 128)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES: *Rehearsal for performance*

DEBRIEF: *Questions* — Does anyone have any feedback about the show material? Does anyone have any feedback about how the material is being performed? How could we make the show even better? What is going to take the performance to the next level in terms of technique and performance quality?

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!

Rehearsal Session # 8

OPENING: *Short Meditation* (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Follow the Leader** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Silent Conversations** (see Theater Exercise page 130)
- **Vocal Warm-ups** (see Theater Exercises page 128)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Rehearsal for performance**
- **Creating goals for the upcoming weekend retreat**

Every year the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company goes on a weekend retreat at the end of the group bonding phase. The group prepares for the retreat by doing the following exercises. A detailed weekend retreat schedule is included below.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone, butcher paper, and markers.

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle. The butcher paper is up on the wall.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor asks the students to write for 5 minutes about what they want to get out of the retreat, and what they want to give. They can free write or make a list. Everyone is then asked to share their goals with the group while someone writes them on the butcher paper. The group is also asked to brainstorm what type of games and activities they would like to do at the retreat. The instructors may use these ideas to create parts of the retreat agenda.

DEBRIEF: *Question* — What is one word or short phrase that describes how you want to feel after the retreat is over. Be positive. Everyone goes around the circle and shares the word or short phrase.

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Weekend Retreat

This is optional and is not included as a “session,” however we have found that it facilitates group bonding in a very meaningful way. By taking the students out of their familiar environments we can ask them to think about themselves as a part of the community we are creating within the company. The retreat is an opportunity for the students to get to know one another on a deeper level than they can through their work in the studio. As a result, we can ask them to be even more introspective as we work to develop the script and choreography further.

It is best if the retreat takes place at the end of the group bonding phase so that the students feel comfortable enough with one another to go on a retreat together and truly open up to each other. Often, small conflicts arise on the retreat; resolving these conflicts deepens group bonding and allows us to implore students to use their conflict resolution skills.

Below is a schedule of the DAYPC weekend retreat for 2003. It gives a very brief outline of what was covered. We do not include tips about how to prepare for the retreat ahead of time here. Of course, there are many details to handle and the planning is the most important part. Getting permission from parents/guardians, booking a location, and handling transportation and food needs are all things to think about if you decide to go on a retreat.

Retreat Schedule 2003

FRIDAY NIGHT AFTER SCHOOL

1. Meet at a predetermined location
2. Go out for pizza dinner together
3. Go to see a live performance together
4. Go to the retreat location
5. Go over weekend group guidelines, including cooking, cleaning and sleeping rules.
6. Bed time

SATURDAY

1. Early morning hike
2. Prepare and eat brunch together
3. Two hour “Unlearning Oppression” workshop with a guest facilitator
4. Debrief of workshop
5. Free time
6. Prepare and eat dinner
7. Work on dances; work on stories and script writing in small groups; group discussion
8. Bed time

SUNDAY

1. Prepare and eat breakfast together
2. Morning hike
3. Two hour theater workshop with a guest facilitator
4. Short lunch break
5. Giving props on backs (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)
6. Pack up and clean up

Journal Note:

Conflict resolution/deepening connections

BY SARAH CROWELL

On our retreat one year, two girls got into a petty argument because one bumped into the other. They exchanged words and the argument got heated enough that I had to step in as a mediator. Destiny Arts Center is a violence prevention center that uses a specific curriculum for teaching peaceful conflict resolution, and we had the opportunity to use those techniques here. The Destiny conflict resolution model is based on talking and explaining one's story as well as listening and repeating back the other person's story. In this particular conflict, one girl was much more articulate about her feelings than the other. As the mediation progressed, she looked better and better because she was so skilled at verbalizing what she wanted to say, despite the fact that she was not owning her mistakes or taking responsibility for her behavior.

The other girl was not saying she was sorry, but I heard her taking responsibility for her part in the argument by saying that she knew that she was angry and irritable mostly because of hard stuff that was going on at home. I was able to point that out and encourage the other girl to find compassion for the girl in pain. Once the conversation took a positive turn I was no longer needed as a mediator and I left the girls alone to continue their conversation. After about 15 minutes they emerged from the room looking happy and feeling like they were friends.

This was a significant turning point for the girl who had been having problems at home. She had been generally crabby and negative and was starting to bring the group energy down. After the mediation she started to come out of her shell and subsequently felt more comfortable being open with the group as a whole. She became a positive leader in the company and stayed that way for the rest of the year.

Journal Note:

The Power of Retreat

BY SARAH CROWELL

The retreat experience wraps up the group bonding phase quite magically. The group gets to spend time outside of the more formal rehearsal and script-writing sessions and the students get to know each other in new and important ways. Now they're ready to begin generating material that comes from the authentic connection and safety that has developed. At the retreat in 2003, on the Saturday night, the group really got into making up dances and writing scenes and monologues. They pushed away furniture and worked on a dance that one girl was choreographing that commented on the negative image of girls in the media. The group got into heated discussions about girls and how boys and men treat them. After that discussion, one girl wrote a monologue about how boys talk to her in public and how she gets caught up in pleasing them. The creativity was flowing and the group was ripe for phase three!



Angelina Johnson-Holman in rehearsal
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Getting Creative: Generating Material for the Show

REHEARSAL SESSIONS 9–17

SCRIPT WRITING SESSIONS 3–6

Intention

The intention of this phase is to identify a theme (or themes) for the performance and to generate a body of written and movement material that is connected to those themes. The group will also choose a theatrical mechanism for the show, a story-telling device that gives the show a beginning, middle and end. A strong emphasis is placed on giving all the youth company members the freedom to share their stories, voice their ideas, and develop their own unique methods of creative expression.

Introduction

During this phase the group will choose what theme or themes will be covered in the show. Since Destiny Arts Center is a violence prevention center, and not just a performing arts school, our show themes focus on the challenges we experience as we try to build a peaceful society. We have found that the most salient related themes in teens' lives tend to focus on identity, culture, racism,



Arienna Grody scriptwriting
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

sexism, homophobia, gender roles, relationships, and environmental issues. Every year we tend to revisit these themes and personalize them to the group we are working with that year. Some of the themes may reveal themselves as more important than others to particular groups. Writing and movement exercises, guided meditations and group discussions are designed to lead the students toward uncovering themes that will get them excited about the creative process.

During this phase, the work of the group should be extremely productive in terms of engaging in energetic dialogue, and developing material that has meaning for each member of the group. Most of the written and choreographic material for the show is created during this phase. Inevitably, the group will end up with more material than is needed. There will be piles of poetry, stories and ideas for scenes that have been created through a variety of different techniques. There will be a storehouse of choreography and choreographic ideas. This is fine; the material can be edited later. Indeed, a lot of the work that is created in this phase will end up on the cutting room floor. In the end we tend to use only about 30% of the written material in the final script. About 80% of the movement that is created is used somewhere in the show because it's harder to create, learn and retain than the written work.

In any case, it is the responsibility of the directors in this phase, to hold space for everyone's voice to be heard, as each student expresses his or her ideas. Directors will be working on keeping the students with loud, visible voices engaged and excited, encouraging and pulling out the students with quiet, hidden voices, and guiding the collective process of creation. This is the phase where the show begins to take shape, but does not come together completely. It's important that the leaders not control the content too much. Of course, it is important to stick to the theme(s) that the group commits to when creating material, but it is crucial that all of the group members feel that their ideas are heard, so that even if their work is edited out in the final phase of show development, they still feel that they were an integral part of its creation.

While generating material, the students and the directors are in a process of searching and researching. The searching is a process in which the youth look within themselves to find poignant personal stories, points of view, fears, hopes, and visions for the future. The researching is the process of developing characters for the fictional stories and developing the social and political perspective of the show. This may require looking up some historical information, researching statistics, etc. For example, the show we did in 2004, called *INsight*, happened to have an all-girl cast. The girls decided that the show would be about their struggles and triumphs as young women growing up in a sexist society. The show dealt with issues of self-esteem, the ways that men treat women, and the ways that women perceive themselves. One piece in the show was a series of statistics about the representation of girls in the media and the effect that representation has on the students. Each girl spoke a statistic as the rest of the group did a movement to reflect the words. This required the script-writing group to do some research on the Internet. The research then prompted another round of searching, as the girls began to tell stories about their experiences learning the statistics.

During this phase, students are also choosing a theatrical mechanism that will carry the story of the show forward. For the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, a theatrical mechanism is a story-telling technique that is used to pull together the real-life stories of the youth participants and give the show a thread that ties everything together. Since we combine movement, theater and personal storytelling, we need to be sure that all the aspects of the show cohere. The trick is to create a show that has a beginning, middle and end. For example, in a show called *Fairytale on the Flip Side*, we used a theatrical mechanism in which two narrators, one cheery and optimistic, the other sarcastic and pessimistic, told a fairytale while the other students acted it out. Their fairytale costumes were all black, white and grey. The fairytale scenes had theme material that related specifically to the real-

life stories of the youth in the show and at certain points the fairytale would pause and the real-life stories would take over. These stories were told through monologue, song and movement and were costumed in color.

Another year, in a show called *Elevate... an invitation*, the students chose to unify the show by telling the story of how eight youth from very different backgrounds got stuck in an elevator together and how they eventually got out. Their fictionalized interactions in the elevator brought out the real stories our youth wanted to tell. The fictional aspect of the show, the elevator, allowed us to unify otherwise seemingly disconnected stories.

During this phase there will be sessions that are fast moving and are totally youth-generated. There may be a lot of individual work going on as well. The large group may be practicing one piece while the directors, as teachers and coaches, are working with one or two other students on other aspects of the show. In some moments, exerting authority and creative leadership as a director is exactly what the group needs. In other moments, the group needs to be left alone to do their own creating. The subtle awareness of reading the group is critical as this process comes together.

We continue to mix up dance, theater and writing rehearsals so that the energy stays steady in all three areas. In this phase the directors are constantly going back and forth between these areas as well as generating material and continuing to build group energy, movement and theater skills. It is important to continue to work on skill development without getting too caught up in it.

Script-writing sessions get more intense. They are focused on collecting the material that the youth have written in the larger group sessions and finding themes that will connect to one another. The script-writing group talks about how to bring out stories that they have heard people mention in passing and group them into themes: i.e. race issues, gender issues, political climate, identity issues.

This is the phase in which we invite guest artists to work with the company. We ask the students what their interests are in order to help us decide whom to invite. Sometimes we go with the students' choices and other times we choose the guest artists based on what we think might be missing from the students' experience. In the past we have invited belly dancers, hip-hop artists, African drummers and dancers, Afro-Haitian artists and salsa dancers, among others. We have also invited guest playwrights and spoken word artists. The guests are sometimes seasoned professionals and sometimes company alumni. Inviting company alumni is great because it gives the current company members a sense of where they might take their experiences and interests in the future and gives the alumni an opportunity to give something back to the company.

Note: Rehearsals in this phase will begin to be more goal-oriented and less about group bonding, but be careful. The youth may get bored with just creating material for the show. If that happens, the directors can insert a few games to lighten things up and boost company morale.

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: Students are completely committed and engaged in the process of creating both written and movement material for the show. They feel comfortable enough with one another to bring forth material that has depth, and are willing to tell their stories in an uninhibited way.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students continue coming to rehearsals and script-writing sessions regularly and are enthusiastic about the process.
- Students engage in heated discussions about creative material for the show. Most of the students are participating in these discussions.

- The stories the students tell are increasingly personal.
- Students feel comfortable enough with each other and the directors to both agree and disagree about scene and theatrical mechanism ideas.

2. Outcome: There is a great deal of written and movement material generated by the students, guest artists and directors. Material is related to the theme(s) on which the group has agreed.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- The directors have at least 50 pages of poetry, stories and scene ideas written by the students.
- There is at least one dance and/or movement/theater piece that is finished and in the process of being polished.
- There are at least four dances and/or movement/theater pieces being created by a number of different choreographers, both youth and professional.

3. Outcome: Students have come up with a theme or themes for the show and a theatrical mechanism about which they are excited.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- When the script-writing group shares its theme and theatrical mechanism ideas with the larger group, there is obvious excitement.
- The entire group stands by the stated themes and theatrical mechanism and gets excited to shift from exploration to honing in on the editing and crafting of the show.

Journal Note:

The power of asking someone who he or she is

BY SARAH CROWELL

I have led the "Who Are You" exercise countless times with groups of teens and adults. It never fails to deepen the group energy, to encourage lively group discussions and to bring forth provocative written work. The answers that people give to the questions in the exercise often surprise them, make them feel uncomfortable and/or give them a sense of relief that they are not alone. I was demonstrating the exercise once to a group of teens. My co-director was asking me "Who are you" very quickly. I was giving one-word answers like: I am Sarah, I'm a woman, I'm a dancer, I'm a teacher, etc. Then I surprised myself and said, "I'm an angel." Everyone laughed sweetly. I had never thought about it, but I guess that I am an angel to some. It touched me to realize that about myself and it gave the youth permission to say sweet things about themselves. Both teens and adults often share that this exercise is the first experience they've had where someone has asked them who they are. Amazing, isn't it? It seems like that question is so essentially human, and yet we may go an entire lifetime without having someone ask it of us! Teens are in a time in their lives when they are constantly exploring their identities and so this exercise is tailor-made for them. They not only get to say who they are; they get to say it to a peer who will then respond with her own statement of who she is. The normal holding back that teens do with each other often evaporates here and common ground is created that can never be taken away.

Session Outlines

Rehearsal Session # 9

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

Note: The focus of most of the warm-up exercises in this session is partner work in order to prepare the group for the focus activities, which require partner work as well.

- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Mirroring** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 140)
- **Weight Exchange** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 131)
- **Silent Conversations** (see Theater Exercises page 130)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Who are you?** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 127)

Note: The description in the Appendix gives instructions for how to bring the group out of the meditation, how to initiate a writing exercise and how to debrief the exercise as a group.

- **Share out: Anyone who is willing to share what they wrote can read it out loud.**
- **Collect writing**

DEBRIEF: Giving props (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!

“Who am I?” – Youth Writing

BY KENDRA STATON

Who am I?

I'm un-pretty, awkward, afraid, loving, earth, mother, daughter, fake, silly,
worried, imperfect, whole, connected.

Who do I pretend to be?

Confident, Everyone, Mother Teresa, Whole, Sane, Joined, Depressed, Anyone but me, Okay, Loving, Loved.

I am pollution

that came into my head at random but thinking about it

I suppose I am

I pollute the world and pollute moods and atmospheres I find myself in

I also said I was Oprah but I have no idea where that came from.

I am strong, vulnerable, weak, understanding, confused, lost, passionate

I am shy.

I pretend to know how I'm supposed to act.

Rehearsal Session # 10

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Follow the leader** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Advanced dance movement practice** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)

Note: Most of the dance technique the students learn happens in dance technique classes, not in rehearsal sessions, however it is great to get the students to practice tough dance moves in the context of rehearsal every once in a while, so the students understand the importance of steady technical practice.

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **“Being Seen/Not Being Seen” Writing Exercise**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20-25 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room seated on the ground in a place where they will not be tempted to talk to anyone else.

DESCRIPTION: The director tells a story to introduce and inspire the next writing exercise. She says she has heard that in part of Africa the people greet each other with a phrase that can be translated into “I see you.” Every time they greet someone the person looks into their eyes and tells them that they have truly been seen. She speaks about it passionately. Then she instructs the class to write a short story about a time when they felt really seen, and a time when they didn’t feel seen or felt invisible. Example: Choose a time when someone went out of their way to help you or a time when you felt like someone saw you for who you truly are; and choose a time or times when you felt misunderstood, overlooked or left out.

- **Share out:** *Anyone who is willing to share what they wrote can read it out loud.*
- **Collect writing**

DEBRIEF: Questions — How was that exercise for you? Did it make sense? Why or why not? Do you see any way of using the theme of being seen or not seen in the show?

- **Giving props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: The instructors ask everyone to go up to at least four people in the room, look into their eyes and, with complete sincerity say “I see you.”

- 1...2...3... hey!

“Being Seen/Not Being Seen” – Youth Writing

BY ARIENNA GRODY

Most people don't see each other in a positive light. We find it easier to pretend that others don't exist or that they don't mean anything to us. I spent most of elementary school trying not to be seen and I wasn't. I did everything I was supposed to do and remained invisible. I think that came from my parents. My mother spent her childhood the same way and my father, a political activist who walked around in tie-dye dresses, spent so much time behind bars that I didn't ever want to make a spectacle of myself. I preferred to be nothing more than a shadow. It took me a long time to realize that being seen didn't have to mean getting criticized or arrested, that it could be nice.

BY JAMILA JACKSON

I was seen...

It wasn't a certain circumstance, but I know I am seen by Katie. I tell my mom about everything but I can just talk to Katie in a different way. She always knows when I am upset and mostly I don't have to explain what I mean because she already knows.

I was not seen...

Last summer I was in Maine. I was in my grandmother's house reading a book in the living room. She was in the kitchen just across the wall. She was telling her friend about someone who was disrespectful, mean and obviously she didn't like them. I was being my nosy self and listening. Then I realized she was talking about me. I couldn't believe it. I got up and yelled at her because she said something about me under-achieving because I am black. I couldn't take it (I went upstairs). After I came back down, she was still talking. She said I was unattractive and rude. That she hadn't met my father but she didn't think he was much. How my mom didn't have a real job. How I was worse cause I am black and now I just didn't understand. I hate her. Everyone said she was drunk and that's why she said it but that is B.S.



Jaime Phillips and Jennifer Lawson backstage
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #3

Reminder: The script-writing group is a small subset of the larger company, approximately 4–7 participants, who volunteer to give extra time to the script-writing and editing process. They meet on separate days from the regular rehearsal sessions for 3–4 hours.

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

Note: The script-writing group spent their first two sessions in the group bonding phase simply connecting as a group by doing different writing and theater games. Now they are ready to review material that was written in the large group rehearsal sessions and start discussing themes and theatrical mechanisms.

- **Review written material from rehearsal sessions**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1 hour and 30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together. The instructors have brought in all the writing that the company has done in rehearsal and script-writing sessions up to this point and spread it out on the table.

DESCRIPTION: The instructors ask the group to take a pile of the writing and skim through it looking for common themes and categories. The group then places the writing in stacks according to its category. The categories are simply the set of writing that the group did in a particular session. The instructors intentionally mix up the writing a bit so the group becomes familiar with forming categories. For example, this year the writing fell into the following categories.

- What’s important to me?
- Who am I?
- Being seen and not being seen
- The origins of each company member’s name
- Group poems about/definitions of social change
- Group poems about painful childhood memories

Once the writing is in categories, each group member is asked to read one category of writing in depth. The students are asked to look for themes in the writing. A theme can be the same or different from a category. For example the category of “Who am I?” from above could also be put into the theme of self-identity. The category of “What’s important to me?” from above could be split into a number of different themes, like racism, sexism, love, friends, family etc.

The students are also asked to underline phrases, sentences, stories or parts of poems that they really like in each piece of writing. They should look out for things that create a visual image or that speak to them personally. They should look for strong writing and interesting stories.

Finally the students are asked to identify themes that may require some research. For example, someone liked a poem one student wrote about the Patriot Act.

This process is silent at first, and then the instructors engage the group in a discussion of the themes and brainstorming about where each piece of writing fits.

- **Brainstorm Theatrical Mechanisms**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1 hour and 30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together.

DESCRIPTION: The instructors define the theatrical mechanism and explain how it is used in the context of creating a movement/theater production. (Refer to the introduction in this chapter for an explanation of theatrical mechanisms.) They give examples of theatrical mechanisms that have been used in previous productions to motivate the student to think creatively.

Examples:

- A group of people stuck in an elevator
- A fairytale told by narrators and acted out by performers on stage
- A group of people in a car getting out of town

This discussion yielded another set of ideas for theatrical mechanisms:

- Group therapy session
- People abducted by aliens trying to get information about the human race
- Radio personalities as narrators

- **Prepare for presentation to larger group**

The instructor asks for two volunteers to prepare to make a presentation to the group about the above brainstorms. One volunteer will explain what show themes and theatrical mechanisms are and one will review the themes and theatrical mechanisms discussed in the script-writing session. The instructors coach the volunteers about their presentations. They may choose to make notes or create a visual presentation on butcher paper.

DEBRIEF: Questions — How do you feel about the themes that are emerging? Are you excited about the process? Are you nervous about the process?

CLOSING: Go around and say one word or short phrase that describes how you feel the session went today.

Rehearsal Session #11

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Verbal Check-in** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116)

WARM-UPS

- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Advanced Dance Movement Practice** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Exploring Power through Movement** (see Theater Exercises page 134–136)

- **Short Debrief of Exploring Power through Movement exercise**

Questions: How was that exercise for everyone? What was it like to lead and what was it like to follow? Did anything about it surprise you?

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

- **Script-writing group shares out**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: If the script-writing group presenters want to have visual aids they should

Journal Note.

Using what you're passionate about in your work with youth

BY SARAH CROWELL

When I am working with a group of young people on a performance piece, everything that I hear, read or experience is potentially a theme, a dance or theater piece, or food for contemplation for the show. Early in the process of creating the show this year, a friend of mine gave me a CD that had a talk on it by a woman named Dr. Joy Leary. Her talk was called "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome" and was based on her postgraduate work about the continuing struggle African Americans face so many years after slavery. The work really moved me. She told stories to make her points. She made me laugh and cry. I believe that life and most certainly art should do that to you. It should move and inspire you. Dr. Leary's stories did that for me. Of course, I wanted to share that inspiration with my students.

One story particularly made me think of my students. She spoke of a trip that she took to South Africa with a group of African American women. There's a greeting that the Africans use when they meet either a friend or a stranger. It means, "I see you." Many times a day they greet people with the same statement. This way they are acknowledging each other all the time. When Dr. Leary returned to the US she began interviewing African American men who had committed violent crimes. She found one thing in common with all of these men. The reason that they consistently stated for having committed violent acts was that they felt disrespected. When you break down the word "re - spect" it literally means "to be seen again." These men, Dr. Leary explains, whose origins are in Africa where their ancestors were greeted every day by a phrase that means, "I see you," are angry, and sometimes violent in the face of disrespect, or not being seen. Dr. Leary goes on to explain that this anger and violence results from generations of racism and thus disrespect. Something about this made sense to me. Something resonated about Dr. Leary's work. I wanted to give all of my students the experience of being seen for who they truly are, as I see them - unique expressions of the divine. I wanted them to understand what I had learned from the story. I wanted them to consider that this story was also theirs in some way. I wanted them to be able to talk about it and articulate it so that they could tell their stories about feeling seen or not to each other and then to an audience. I created a rehearsal session that incorporated these ideals.

The youth really got into the exercises that are included in the session plan above. By the time we reached the end of the rehearsal, I had the students say good-bye by going around and looking into each other's eyes and saying "I see you." They were sold on the idea. They did it all year. "I see you," they would say to me and laugh and touch me on the shoulder and sometimes just reach out and hug me. "I see you," I would say in return.

NOTE: FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DR. JOY LEARY AND HER WORK, CHECK OUT WWW.POWEROFONENESS.ORG.

prepare them in advance. This may include the presentation points listed on butcher paper and taped to the wall.

SET-UP: The presenters are standing at the front of the room and the rest of the company is gathered around them sitting on the floor.

DESCRIPTION: The script-writing group has chosen a representative to explain the concepts of show themes and theatrical mechanisms. Then another representative talks about the themes and theatrical mechanisms that were discussed in the previous script-writing group. This is used as a warm-up for the free-write and group brainstorm that happens next.

- **Group Brainstorm about theatrical mechanism**

The instructor thanks the youth presenters and then facilitates a 10-minute group discussion about which theatrical mechanisms stand out for the group. Other ideas may also be generated.

- **Free-Write and Group Brainstorm on themes and ideas for the show:**

Note: This group has a bunch of students who have done this process before and the others have seen Destiny shows for years, so they know what types of themes have been used before and what they are moved by, etc. The following directions can be given to the seasoned group or the new group. This discussion can happen much earlier on in your process. We did a performance in our first phase and so some theme material has already been generated. You may choose to do this brainstorm exercise in phase one, but make sure the group has bonded well before you do it.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Blank paper and pens or pencils for each student and instructors, butcher paper taped to the wall, magic markers.

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room seated on the ground in a place where they will not be tempted to talk to anyone else.

Directions for Free-Write

The instructors ask the students to take 5 minutes and write down their ideas for show themes. They are asked to keep in mind issues that are important to them, and/or issues that have come up for them in their writing in the group or elsewhere. Guiding questions:

- What issues are important to you right now?
- What gets on your nerves?
- What makes you angry about what's happening in the world?
- What are you passionate about?

Directions for Group Brainstorm

Have a couple of the students volunteer to write up what the group shares. Ask students to either share their writing or give their theme ideas for the show. Continue to ask probing questions if the conversation is slow to start. Ask guiding questions if the conversation is lively. Make sure that the students who are scribing get down the essence of the conversation as well as the detailed ideas and discussion topics. Keep the group accountable to the group brainstorm guidelines.

DEBRIEF: Go around and give one word or short phrase to describe how you felt the group brainstorm went.

- **Giving Props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!

Journal Note: *Themes emerging!*

BY SARAH CROWELL

The year I co-created the show that is included in this guide, our group happened to be all young women. After doing the writing exercise from the above session, the group got into a very heated discussion about the way that boys and men treat girls and women. They talked about the boxes that they are placed in and how they try to fit into the boxes themselves. Then one girl said that she didn't really like girls. Another girl agreed. Instead of asking the obvious question, to me, which was, "How can you not like girls when you are one?" I asked probing questions. What was it that they didn't like about girls? Why did they feel uncomfortable hanging out and being friends with other girls? What were the qualities that made being around other girls unappealing? I got a long list of negative associations. Girls were considered trifling, passive/aggressive, moody, overly emotional, sensitive drama queens who were wrapped up in their issues.

After I got the whole list down on paper, I asked them to give the negative qualities of boys, in their opinion. I felt it was only fair. After getting another long list of those qualities, that included egotistical and emotionally shut down, I encouraged them to add positive qualities to both lists. Creating the lists resulted in a heated discussion about the internalized oppression that women and girls experience. Again, I took notes.

I could see an important theme for the show emerging. The girls were getting excited about the possibility of having the show center around their issues as young women, and I could see light bulbs going off in their heads. I knew I would get a whole crop of new writing that the girls would write on their own out of the discussion. It turns out that this discussion indeed inspired many writers in the group. One girl wrote a piece about having anorexia, another about feeling ugly, and another about her anger toward the men who objectify her on the street. All three pieces eventually ended up being part of the show. The group took an important leap in this brainstorming session. They began to feel committed to some interesting themes and began thinking about ideas that could be incorporated into the show! The group bonding from phase one was starting to pay off and the girls' comfort with one another was beginning to bear fruit.

Rehearsal Session #12

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **IMAGE THEATER: Self-freeze, Partner Sculpt, Group Sculpt, Slide Shows, Slide Show** (see Theater Exercises page 136–137)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Long Meditation: Artichoke** (see Meditations page 110)

Note: The description in the Appendix gives instructions for how to bring the group out of the meditation, how to initiate a writing exercise and how to debrief the exercise as a group.

- **Share out:** *Anyone who is willing to share what they wrote can read it out loud.*
- **Collect writing**

DEBRIEF: Go around and give one word or short phrase to describe how you felt about today's rehearsal session.

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!

"Artichoke" – Youth Writing

BY JAMILA JACKSON

When I had peeled everything off, I was a bright light, like sunshine. More than people seeing me, it felt like I could see other people without being distracted by looks, rumors and all my judgments. I just saw real people. It was like after I stripped off all the leaves I was standing on a beach in sand and I dove into the water. When I was walking around, everyone could see that all I was, was the sunshine.

BY MARIANA MARTINEZ

Without all of my layers I felt empty. Without them I was just a blob. As I walked around at school without my layers, I felt very vulnerable. People could see me as me. They could see my innermost feelings without even trying to know who I really was. I could see exactly who they were, but this left no mystery. These layers really make a person who they are. Who are they without them? Without my layers, I really didn't know who or what I was. Nobody wanted to get too close.

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #4

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Review new writing for interesting stories or ideas for the script**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1 hour

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together. The instructors have brought in all the new writing that the company did in the previous rehearsal session after the artichoke meditation and spread it out in the center of the table.

DESCRIPTION: Each script-writing group member takes a few of the writings and reads them out loud to the rest of the group. When all of them have been read, the group discusses which of the writings stood out and how any of the writing could fit into what has already been created.

- **Review the group discussion/brainstorm from rehearsal**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET UP: The group is sitting around a table together. The instructors have brought in their notes from the group brainstorm that happened in the last rehearsal session, about girls not liking other girls.

DESCRIPTION: The group is asked to discuss whether there is theatrical potential in the conversation that happened. The directors give the group ideas in order to spark a short conversation. Eventually, during this script-writing session, one of the directors translates all of the brainstorming and conversations and creates an opening piece for the show that is shared at the end of this session.

- **Narrowing in on a theatrical mechanism**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1 hour and 30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Scrap paper, pens, pencils, markers, butcher paper and tape.

SET UP: The instructor splits the larger groups into smaller groups of no more than three people.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor reminds the group of the theatrical mechanism ideas that they came up with in the last script-writing session and that they presented to and discussed with the whole group in a rehearsal session. They were:

- Group therapy session
- People abducted by aliens trying to get information about the human race
- Radio personalities as narrators

Each group is given one of the theatrical mechanisms and is instructed to work together to come up with as many ideas about how to use the mechanism as they can think of, and prepare for a presentation to the rest of the group. The presentation should be in the style of “making a pitch” to a big movie executive. They have about 15 minutes to prepare. They may choose to prepare visual aids by making lists and/or pictures on the butcher paper provided.

- **Share out**

Each small group comes back to the larger group and presents their ideas. The directors share their idea for the opening of the show that is based on many group discussions and brainstorm. See Rehearsal Session # 13 (below) for details.

DEBRIEF: Questions — Which theatrical mechanism do you like best and why? How was it to work in small groups today? Do you feel like you are participating enough in group discussions? If not, why not, and how can the group support you to participate more fully? If so, how can you support the quieter members of the group to participate more fully? What theme or themes are most interesting to you?

CLOSING: Go around and say one word or short phrase that describes how you feel the session went today.

Rehearsal Session #13

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Movement to express to the group how you are feeling** (see Group Bonding page 117)

WARM-UPS

- **Follow the Leader** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Guest modern dance choreographer works on her piece**

DEBRIEF: Question — How was the rehearsal for you in five words or less? (Everyone answers this question around a circle)

- **Giving Props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Journal Note:

Working with guest choreographers

BY SARAH CROWELL

I love working with guest artists. They bring a new perspective and different styles of movement and theater to the company. It also gives alumni from the program an opportunity to come back and show off the choreographic skills that they learned as part of the group or in higher education programs. The tricky part about using the guests is that we have to choose a theme for the guest before the themes for the show have been solidified. The dancers have to start learning the choreography early in the process of creating the show even if we haven't finalized a theme and a theatrical mechanism, because there is a very limited amount of time to put the show together and the dances have to be clean. The way I get around this is to have a professional artist and an alumnus in mind before I start to work on the project with the company. As the themes begin to emerge I talk to the artists and give them an idea of what they could work on. This year the alumnus was a modern dancer who also had experience in the martial arts. I knew I wanted her to mix the two disciplines in her piece and I knew that I wanted the piece to express a message of power. As the girls started working with themes around gender issues, I talked to this choreographer and let her know that I wanted her to look for music that she liked that expressed the power of women.

Another way I have dealt with bringing in a guest artist before the show themes are solid is to have him or her create finale material that is empowering and uplifting. I always like to have a dance at the end or near the end of the show that is upbeat and fun. I may also have the guest come in and work on movement techniques that could be used in various parts of the show. This way I can incorporate the guest's work without having to commit to a theme before the students are ready. For example, I have had guests come in and work on lift choreography or fight choreography. A show can always use some lifts and a fight scene or two!

Rehearsal Session # 14

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Highs and lows check-in** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 147)

WARM-UPS:

- **Moving Through Space Fun** (see Theater Exercises page 132)
- **Group Montages on a Theme** (see Theater Exercises page 131)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Youth company member goes over her new choreography.**

Angelina was inspired after the retreat weekend to create some new choreography that she wanted to share with the group. Space was created in the rehearsal for her to teach the dance.

- **Work on opening of the show.**

After the group discussion from the previous rehearsal and script-writing sessions, the directors put together a possible opening for the show, which included a backstage introduction segment and an onstage theatrical piece. The backstage introduction was written up in two different ways and both versions were read to the group. See below.

Possible backstage lines #1:

From backstage in the blackout: This year's Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company production was written and created by girls. It wasn't intentional. It just happened that way.

Possible backstage lines #2:

From backstage in the blackout: WARNING. Fourteen, fierce females created this show. It may contain material that will open your heart, make you laugh, make you cry, and it may make you feel like YOU have been seen.

Final version of backstage lines:

After the group edited and worked on the backstage lines over many weeks, including in this rehearsal, they became the following: WARNING. Fourteen, fierce females created this show. It may contain material that will open your heart, make you laugh or make you cry. It may help you recognize the true nature of a situation that you weren't able to understand before. It may give you — INSIGHT. (Note: the show title ended up being "INSight," so the group wanted the name somewhere in the introduction)

The onstage theatrical piece was read to the group and then written and rewritten a number of times. It ended up as the following:

Jennifer: Girls, ya'll came to see a show about girls? What's wrong with you?

Zeneta: What are you talking about?

Kendra: Yeah, you're gonna ruin the show.

Lisie: Hey, don't mess it up for all of us.

Rhummanee: I agree with Jennifer, I don't know who decided to do a show about girls. I can't stand girls!

Improvisational argument...all girls

Jennifer: This is exactly what I'm talking 'bout, females can't even get along enough to begin a show.

Rhummanee: Mmm hmm... Girls are just a bunch of moody, jealous, passive/aggressive, trifling, messy, sensitive, fake, psycho, drama queens.

Zeneta: Wait a minute we're girls.

Kendra: Yeah, we can be all those things sometimes, but that's not who we are.

Jaime: For a bunch of trifling, passive/aggressive, sensitive drama queens we sure worked hard to put together an amazing show.

Lisie: All those hours at Destiny for what? For nothing? We better get on with it.

Arienna: Uh huh, and look at all of them out there, (pointing to the audience) they're waiting on us.

Rhummanee: You got a point.

Jennifer: (takes a moment, looks around) Alright, you're right. You're right.

Kendra: I told y...

Rhummanee & Jennifer: A...hey, don't push it. Let's just do this.

Everyone moves into places still talking about what just happened.

All: We are girls

Amalia: between the ages of 13

Jaimie: and 18.

All: We are girls

Angelina: With stories to tell.

Mariana: Stories that we didn't even know

Chandrika: were worth telling.

Dessie: But now we know they are.

Jamila: We are girls

All: United as one

Kendra: Coming together to tell our stories

Jennifer & Rhummanee: To be seen for who we really are.

- **Group Feedback on opening scene idea**

After sharing the original ideas for the opening scene, the group spontaneously began to debate the merits of both possible openings. They worked together to come up with what appears in the final script.

- **Act out the chosen opening scene**

The directors went with the momentum of the group liking the opening scene idea and began to stage it in order to give them an idea of how to move the piece from the page to the stage. The directors had the group stand in a clump in the center of the room and randomly divided up the lines that would be spoken onstage. The group decided that the 13 year old should say the line “between the ages of 13” and the 18 year old girl should say the line “... and 18.” Everyone gave ideas about how the group should move as they said each line.

- **Youth company member reads her poem to the group**

Jamila was inspired by the weekend retreat’s script-writing and dance session and wrote a poem that she was encouraged to read to the group. The dance that had been choreographed on the retreat weekend was to a song called “In Those Jeans” which was basically about objectifying women. A company member, Lindsay, was choreographing the piece to make a statement about the negative impact of that kind of popular music on girls and women (even though the group loved the music despite the sexist content). The poem was a direct comment about the song’s content and the directors immediately recognized that the poem could be linked to the dance somehow in the show. Here’s the poem:

“Addicted to your stares” – Youth Writing

BY JAMILA JACKSON

I’m trying to stay calm, but I’m getting frustrated
Every single time you look at me I feel a little more degraded
See, at first I was flattered,
you led me to believe that your opinion really mattered and I became addicted to your stares
I paid more attention when I got up in the morning to what I should wear
It’s like my hair has to be just right, my jeans fit real tight
‘cause if not then you won’t say anything and I won’t feel right
This has gone way too far
I don’t even know you
You’re the guy on the corner, outside the liquor store, standing up,
laying down, wandering around
But it doesn’t really matter
‘cause you always got something to say
and no, your eyes never stray slowly down from my face to my chest and my hips and stay that way
it’s always: “hey lil’ mama” or “come here shorty”
it’s like a demand
you reach out your hand and if I tell you “I already got a man”
then you just wanna be my “friend”
well take your eyes offa my chest then
there is no more room for you in these jeans, are you crazy?
The only way you like them is if they’re so tight I can hardly breathe
like they say, if you must, look with your eyes not with your hands
do not touch me!

DEBRIEF: Giving Props (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3...hey!

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #5

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Go over what we have so far**

The directors have prepared a list of categories of writing, personal stories that the group identified as interesting to them from the previous script-writing session, scenes that have been written, and dances that are being choreographed and rehearsed. The following is the synopsis that the directors presented to the script-writing group for review and discussion, including some comments about how they came up with the content.

The script-writing group begins to edit the opening scene that was debated by the whole company in the previous rehearsal session. See above rehearsal session for detail.

The directors discussed working with the company members' writing from the "Being Seen/Not Being Seen" writing exercise and a number of group discussions, to create short introductions for each girl that would possibly go directly after the proposed opening section. These introductions were eventually given to the company members and they changed and edited them as they saw fit. The following format served as a template for their creativity. The first draft appears below.

SCENE AFTER THE OPENING

Lindsay: I get this call after I finally gave my phone number to this guy. He's like "Hi, is this Katie?" I'm like "No." "Oh, well is this Vanessa?" "No." "Diane?" Please. I hang up the phone after another 2 or 3 tries. He didn't even remember my name.

Rhummanee: This woman came up to me with a great big attitude. I was about 12 or 13. I was with a bunch of my friends. All my friends were black. She started going off. "You need to hang out with your own people, your own kind!" she kept saying. I kept thinking: And who would 'my own kind' be?

Jamila: We didn't write an introduction for Jamila, instead we suggested a theme that might trigger her to write something of her own. The idea was to have her write something about overhearing her white grandmother saying mean things about her being half black. She had talked about this in script-writing sessions in the past and the story was poignant and compelling to the group and the directors.

Jaime: This introduction was not written either, but the directors suggested that Jaime write something about her eating disorder here. A suggested opening line was: "Everybody thinks I'm so great..."

Angelina: Angelina had spoken about the dilemma of being an African American person who did what she felt were things that, stereotypically speaking, African Americans did not do, like backpacking and taking trapeze lessons. The directors suggested that she write an introduction that talked about that. A suggested opening line was: "Some people think that I'm trying to act white because I camp and do trapeze and stuff like that..."

Zeneta: The following is another suggested opening line based on discussions that Zeneta had had with the directors and the script-writing group. "How many black girls do you know who love Xena the Warrior princess? People think I'm weird, but I think..."

The following is a list of dance and theater pieces that are already in the beginning stages of creation or are still in the idea phase, but that the group or individuals are interested in developing. The list includes notes about what has already been written and/or ideas about how to create the piece. Note: Because this is part of the generating material phase of the creation process, many of the following ideas were not used in the final show. The following serves as a written review of the brainstorming that happened to this point.

- Anti-sexist piece which includes Lindsay's "In those jeans" dance and Jamila's poem in some way.
- Martial arts forms piece — in progress
- Martial arts fight scene — in progress
- Guest choreographer's modern dance — in progress
- Angelina's new hip-hop dance — in progress
- Modern dance with partner and lift work — in progress in dance classes
- Being Invisible/Being Seen — The directors have an idea about using the writing that was done about being invisible and being seen, by having each company member introduce themselves at the beginning of the show with a short statement about how they feel invisible. At the end of the show each company member would re-introduce herself with a short statement about how she has been seen or how she feels empowered and visible in the world.
- Boy/Girl piece that talks about stereotypes and boxes that we put ourselves and each other into
- A piece for Kendra that deals with her issue of feeling ugly. She is an amazing dancer and this could be a solo. Perhaps we will call it "What is Beautiful?"
- Group piece about race — this could be a piece that includes short segments of each company member's individual experiences around race. The script-writing group suggests that we create a piece that deals with the checking of racial identity boxes on forms for tests, etc. The group still needs to do a writing exercise around these issues in order to get written material to work from to create this piece, and the directors take note.
- Rhummanee's story about her reclaiming her Cambodian name.
- Group Biracial piece — there are four biracial girls in the company and two of them are in the script writing group. The two writers have already done some writing around their experiences and need to develop the material and then involve the other girls in creating movement to go with the written material.
- Being white — Dessie has written and spoken about the experience of being white in America. This could be made into a monologue or dance/theater piece.
- Growing up in Cuba — Amalia has done some writing about growing up in Cuba and perhaps this story would make a powerful monologue about race, politics and culture.

- Being abducted by aliens — Zeneta has talked about her fascination with aliens and there is a possibility that she could create a piece that related to aliens in some way.
- Short Skits about:
 - School testing
 - Voting
 - Drugs
- Consumerism — the group had an idea about a skit that showed a group of people at a “Consumers Anonymous” meeting.
- Assimilation — the group had an idea about a skit that showed someone leading a session in an “Assimilation School” where people of color and immigrants were made to assimilate to traditional “American” values.

- **Decide on the Theatrical mechanism**

The directors facilitate a discussion to decide which theatrical mechanism to use in the show. It is important that the whole script-writing group gets behind one theatrical mechanism. If they are all into it, chances are the whole company will be too. By this time it should be pretty obvious what the mechanism will be, based on the discussion from the last script-writing session.

The group decides on the mechanism of using narrators who are radio show hosts. They decide to call the radio station Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y. They want the narrators to string together the autobiographical monologues and scenes rather than having the fictional part of the show take center stage. This decision is based on many group discussions in both rehearsal and script-writing sessions.

- **Work in Small Groups**

After the directors go over the list from above and the group decides on the theatrical mechanism, they split into groups of no larger than three people. Each group either chooses a piece that they want to work on or the directors give them a piece to develop. One group may



Scriptwriting session
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

work on a skit, and another may continue to develop a dance/theater piece. If someone is working on a monologue she may choose to work alone and then have a director or another company member help her edit the material she has written. A group may decide to write scenes connected to the theatrical mechanism that has just been chosen. Yet another group may work with a director on compiling group writing into a group scene. Group scenes are created by looking through the writing that all of the members of the group have done on a particular theme. They underline parts of each person's writing that are interesting and catchy to them, and then type up all of the short segments onto one sheet. Then they can see how to put the short pieces together into one cohesive story that makes sense.

- **Share out**

Each small group comes back to the larger group and shares what they have been working on.

DEBRIEF: Questions — How do you think the script-writing group went today? What would have made it stronger? Do you feel committed to the theatrical mechanism that the group chose? Could you “sell” the idea to the whole company? What do you think about what we have created so far?

CLOSING: Go around and say one word or short phrase that describes how you feel the session went today.

Rehearsal Session # 15

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Weather Report** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 117)

WARM-UPS

- **Image Theater: Slide show** (see Theater Exercise page 137)
- **Slide Shows on Themes** (see Theater Exercises page 137)

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15–20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: The instructors have prepared a number of slide show themes based on the show themes that were discussed in rehearsal and script-writing sessions. They split the company into five small groups according to what theme each person has expressed interest in working on.

DESCRIPTION: Follow the instructions for this exercise in the Appendix with these specific details.

Each group will create a slide show with six slides. The themes for each group are the following:

- biracial identity
- abducted by aliens
- gender stereotypes
- being seen/not being seen
- the story about Rhummanee's experience with a woman who told her that she should hang with “people of her own kind”

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Group Dance Segments to be rehearsed**
 - Guest choreographer's dance — Arienna leads
 - Angelina's piece — Angelina leads
 - Lindsay's dance — Lindsay leads

DEBRIEF: Question — How was the rehearsal for you in five words or less? (Everyone answers this question around a circle.)

- **Giving Props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Journal Note,

Choosing the "flavor" of a show

BY SARAH CROWELL

The whole company decides on what I call the "flavor" of the show. The flavor is the balance that the script has between the fictional stories and the "real-life" stories. Some of the shows I have worked on have been solely a fictional story based on the real-life experiences of the company members. Some have been more focused on the real-life stories of the company members told plainly to the audience using monologue, poetry, song, rap and/or dance. Other shows have had a balance of fictional storytelling mixed in with real-life storytelling. Most teenagers want to tell their stories. The flavor of the show is created by the mix of the different personalities in the group and their interest in different modes of expression. A group that was interested in telling more real-life stories than fictional ones created the show *INSight*.

Journal Note,

Leaders emerging

BY SARAH CROWELL

Lindsay has been a strong leader since last year. She led choreography and got a pretty good response then, but this year I see some development in terms of her teaching skills. She understands how to break down material without adding sarcastic comments when people have difficulty getting the moves. She is successful at creating duet material and teaching it by herself to a group of duets, which shows a level of maturity in her teaching as well.

Angelina has come out of her shell. She began to demonstrate her talent for choreographing interesting group hip-hop material for a Destiny Arts Center recital in the fall. Now she is becoming more seasoned. She teaches with more precision and attention to counts so that the dancers can follow along. The movement is more interesting in terms of technical range, use of levels, use of stops and starts in her rhythmic patterns, etc.

Arienna has been very quiet and shy in rehearsal for the past four years. She is finally discovering her power as a leader. She has always been a lovely mover. Her modern dance has improved steadily and her hip-hop movement is becoming sharper and spicier this year. Now she takes on leadership roles easily and breaks down technical material very well. She is excellent with rhythm and maintains the group's attention. Big steps!

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSION #6

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Mediations page 107–108)
- **Review Guidelines for Group Discussion** (see Appendix page 102)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

Note: The following focus activities all require the equipment and set-up described below.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: Varies for each exercise.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper, pens and pencils for everyone.

SET-UP: The instructors split the scriptwriters into groups no larger than three people. Each group is assigned a different project chosen from the list below.

- **Researching statistics:**

One group gets on the Internet and researches statistics related to girls, the media, body image, eating disorders, etc. The girls in the company are interested in connecting the personal pieces about their own experiences with related statistics. Some of the statistics that were found during that search are included here.

Statistics

- 70% of the editorial content in teen magazines focuses on beauty and fashion, and only 12% talks about school or careers.
- The average American woman is 5'4" and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds.
- Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.
- 80% of American women are dissatisfied with their appearance.
- Discontent about body image correlates directly to how often girls read fashion magazines.
- In the United States, conservative estimates indicate that after puberty, 5–10 million girls and women struggle with eating disorders.
- Americans spend over \$50 billion on dieting and diet-related products every year.
- Every year 50,000 people die of eating disorders in the United States.

- **Brainstorm Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y scenes**

One group brainstorms different ways that the radio announcers could introduce different scenes in the show. The following is part of the list that they developed.

- People calling in song requests
- People calling to ask questions of a radio psychologist
- Radio announcers give the Top 10 songs of the day
- Radio announcers introduce “a word from our sponsor” which could lead into a skit in the form of a commercial

- Traffic reports
- Astrological reports

• **Write short skits and act them out**

One group identified the following four themes as areas around which they wanted to develop skits.

- School testing
- The upcoming elections and the importance of exercising the right to vote
- Consumerism — “Consumers Anonymous”
- “Assimilation School”

The group ended up doing writing on only two of the theme areas. Their works in progress are included below.

“Consumers Anonymous” — work in progress

Characters:

Zeneta: She stole something and the courts made her come to the meeting. She’s trendy, loves to buy the latest fashion, and sees nothing wrong with her consumerism.

Amalia: A progressive activist who, deep down inside, loves Gap jeans

Lisie: A secret Nike employee who is infiltrating the meeting

Dessie: A CEO who overspent and blew her fortune

Chandrika: Someone who has really healed from consumerism. She only buys from local businesses, thrift stores etc.

Entire group recites the Consumers Anonymous Opening Prayer:

I pledge to buy things only when I need them.

I pledge to buy things from local businesses.

I pledge to buy only recycled fashions.

Each character introduces him or herself

Hi, my name is _____ and I’m a recovering consumer addict.

All: Hi _____

Zeneta: I can’t afford it now, but when I get my money, ooooh, it’s on!

All: Ooooooh no! We need to do an intervention with her!

Note: This scene was never finished and did not appear in the show, but it sparked great group discussion and gave the youth experience in creating short character sketches.

“Assimilation School” – work in progress

BY CHANDRIKA FRANCIS & JAMILA JACKSON

Assimilation School instructor (speaking to a group of avid listeners): Are you a foreigner or just plain ethnic? You don’t need to feel like an outsider looking in anymore. Just come on over to the dynamic Assimilation School where for the small fee of your dignity and culture we teach you how to be American.

Have you already completed the first session where you learned to eat right, speak white and be a real American? Well, now we offer a follow up session.

Note: This was eventually developed into a theater piece that appeared in the show. The scene can be found in the INsight script in the Appendix.

- **Listen to a monologue and decide how to connect it to the rest of the show.**

One group listens to Jamila recite her poem about being biracial, which appears below. They discuss how it fits with the other material in the show, and options for staging the piece.

Biracial Piece – work in progress BY JAMILA JACKSON

i have dreamt a broken child's dreams
it seems
i am tossing and turning
my forehead burning
i have this fever inside of me
on one side
i have shackles of rust
and chains of mistrust
they hold me
they mold me to the dry hot parched dust
i have the bloody cry of a fresh whip beating
light chocolate,
dark chocolate,
our chocolate flesh
on the other side
i have pale rich roots
English queens and kings
a past that rings
with irish struggles
pale frail bodies weak with the troubles
of gray bleak days
and cold hungry nights
i am beaten down time and time again
but my heart keeps beating
keeps bleeding
memory of
a white slave master his eyes full of lust
who thinks nothing of raping a girl 14 on that
same
dry
dust

but we help her, we bathe her
we feed her, we raise her
i have upperclass upbringings
in uppereast side new york
a dinner with seven courses and more than three forks
i have uptight lives
no hugs
cold love
i have this nightmare each and every night
i am torn between worlds
each one filled with terror and fright
one is of music rhythm and color
the other bleached completely white
i am afraid of both
like a double dutch game i wanna jump in
but something holds the real me within
so i
hang back and watch for a taste
silent tears streaming down my face
i have blood that is mixed twisted and swirled
roots spreading throughout the world and...
i have a problem
as i look down on this paper
trying to see
how all of me
is going to fit into a box
or three
but i stop and simply go down the list
and check "other"
as if none of this even exists

- **Discussion about the need for another group writing session around a particular theme**

After hearing Jamila's poem the group becomes committed to having the whole company write a group piece about having to choose one box to describe one's race and/or ethnicity on certain forms. The group decided to create a writing exercise to get the material they needed in the next rehearsal session.

- **Share out**

Each small group comes back to the larger group and shares what they have been working on.

DEBRIEF: Questions — How do you think the script-writing group went today? What would have made it stronger? Do you feel committed to the theatrical mechanism that the group chose? Could you “sell” the idea to the whole company? What do you think about what we have created so far?

CLOSING: Go around and say one word or short phrase that describes how you feel the session went today.



Scriptwriting session with Delexes Woods and Jelani Prosser
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Rehearsal Session #16:

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Movement to express to the group how you are feeling** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 117)

WARM-UPS

- **Follow the Leader** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

Note: This is where we ask youth to write with more focus on creating material around identified themes for specific pieces.

- **“Check a Box” written exercise**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10–15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper, pens and pencils for everyone.

SET-UP: The students are sitting around the room, far enough away from anyone else so that they can concentrate.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor asks the students to answer the following question in a free-write: What do you check when you are asked to check a box that describes your race or ethnicity on a form? How do you feel about checking that box?

- **Share out:** Anyone who is willing to share what they wrote can read it out loud.

- **“What do you want your community to know about you” written exercise:**

Note: The focus here is on race, family, community and stereotypes. Please remember that talking about race issues can be very sensitive! Do not attempt this exercise unless you have had some prior experience working on these issues with young people.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20–30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper, pens and pencils for everyone.

SET-UP: The students are sitting around the room, far enough away from anyone else so that they can concentrate.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor asks the students to answer the following questions in a free-write and gives examples of how the questions could be answered.

- What don’t you ever want to hear someone call you again?

Example: I never want to be called niggah, short, stupid or fatso again.

- What do you want the community to know about you?

Example: I want my community to know that I am a good person.

- What can the community do to support you?

Example: My community can give me the benefit of the doubt when I make a mistake.

- Who are your people?

Example: My people are high yella, black and white, African and Native and European, slaves and slave masters, ministers and farmers and fashion conscious divas.

Finish the following sentences:

- My mother is...

Example: My mother is a light skinned African American woman.

- My mother is the type of person who makes friends with everyone.

- My mother is my best friend.

- My father is...

Example: My father is white and went to Princeton to get his BA.

- My father’s people come from England as far back as Oliver Cromwell.

- My father is an activist. He knows all there is to know about what’s going on in the world.

- **Share out:** Anyone who is willing to share what they wrote can read it out loud.

- **Short debrief of the two writing exercises above**

Questions: How was it for you to do the writing exercises? How did it feel to talk about issues of race and ethnicity with the other people in the group? What stood out for you about the discussion?

- **Collect writing**

- **Break into groups and work on movement pieces, dance/theater pieces, monologues or skits**

Biracial Piece

This piece is now just a poem that one of the script-writing group members wrote. All the biracial girls get together and explore adding movement to the poem.

Martial arts forms

Two marital artists work on a fight form.

Monologues

One director works with three girls on developing monologues that are now works-in-progress.

Rhummanee: a monologue about her reclaiming her Cambodian name

Arienna: a monologue about her feeling of invisibility

Jaime: a monologue about her issues with body image and anorexia

Short Skits

One director works with the rest of the group on exploring the short skits that the script-writing group has been working on:

“Consumers Anonymous”

“Assimilation School”

DEBRIEF: Each small group shares what they have been working on with the larger group.

- **Giving props** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!



Company members practicing a theatrical scene
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Rehearsal Session #17

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)

WARM-UPS

- **Aerobic Exercises** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)
- **Advanced Dance Movement Practice** (see Dance and Choreography Exercises page 138)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Run Dances**

Guest choreographer's dance — Arienna leads

Angelina's dance — Angelina leads

Lindsay's dance — Lindsay leads

Artistic director's dance — Sarah leads

Dance instructor's hip-hop dances — someone is chosen to lead each segment of the choreography

- **Stage “Check the Box” piece**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20–30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: A pen or pencil for each student.

SET-UP: The directors have organized and typed up all of the written material about checking boxes from the previous rehearsal's writing exercise. Then they made them into short statements, chose one statement per student, and put them into an order that flowed well. They passed out the copies of the written material to each student.

DESCRIPTION: Each student reviews her “Check the Box” statement. The students can take a few minutes to modify the statement in whatever way they like, but it must maintain the integrity of the original statement. They are asked to memorize their lines as well as the lines that come before and after theirs. The directors then “block the scene” in collaboration with the performers. This means that they work together to create movement and action with the spoken word segments that is interesting and that augments the written material. The directors have already included a few staging notes in the script to get the process moving. (See Dance and Choreography Exercises page 142 for ideas about how to create and block movement with text.)

The “Check the Box” Script — a work in progress

The company members walk around the room in different directions with paper and pen in their hands. They end up in small clumps based on the racial identity box that they check on forms. Everyone chants in unison as they walk: “Check a box, choose a box, check a box, just one box...”

Zeneta, Angelina, Kimisia, Jaime: I check African American.

Zeneta: ...because it's the only box I can check.

Angelina: I don't know if I have another race in my family. I never asked.

Kimisia & Jaime: I'm proud of the race I am.

Jaime: ... but sometimes I wonder why there isn't just an African box because we only live in America. America has in no way included us in "their" world. We were placed here.

Miranda, Lisie, Navarra & Molly: I check Caucasian

Abbey, Giana, Arienna, Rhea & Zoe: Or white.

Lisie: Sometimes I'll mark off "other" and then fill in "Jewish" in the line next to the box.

Zoe: Jewish isn't a skin color or a race.

Molly: It's an ethnicity, a religion, a history that's molded us into a community rich with culture.

Abbey: I'm not just a white girl. I'm not just Jewish. I'm not just blonde. I can't fit into one category.

Arienna: It's just a box. I don't have any emotions about it.

Giana: I'm pretty much Sicilian and Southern Italian.

Rhea: I'm Russian, Irish, German and Scottish, but sometimes I draw my own box and put "short" next to it.

Navarra: I don't think they want to know my heritage, just the color of my skin.

Rhummanee: I usually choose "Asian" or "Asian American" or "Asian/Pacific Islander." Sometimes they actually have a Cambodian box. I check that one, of course.

Zakiya: Asian/Pacific Islander, or other.

Rose: I check Asian American, but if you fit into more than one box which do you check?

Lena and Lindsay: I check other ...

Lindsay: ...because I'm biracial. I'm used to doing it. I've done it so much that I don't even care anymore.

Lena: There's no box that fits what I really am, which is Ukrainian and Lebanese.

Jamila: There are too many boxes to choose from. I can't just pick one!

Kendra: I would just check African American 'cause that's totally true but I feel awkward like I'm not black enough to check that, but to check white would be denying a whole quarter of my heritage.

Amalia: If they have a biracial or multiracial box I'll pick that one. Sometimes I check Caucasian and Latina.

Mariana: I check Latina, Mexican.

Katiana: Black, white, Native American. The state needs my survey filled in so they know how many blacks, whites, whatever exist. It's stupid, but I don't complain. I'm multiracial and I am glad to let you know it.

Lisie: We should all just say we're people of color and confuse them in the white house!

DEBRIEF: Giving props (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)

CLOSING: 1...2...3... hey!

Journal Notes:

Students making creative breakthroughs

BY SARAH CROWELL

At the end of the generating material phase the students tend to come up with material that is theatrically interesting, deeply personal, and connected to the themes that have been identified for the show. This year there were some notable creative breakthroughs for a number of students. I got a message on my voicemail from Kendra who recited a monologue she had written, but was too shy to read to me in person. It was a poignant piece about how she felt she had lost the carefree innocence of her childhood and how she struggled with confidence in her teens. The piece was so well written that it appeared in the show just as she had recited it to me on the voicemail.

Jennifer came to me at the beginning of a rehearsal and said that she had written something that she wanted me to read. She told me that she had spoken to her mother about not having many parts in the show, and that her mother had said she needed to be more honest with me and my co-director about what was going on in her life. Then maybe she would get more into the whole creative process. With encouragement from her mother, she had written a piece about how she had been arrested for bank fraud, and was now part of the home supervision program in the juvenile justice system. She had been embarrassed to talk about it, and when she read me the piece, I was moved by her courage and her regret about what she had done. I asked her if she wanted to do a piece about her experience in the show. She said that she did and that she wanted to let other youth know about the dangers of getting involved in criminal behavior. Her monologue ended up becoming a powerful dance/theater piece in the show.

Whether the stories that the youth write are turned into pieces for the show or not, the act of writing them and telling them to the instructors and the rest of the company is very powerful. As the stories are told, many of them about painful experiences, I find that the grip that they have on the students' lives tends to loosen, especially as they see that others can relate to their stories.

Journal Note:

Being a mentor to youth

BY SARAH CROWELL

In the process of creating a show that is autobiographical and that leans heavily on the youth as choreographers and writers, we as instructors must maintain a delicate balance between empowering the youth to speak their own truths, and mentoring, challenging, supporting and pushing them as adult allies. I am a strong proponent of giving youth a place to develop their creativity and tell their stories. I am also not afraid to really teach the youth. They are just coming into their power. They not only need freedom of expression, they need a structure that will bring their creativity forth. I give them guidelines about how to choreograph pieces that are visually interesting, ideas about how to edit written material, and ways to teach others that will bring the best results. I challenge youth to push themselves beyond their comfort zones, and develop skills that they have not already mastered. In the role of a mentor I think of myself as a cross between a dance/theater teacher, a parent, a role model and an adult ally.

Putting the Pieces Together: Finalizing the Script & Choreography

REHEARSAL SESSIONS 18–27

SCRIPT WRITING SESSIONS 7–11

Intention

The intention of this phase is to refine and edit the written and movement material created in the previous phase into a performance piece that tells a meaningful story, has powerful creative content and is fully owned by the performance group.

Introduction

This phase is dedicated to pulling the script and choreography together to create a performance piece that makes sense and flows well. This means making important decisions about what makes it into the show and what doesn't. A huge body of work has been created; now it's time to refine, edit and mold it into one cohesive show. This is the phase where the directors take over a lot of this



Sarah Crowell directing
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

decision-making. It is also a time for the youth leaders to step up their involvement in the editing process. This may mean that fewer people are writing and choreographing movement so that the process runs smoothly. It is important for the directors to gently transition into this phase so that the students do not feel disempowered. In my experience, the students usually feel relieved that they can focus solely on preparing to perform. Directors begin to help the students develop their performance quality in both the dance and theatrical material in a more intense way. At the same time as they are putting together the script with the raw materials that the youth have created, they are blocking scenes, coaching students on monologues, staging choreography, and bringing out the very best in each student. This is also the phase where the directors cast the fictional characters and define the “real-life” sections of the show as they connect to the fictional story.

In summary, this phase focuses on the following areas of show creation:

Finalizing the show theme and finding a title

- Further developing and staging individual, small group and large group pieces
- Developing smooth transitions between the different elements of the show
- Refining written and choreographic material and pulling a cohesive script together

In addition, the group improves technique in the following areas:

- Dance and theatrical technique, through the practice of show material as well as regular technique warm-ups and drills
- Editing written material and staging dances, dance/theater pieces, scenes and monologues
- Stage presence, through practicing show material with coaching from the directors

It's a significant creative challenge to put the individual pieces of the show into a whole and to refine pieces so that they are ready for the stage. Many young people have never been given this kind of opportunity. They may know how to “bust a move” or write poetry but often, they don't know how to put it all together. They may need some instruction and support to channel their



Amalia Mesa-Gustin in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

stories into an engaging artistic piece. This process can be frustrating for some young people, as it is time consuming and detail-oriented, but it's worth it. Our roles as witnesses, coaches and teachers are critical to the process.

A special note about this phase

This phase is not written in the same way as the first three phases. It does not give a session-by-session break down of the process, because many of the rehearsal sessions simply involve groups working on choreography for different segments of the show, or directors coaching individuals on monologues. Many script-writing sessions involve the group developing the fictional story together, or individuals writing and developing monologues. We wrap up the script-writing process and go full speed ahead on the rehearsal process. Thus, this phase is written in groups of sessions. The chapter gives a snapshot of the different stages of putting together the final product — the show.

Concept to Performance section

This chapter also gives a number of examples of how the raw material from phase three is translated into staged dances, theatrical scenes and dance/theater pieces. These examples are called Concept to Performance and appear at the end of the chapter.

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: Students in the script-writing group are inspired to refine the written material they already have into a cohesive script, using the chosen theatrical mechanism combined with the real-life stories.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students are willing to take direction about how to edit the large amount of material.
- Students debate less during script-writing sessions and have quieter, focused discussions about how to write, edit and refine the stories and the show itself. This doesn't mean that they are not passionate about the material. The passion is just channeled in a different way.
- Students are working alone or in small groups on particular scenes that they identified as important in the generating material phase and are sticking to the identified theatrical mechanism as they work.

2. Outcome: Youth and adult choreographers are making sure that their work makes sense in the larger context of the show.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Choreographers check in with the directors about the way that their pieces fit into the show.
- When choreographers create new material they are intentional about how to make it work within the structure of the show.

3. Outcome: The students like the way the script is shaping up, and are happy to balance their focus between preparing to perform and continuing to help craft the script and choreography.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- When the company does the first read-through of a draft script, everyone either laughs at the funny parts or is quiet and attentive during the serious parts.
- Students are equally excited about doing physical and vocal warm-ups as they are about creating scenes for the show.

Session Outlines

SCRIPT-WRITING SESSIONS #7-11

The final five script-writing sessions can use a similar format to the sessions found in Chapters 2 and 3, and should cover the following:

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Verbal Check-in** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116)

WARM-UPS

- **Brain Drain** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 120)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Brainstorming the show title**

The script-writing group does the initial brainstorm for the title of the show, and then brings their ideas to the whole company for debate and a final decision.

- **Prioritizing issues to be covered in the show**

The script-writing group also looks through all of the original lists that the company created in brainstorming sessions about issues they wanted to cover in the show. Based on the monologues, movement pieces and scenes that are being developed, the group decides which issues will take priority and which will have to be discarded. The show cannot cover every issue about which the group is passionate. For example, this year in earlier script-writing sessions the group had expressed interest in creating performance material about the following issues: the public education system, the California Youth Authority and its policies, domestic violence, the effects of global warming, the war in Iraq, etc. The group eventually decided not to cover issues of domestic violence, the California Youth Authority or the effects of global warming in the final script, because they wanted to develop fewer ideas in greater depth. It is important to involve the group in this process so they don't feel like the issues that they want to address are being discarded without consideration.

- **Writing character sketches for all fictional characters in the show**

Once the fictional characters have been decided on, the script-writing group creates short character sketches for each one, in order to bring them to life for the actors who are playing the roles. The sketches answer a list of questions that the directors prepare ahead of time. The group may also come up with their own questions to add to the list that are more specific to the character in the show. Here is a sample list of questions:

- What is your character's name?
- Who are his/her parents?
- Where does he/she live?
- How old is he/she?
- How would others describe him/her?
- How does he/she spend his/her free time?

- What’s his/her economic situation?
- What are his/her hobbies?
- What is he/she afraid of?
- What makes him/her happy?

- **Deciding on casting for characters for the fictional segments of the show**

The script-writing group discusses ideas about which company members would portray which characters well, or which monologues should make it into the show. However, final casting decisions always fall on the directors.

- **Writing fictional scenes**

The script-writing group works together to decide on the storyline for the show. The scenes themselves are written, in part, during script-writing sessions in groups of no larger than three people. As the script develops and the company members become more entrenched in rehearsing movement and theatrical material, the directors take over writing the scenes. This is done with great care and respect for the collaborative process. As directors either put the finishing touches on scenes that the youth have already written, or create new scenes, they constantly keep in mind the storyline that was created by the group, and the point of view that the group has held. This way the scenes retain the “flavor” of the company members. See the Concept to Performance section at the end of this chapter for tips on how to write scenes with the student voice in mind.

- **Doing research for specific scenes**

There may be a need for research to develop a scene for a character or an autobiographical scene. For example: one character in the DAYPC show INsight was a radio show host who talked about the astrological predictions for a particular month. The person portraying this character went on the Internet and found the actual predictions for the month of the show and created a concise version of them for her radio show lines. Another year, a scene was being created about girls, body image and eating disorders. A few company members did research for the piece by talking to a woman who was an expert in eating disorders. She gave the group important information that they used in the creation of the piece.

- **Outlining the order of the show**

Work also needs to be done to create an order for the show that combines the fictional scenes, autobiographical scenes and movement pieces. The directors will do most of this, and will role model to the scriptwriters how this complex process works. It is the directors’ responsibility to keep the pacing of the show interesting, and this requires, for example, not getting stuck with too many monologues in a row or with too many consecutive theatrical scenes that don’t have movement in them.

As the directors are working on the show order they are considering the following questions:

- Is the story being told in such a way that the audience can understand it?
- Are solo and/or monologue moments interspersed with dialogue and group scenes?
- Are there moments of comedy interspersed with the more serious, dramatic moments of the show?
- Are the theatrical moments balanced with the moments where there is dance on stage?

Journal Note:

Orchestrating rehearsals that have small groups, and individuals working at the same time

BY SARAH CROWELL

The most efficient way to rehearse for a show that includes pieces involving the whole company, small groups of the company, solos and monologues, is to cast the small groups and monologues in such a way that everyone can be engaged in rehearsing at the same time. I have done this by casting three or four different groups. For example, Group A could be a combination of three monologues, two small dance/theater pieces and one duet. Group B could be one larger group dance and one monologue. Group C could be eight different solo segments and a small dance/theater piece. The trick is to have everyone working at all times. The directors move between the different activities and give guidance and feedback as necessary. In one rehearsal each group could work for a specified amount of time, allowing rehearsal for most of the show material. I have found that it's also important to start and end each rehearsal session with something that unifies the group. This may mean doing warm-ups together, running a company piece or having each group share their piece with the rest of the company at the end of the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Sessions 18–27

The final ten rehearsal sessions can use a similar format to the sessions found in Chapters 2 and 3, and should cover the following.

OPENING

- **Short Meditation** (see Meditations page 107–108)
- **Verbal Check-in** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116)

WARM-UPS

- **Dance warm-ups**

Every rehearsal includes a cardio section (repetition of high-energy dance moves, jumping rope, jumping jacks etc.), a stretch section (all the major muscle areas are stretched out thoroughly), a strengthening section (sit-ups and push ups), and a technique practice section (a combination of pliés, dégagés, développés, battements, turns, leaps and floor work). These warm-ups are designed to be short but thorough to prepare the students to be on stage for prolonged periods of time doing fairly complex and often vigorous aerobic movement, while also allowing them time to rehearse actual pieces in the show. See Dance and Choreography Exercises (page 138) for other dance warm-ups to use in these sessions.

- **Vocal warm-ups**

When rehearsals involve running theatrical scenes and monologues we do a short theater warm-up that focuses on voice projection, enunciation and nuance. (See Theater Exercises page 128).

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Finalizing the show title**

The script-writing group brings their show title ideas to the whole company, and they brainstorm the title together. The group takes a vote on what the title will be, and the directors make the final decision.

- **Announcing the casting for characters and reading their character sketches to the group**

The directors make their final casting decisions and announce them to the company. The script-writing group reads the character sketches they have written.

- **Staging and rehearsing dance/theater pieces**

All of the dance/theater pieces are staged and rehearsed in this phase. See the Concept to Performance section at the end of this chapter for tips and examples on combining monologues and group theater pieces with movement.

- **Blocking theatrical scenes**

All of the theatrical scenes are blocked so that each actor knows exactly where to stand or move in every moment of every scene.

- **Coaching and running monologues and theatrical scenes**

Each company member performing a monologue is coached individually by one of the directors. The director is looking for clear voice projection, integrated body movement, and strong stage presence. They are also helping the students stay true to the characters that they are portraying if they are working on fictional scenes. After we block the theatrical scenes, we run them over and over again, keeping in mind the above considerations for all characters.

- **Creating choreography for specific characters**

There may be dances that are created to pull out the personality of a specific character. For example: one year there was a character in a DAYPC show who wanted to be a teacher and tell her students the truth about the contributions of people of color in American history. A dance piece was created for this character to the song “Black Man” by Stevie Wonder, which speaks about the issues about which the character was passionate.

- **Creating scenes as segues between other scenes**

There may be a moment, either with movement, theater, spoken word, narration or song, for instance, that needs to be created to provide a transition from one scene to the next. For example: one of the students has a song he/she wants to sing and there is a space in the show where there is a fairly long set change. This is the perfect place for a singer to do a solo as the set changes behind a closed curtain. As long as the song moves the story along, it works.



Lisie Rosenberg in "Tomorrow is Today" 2005
Photo by Schuyler Fishman



Kendra Staton, Lisie
Rosenberg and Orlando
Lewis in "Tomorrow is
Today" 2005
Photo by Schuyler
Fishman

- **Completing choreography and running dances**

All of the dance pieces in the show are completed during this phase. They are given a beginning that includes an entrance or an opening pose, and an ending that includes an exit or an ending pose. We drill the choreography in rehearsals so that everyone is moving in unison during group pieces, the spacing for each segment is precise, and all of the technical elements of the pieces are well-executed.

- **Placing choreography that has already been created into the context of the show**

The directors are responsible for placing movement pieces into the context of the fictional and the autobiographical scenes, so that the show has an interesting flow.

- **Putting together choreography by many different choreographers**

Different choreographers, both youth and adult, may have created short segments of choreography during the generating material phase. These segments may be combinations that were taught in dance classes, short segments of choreography that were created by company members before the show theme was set, martial arts forms that students already know and practice, etc. These chunks of movement need not go to waste. There is often a way to combine the choreography into one unified piece. This can be done in a number of ways:

- The segments can be linked by using one piece of music that works for all of the movement. Short entrance and exit choreography is created to transition between the chunks. For example, there may be one hip-hop combination, one modern dance combination and one martial arts form that can all be done to a particular musical rhythm. The students practice them all to one piece of music and then the directors create movement that links the segments.
- The segments may also be strung together by creating a “soundtrack” for the piece that has short segments of different styles of music on it, connecting directly to the styles of movement that have already been prepared.

Journal Note:

Working one-on-one with students

BY SIMÓN HANUKAI

When working with a large group of teenagers we often feel that we need to constantly engage them as a whole unit, but it is often the one-on-one interactions that can make the greatest difference. Whether it is to rehearse a monologue or segment of a scene, or to deal with a conflict, it is often a good idea to pull a young person away from the pressure and the distractions of being in the presence of his or her peers. Even an adult would feel vulnerable when all of the attention in the room is focused on him or her. It is the job of the director to be attentive and to sense who in the group may require more individualized attention. An example of this happened during the creation of *INSight* when Jamila first brought one of her poems to share with the company. The words flew off of Jamila's tongue faster than a flock of frightened, yet undeniably beautiful birds. No matter how many times everyone asked her to slow down, she just couldn't do it. It was immediately obvious that the best thing for Jamila would be to pull her away from her peers and practice slowing her speech down. She thrived on the one-on-one attention and in no time was able to completely transform the presentation of her work. In the end she not only pulled off an amazing performance, she grew tremendously as an artist and performer.

This combination of different movement styles can serve as an interesting blend for an opening piece, a finale piece or a piece that moves the show from one mood to another.

- **Rehearsing the show in segments**

Once segments of the show are completed, they are rehearsed for memorization, continuity, execution and style.

- **Rehearsing the show in its entirety**

Once the entire show is created, it is rehearsed as often as possible so that the company has a chance to see how the pieces fit together.

DEBRIEF

- If there is time, each small group shows the rest of the group what they have been working on.
- If there isn't time, the directors may choose to verbally review what each group did so everyone knows what was accomplished in rehearsal.
- Giving props: the directors allow 2–4 students to tell an individual or a group what they did well in the rehearsal.

CLOSING: Whatever short ritual the group has been doing for the entire process up to now is repeated here.

Journal Note,

Tapping into the creative muse

BY SARAH CROWELL

If the first three phases go well the script actually begins to write itself in phase four. It seems to me that there's a law of creativity that smiles on those who have chosen the right group, done the right amount of group bonding, and participated fully in the searching and researching phase. All of a sudden things start to make sense. The way to make one scene flow into another becomes obvious. The climax and resolution of the fictional story begins to unfold magically. "Oh yeah, that character would do this in this way" or "Of course, this is what happens after this." The group gets excited, and the mystery of the creative process reveals itself.

During this phase, the students who are into making up dances come in with choreography that becomes a perfect transitional moment between two theatrical scenes. The poets who are writing the narrators' parts have a revelation about how to introduce a section of the show that has been eluding them. The shy one in the group who has been dying to tell a story brings in a monologue that fits into the theme of the show seamlessly. I will get emails or voicemails from students who have written monologues or scenes that really work. Everyone understands where the show is going and there is a momentum that happens that cannot be stopped.

Sometimes this magical creative muse kicks in a month before the show goes up. That can be nerve wracking to the students and the directors. The directors have to continue to hold space for the process and trust that the momentum is building, and that the corner will be turned when the muse takes over. I have been scared many times. I would think: "Oh no, this is the show that will not work. This is not making sense. It's not coming together." And then, seemingly out of nowhere, an idea will burst forth that is the link to everything falling into place. It's like being a surfer who must be patient enough to build up the skill to ride a wave and then being patient enough again for the right wave to come. Riding it is the fun part. That's how I think of this phase – riding the wave. Nerve wracking and completely exhilarating.

Journal Note:

Working with last minute ideas

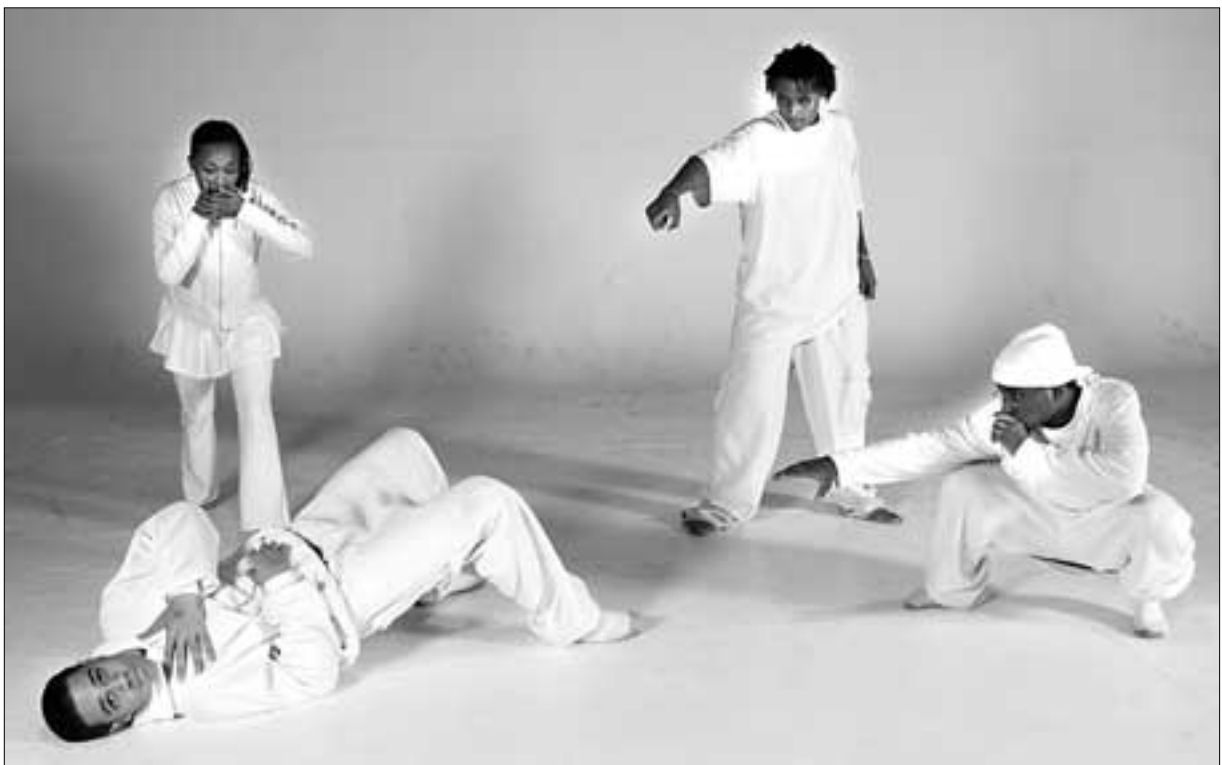
BY SARAH CROWELL

Being flexible with the last minute additions or subtractions to the script or choreography, or changes in the order of the show can be powerful. Of course, the directors make final decisions about these last minute inspirations, and make sure that the process does not lose integrity as the new ideas are introduced and adopted.

During the creation of *INsight*, Rhummanee had the idea of bringing in a guest group of traditional Cambodian dancers to accompany her monologue about her pride in her Cambodian heritage. The group was difficult to reach for a number of weeks and the show date was quickly approaching. I finally got in touch with the group's director myself and explained the idea to him. He was excited to have the group volunteer to dance for Rhummanee, and it was easy enough to integrate them into the piece at the last minute. The dance added a beautiful element to the monologue and gave Rhummanee a chance to reach out to a community group and make a strong connection.

Another year, during tech week, we found that the show was dragging in the first half. The show had two aerial dances (where dancers in rock climbing gear are suspended from ropes and move in the air), one of which was fairly long. It was obvious to me that the piece needed to be cut, despite the fact that the dancers had worked hard to learn the choreography. When I made the final decision to cut the piece the dancers were disappointed, but I explained that sometimes things had to be cut to keep the flow of the show going. They eventually understood that I had made the right decision and learned a valuable lesson about the importance of being willing to let some things go.

Dealing with last minute ideas is tricky. Some years I have seen that the show would benefit from an addition or subtraction of a piece, but decided not to make the change either because I felt the students couldn't add something at the last minute easily or because I felt they couldn't handle losing a particular piece.



Journal Note.

The title brainstorm

BY SARAH CROWELL

Creating a title to a show that is written collaboratively inevitably comes with at least some struggle. Everybody gets attached to his or her understanding of the perfect representation of the work. Everybody is invested in the title being enticing and interesting to potential audience members. Most of the time the themes and characters are chosen long before anyone agrees on a title. In the end, the directors decide on a title so that the posters and flyers can be made.

What I have found most important is that the final show title come from one of the youth company members rather than an adult. One year the company thought that the final title had been a director's idea. We had done the whole brainstorm thing where everyone had written down his or her ideas, shared them anonymously, and then debated them as a group. They felt that they had put energy into the process and that it shouldn't have been stolen away by the adults. In actuality, the final show title had been a company member's idea. Before they knew that, they talked amongst themselves about how angry they were at us, the adult directors. When they finally got up the courage to come and talk to us about their dilemma, the whole thing became a youth empowerment experience for them. They got to express their feelings of frustration about the situation to adults who really listened to them, and because they had spoken up, they got to be reassured that the title was indeed a youth-generated one.

Some years we had so much disagreement about the title that we decided to list a title and a subtitle. For example, the show was called *The Beat on Both Sides... A Cry for Freedom*. Whatever the end product, I have found that the youth are more invested in the show if they like the title and so it's worth it to suffer through a difficult collective process to get there.

One magical year a group just came up with a title that everyone loved right away. That was bliss. One of my co-directors, in a script-writing session, suggested the title, *Soul Dust*. All the students thought that it sounded really cool. They were committed to it even though they didn't know what it meant. We spent much of the script-writing process brainstorming about how to make the title make sense. It was fascinating. The group finally decided that the dust symbolized all the things that we, in our fear and denial, wanted to sweep under the rug. The key to unlocking our souls, we decided, was to pull the rug back and look directly at the hard stuff, with compassion and honest reflection.

Concept to Performance

The following is a series of detailed accounts about how pieces were created for Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company shows, from their conception to their performance. It gives examples of how to edit monologues, how to write theatrical scenes with the youth voice in mind and how to stage dance/theater pieces.

Rhummanee's monologue: Editing a monologue & staging a dance/theater piece

In one of the very first rehearsal sessions of the year, Rhummanee brought up a story that the directors felt could be made into a monologue and perhaps a dance/theater piece. When the group did the game "What's in a Name" (see Group Bonding Exercises page 116) Rhummanee shared that she came from a family of Cambodian immigrants who changed their given Cambodian names to "American" names when they moved to the US so that people would be able to pronounce them. The directors asked Rhummanee to write the story down. It took some prodding and coaching, but she finally came up with a first draft.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? — FIRST DRAFT

What's in a name? I used to think it didn't mean much, but it really does mean a lot. Rhummanee has so much meaning behind it. It's Khmer and I'm Khmer. When I was younger, no one could get my name right. I hated the first day of school. "John?" "Here." "Jasmine?" "Here." "Rhu-, Rhu-, Ru-ma-nee? Hang?" Subs were the same way. "Ru-ma-nee? Is Hang here?" It's Rhummanee Hang. I didn't have a middle name, so I couldn't go by that. I created one for myself. See, this is how it is with Ah-2 people, right. That's Asian people. A lot of us don't have "American" names or middle names, so we just pick one. My brother Koeun is TJ. My sister, Ummra, goes by Michelle. I call my sister-in-law, Debbie, who was born Truc. My cousin Sonita, Lily. Other cousin, Vamnara, David. Savvy, Irene. Our names are beautiful, but I didn't see that at first. They called me Alexandra. Everyone can say that, right? Alexandra. I went by that up until the 5th grade. At least, that's when I told my teachers to stop calling me that. A lot of people still call me Alexandra, though. By that point, I figured that my name is a part of who I am.

After seeing the first draft, the directors encouraged Rhummanee to refine the piece by developing the material about her Cambodian roots that she had mentioned as a way to ground the piece in her cultural pride. They also encouraged her to develop the parts that were more like dialogue than monologue. Here's her second draft:

WHAT'S IN A NAME? — SECOND DRAFT

What's in a name? I used to think it didn't mean much, but it really does mean a lot. Rhummanee has so much meaning behind it. It's Khmer and I'm Khmer. When I was younger, no one could get my name right. I hated the first day of school. "John?" "Here," "Jasmine?" "Here." " Rhu, Rhu, Oh wow, Rhum-manee? Hang? Subs were the same way. Is Hang here? Rhummanee...It's Rhummanee Hang.

I didn't have a middle name so I couldn't go by that. I created one for myself. See this is how it is with Ah2 people right? That's Ah-2 people. That's Asian people. A lot of us don't have "American" names or middle names, so we just pick one. My brother Koeun is known as TJ. My sister Ummra goes by Michelle. I call my sister-in-law Debbie who was born Truc. My cousin Sonita, Lily. Other cousin Vamnara, David. Savvy, Irene. Our names are beautiful but I didn't see that at first. They called me Alexandra. Everyone can say that right? I went by Alexandra up until the 5th grade. At least that's when I told my teachers to stop calling me that. A lot of my friends still called me Alexandra, though. By that point, I figured that my name is a part of who I am.

As I grew older, I began taking an interest in my roots: Conversations with my mother taught me a lot. I learned about the Pol Pot regime, The Killing Fields Era. What tortures me is what my people went through. What my mother went through. Enslaved by her own people. I started watching traditional Khmer dances and fell in love with their beauty. And Khmer songs...the lyrics were poetry. The classics though. The new Karaoke stuff just ain't working for me.

Finally the directors worked with Rhummanee to edit the writing slightly and then stage the piece to include other company members who would play the teachers and students in the classrooms that she described in her original monologue, and to incorporate the traditional Cambodian dancers. The final line of the monologue was refined to give it a powerful finishing point. Here's the final version that includes stage notes:

WHAT'S IN A NAME? — FINAL VERSION

The lights come up on a classroom scene. There are 4 chairs set up in 2 rows of 2 and a "teacher" is standing at the front of the group. Rhummanee is sitting in the back of the "classroom." She says the first lines of the monologue from her seat facing the audience and then slumps in her chair as she becomes part of the classroom scene.

Rhummanee: What's in a name? When I was younger I hated the first day of school. No one could ever get my name right.

The teacher character is taking attendance. She is holding a clipboard and a pen.

Teacher: John?

Student: Here.

Teacher: Kate?

Student: Here.

Teacher: Jane?

Student: Present.

Teacher: Rhu, Rhu, Oh wow, Rhum-manee? Hang? Is Hang here?

Rhummanee: Rhummanee (pronounced RAH mah nee)... It's Rhummanee Hang (pronounced HONG).

Audio: Play traditional Cambodian flute music

Rhummanee stands up, moves center and addresses the audience. The classroom scene exits. They take their chairs with them.

Rhummanee: People couldn't say my name so I created one for myself — Alexandra. Everyone can say that right? I'm Khmer, which means Cambodian in my language. A lot of us don't have "American" names, so we just pick one. My brother Koeun is known as TJ. My sister Ummra goes by Michelle. I call my sister-in-law Debbie, who was born Truc. My cousin Sonita, Lily. Other cousin Vamnara, David, and Savvy, Irene. Our names are beautiful, but I didn't see that at first. Then in the 5th grade I told my teachers to call me by my real name — Rhummanee. Then I started taking an interest in my roots.

Cambodian dancers enter upstage of Rhummanee and begin their dance while she finishes her monologue.

Conversations with my mother taught me about the Pol Pot regime, otherwise known as The Killing Fields Era — what tortures my mother went through, enslaved by her own people. I started watching traditional Khmer dances and fell in love with their beauty. And Khmer songs...the lyrics were poetry — the classics though. The new Karaoke stuff just ain't working for me. I'm a descendant of a once vast empire with great kings and queens. My roots are rich in culture. So now when I say my name I know who I am.

Rhummanee exits the stage when her monologue is over, and the Cambodian dance continues. When it is done, the lights fade to black onstage.



Rhummanee Hang onstage in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Kendra's monologue: Staging a dance/theater piece

Kendra wrote a monologue that the directors felt didn't need any editing, so they worked with her right away to stage the piece. Kendra is a beautiful modern dancer and so they knew that they wanted to incorporate a modern dance solo into the piece. The monologue reads as follows:

It never used to be like this. I was wild, I was free, I was open, beautiful in every sense of the word. You know how kids are. Yeah, it was definitely never like this. There's no one way to describe what happened, because I don't even get it. It's called growing up. It's called acne, and stretch marks, and teenage-hood and awkward and boys and unprepared. It's called fear and unworthy and food and shyness and grades. Suddenly, instead of walking slowly with life hand in hand, life was happening to me at a sickening pace and I just had to shut it out. My biggest enemy was my appearance. Acne mostly. I felt like I'd been forced to wear an "ugly" mask against my will and because of it I was incapable of being liked or beautiful or worthwhile. I wish I could tell you I've changed. Wish I could tell you some inspirational story about realizing my beauty lies within. But I guess I can't. Not yet. Someone once said "then the day came when the risk of remaining tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." I'm just hoping my day is soon.

The year that Kendra's monologue was written, the directors were working with a video artist who was creating visual backgrounds for some of the dance/theater pieces. He worked with the students and the directors to create different visual montages to support the pieces. Kendra was interested in using video for her piece and decided that she wanted to pre-record her monologue and have a slide show of childhood photographs play while she spoke the words. The slide show followed her from the days that she felt "open and beautiful" into her teen years when she developed a severe case of acne. The video

played as she sat silently onstage. When the video was finished she went into a modern dance to a song called "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera. The singer talks about fighting with low self-esteem and wanting to own her inner and outer beauty. Perfect lyrics. One of the directors co-choreographed the dance with Kendra. It had a solo section, a section that included three other dancers (for the part of the lyrics that talked about the singer's friends) and a section that included all of the dancers in the company who entered when the lyrics said "We are beautiful in every single way." At one point in the dance the whole group just faced the audience with proud looks on their faces and stood for 16 counts. Then the group left the stage and Kendra was left alone with a final video montage of childhood photos and a big blossoming rose.



Kendra Staton onstage in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

RADIO D-E-S-T-I-N-Y: WRITING THEATRICAL SCENES WITH THE YOUTH VOICE IN MIND

During script-writing sessions the students created character sketches for the two Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y hosts. “Jazzy J” was an intellectual with street smarts. “Delirious D” was a new age type — a little bit flighty but grounded in her political and social awareness. The group had also decided on the flavor of the radio station. Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y was a progressive station that broadcast a variety of music and news shows and invited community members to call in regularly to give feedback and to make requests. The script-writing group had also started to write some scenes together. If we had had many more months to create the show, the script-writing group could have written all of the radio scenes collaboratively. However, due to time constraints the directors had to write and edit the scenes and then bring them to the group for further editing and refinement. The following is the opening radio scene from *INsight* that introduces the characters and brings in a section about a caller named “Kina Shallow” that the script-writing group created. It shows how the directors were keeping the students’ use of colloquialisms in mind as they created the dialogue, and also how the theatrical scene segued into a dance and a monologue and then back into the theatrical scene.

RADIO D-E-S-T-I-N-Y SCENE 1 (partial)

The scene opens with lights coming up on the two hosts sitting at a radio station booth set piece. There are bulletin boards, posters, microphones and an audio control panel visible to the audience. The front of the booth displays the Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y logo. Both radio announcers talk into microphones.

Jazzy J: Wake up wake up — all you positive radio listeners. You’re getting a REAL start to your day today, ‘cause you’re TUNED IN to Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, where we don’t just wait for destiny to happen to us...

Delirious D: ... we actively create it every day!

Jazzy J: Good morning. This is Jazzy J.

Delirious D: And this is Delirious D.

Jazzy J: ...and you’re listening to the “Wake Your Soul Show” where we help your mind, body and soul get up in the morning!



Jennifer Lawson and Dessie Woods onstage in “*INsight*” 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Delirious D: Wake up listeners! The sun is shining so don't forget your sun salutations this morning. As you know, we're here to educate you, inspire you, and provide you with in-sight...hmmm insight, I like that word, Jazzy. I bet you know what it means.

Jazzy J: I'm glad you mentioned that. Let me look it up in my mental dictionary right quick.

Audio: Play page turning sound effect

Jazzy J: Okay, here it goes. Insight...

1. the power or act of seeing into a situation

Delirious D: Alright!

Jazzy J: But that's not all...

2. the act or result of understanding the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively

Delirious D: Wow, I like that. I'm into the intuition part. I'm really an intuitive person. (keeps babbling)

Jazzy J: (interrupting) We know all that. (Rolls her eyes)

Audio: phone ringing

Lights: Kina Shallow appears in "phone light" which is on the opposite side of the stage as the radio booth. The phone light has a small table with a phone on it that Kina Shallow is talking into.

Jazzy J: Thank God! We got a call on the request line.

Delirious D: Caller you're on the air. Who are we talking to?

Kina Shallow: Ummmm. This is Kina.

Jazzy J: Kina? Kina who?

Kina Shallow: Kina Shallow.

Both radio announcers look confused and amused at the same time

Jazzy J: (too *Delirious D*) Ok, let's give her a chance. (to Kina Shallow) What can we do for you today?

Kina Shallow: Can you play 'In Those Jeans' by Ginuwine? (Note: this is a song that the youth have choreographed a dance to that represents the way that popular media sexualizes young women)

Delirious D: (to *Jazzy J*) Oh noooo! Kina is shallow.

Kina Shallow: Huh?

Jazzy J: Uh, no no no no, nothing... Just for you Miss Shallow, we'll play 'In Those Jeans'.

Delirious D: ...but listeners, let me warn you, this is not the kind of thing that you would usually hear on Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, but we're going to play it anyway, just so that you can know what some folks out there are listening to.

Jazzy J: Don't go out and buy it though. Listen with critical ears y'all and we'll check back with you after the song. Any final words, Kina?

Kina Shallow: Uh, yeah... Can I send this one out to my man?

Delirious D: (slightly sarcastic) Sure...

Jazzy J: He just bought me some new jeans and I wanna let him, and everyone else out there in radio land, know that they fit jussstttt right.

Delirious D: Ok ok ok thanks Kina Shallow.

Lights: Phone light out

Jazzy J: Here's your song.

Audio: Play Ginuwine track

Putting on the Show: Production & Performance

Intention

The intention of this phase is to raise the individual and collective standard for excellence and perform a show at a pre-professional level. The intention is also to produce a show that is well attended and gives the youth an understanding of the powerful positive impact authentic self-expression has on their audiences.

Introduction

This phase covers two areas — production and performance. Producing the show requires handling the details, including renting and/or preparing the performance space, designing, collecting and sewing the costumes, designing and preparing the lights, designing the sound and preparing the sound system, doing publicity, printing the program, getting volunteer ushers and lobby assistants, etc. Preparing the show itself for performance requires bringing the students up to the highest level of



Andria Kemp onstage in "Soul Dust" 2001
Photo by Catrina Marchetti

excellence possible. Does everyone know their lines and are they projecting and articulating them well? Does everyone know the choreography and are they executing it well?

At Destiny Arts Center, we strive for productions that are pre-professional. What this means to us is the following:

- **We are pushing them towards a high standard of excellence in their technique, their performance presentation and the sophistication of their performance material.** We are training young people so that if they choose to pursue the performing arts as a career, they can do so with some pre-professional experience under their belts.
- **The lights, sound, stage management, publicity, set production and other technical aspects of the performance are very similar to a professional production.**
- **Technical and dress rehearsals run as similarly to professional dance and theater companies as possible.** Destiny runs technical rehearsals from 4:30–9:30 pm on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before opening night, and a dress rehearsal from 4:30–9:30 pm on the Thursday before opening night. The students are asked to take Friday off from school so that they can do a second dress rehearsal on Friday afternoon before the opening on Friday evening.
- **Performances are run as similarly to professional dance and theater performances as possible.** The Destiny performances run for at least one weekend, with shows on Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 pm and Sunday afternoons at 3:00 pm.

While we strive for professionalism, we also realize that we are working with full-time high school students who are learning to balance many responsibilities. On technical rehearsal nights we have tutors available to help the performers with their homework during moments when they do not need to be on stage.

This chapter will give some useful tips to teachers who are interested in producing a pre-professional show. Production and performance details will vary depending on whether the show is being put on at a school, a theater or another community setting. This chapter offers broad guidelines that can be applied to various performance venues. Destiny puts on performances in school auditoriums and small local theaters.



Kendra Staton, Arienna Grody, Dessie Woods, Jennifer Lawson and Zeneta Johnson in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: The students perform with a high level of professionalism.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Students come to rehearsals after having practiced lines and movement in their spare time.
- The execution of lines is filled with emotion and intention. The group choreography is polished and the unison work is clean. The theatrical scenes are either funny or poignant, and the solos and small group pieces are well-crafted and well-rehearsed.

2. Outcome: The pre-production and production crew work to put on a show with a high level of professionalism.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- All aspects of pre-production and production run smoothly. See the rest of this chapter for details.

3. Outcome: The show is well attended, and the audiences enjoy the performance.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- The theater is either sold out or near capacity for each performance.
- The audiences respond with enthusiastic applause and often standing ovations at the end of every performance.
- The audiences respond with enthusiasm about the performance in written audience surveys.

4. Outcome: The students understand the impact of their authentic self-expression on their audiences.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- During the performance run, before and after shows, the students express their deepening understanding of their impact on audiences by individually reporting to the group and/or to the directors how audience members have reacted to the show.
- The students are moved by the response that they are getting from their audiences and express their feelings to the group and/or to the directors individually.
- The students give positive feedback about the entire process in their student evaluations.



Mariana Martinez, Amalia Mesa-Gustin, Rhummanee Hang and Arienna Grody onstage in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Pre-Production

The following is a checklist that outlines things that need to be done and people who need to be contacted and organized for pre-production.

Checklist 1: What needs to happen? (See page 87–88 for timeline.)

1. A photo shoot is organized for the company where photos are taken that will be used to design postcards, flyers and posters, and will also appear in the local press. The photos should be attention-grabbing images that represent the show content and the talent and diversity of the performers.
2. The lighting needs to be designed. The sophistication of the lighting design depends on the theater space and the lighting designer.
3. The sound needs to be designed. Designing the sound means creating a show CD that includes all of the music, sound effects and background beats for all of the scenes in the show in order.
4. The theater needs to be booked and/or rented for the decided rehearsal and show times. It is important to choose a space that is wheelchair accessible.
5. Destiny Arts Center always has their shows interpreted for the deaf using American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. The interpreters need to be contacted and given schedules, scripts and lyrics to the songs in the show.
6. If the show requires a set, it should be designed, assembled and painted.
7. If the show requires props, they should be located or purchased so that the performers have a chance to work with them in rehearsals.
8. The costumes are collected, designed and sewn.
9. Tickets should be ordered, or designed and printed. The price of the tickets should be set, as should a system for selling them.
10. Postcards, flyers and posters need to be designed.



Putting on makeup backstage
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

11. Postcards need to be sent out to an appropriate mailing list in a timely fashion.
12. Flyers and posters need to be distributed to the target audience.
13. Press releases and Radio Announcements need to be written and sent out to the appropriate local press. (see Appendix page 167 for sample Press Release and Radio Announcement)
14. Email invites need to be created, consistent with the flyer and poster design, and sent out to an appropriate email list.
15. The program needs to be prepared, designed and printed. Ideally the design for the postcards, flyers and posters will appear on the cover of the program. The program should include the following: the dates, times and location of the show, the names of all of the cast, crew, choreographers, writers and directors, music credits, and a section for giving thanks to sponsors, volunteers and other supporters of the production.

Checklist 2: Who are the people that need to be involved?

Note: Students or professionals, who are either hired or come in as volunteers, may fill these roles. Professionals may work with students as mentors in any of these roles.

1. **Photographer:** This person should be familiar with taking photos of dance in motion. The best press shots are the ones that have movement, energy and personality.
2. **Lighting designer:** This person should be familiar with lighting for both dance and theater. He/she should be flexible with last minute changes and excited about working on a youth production.
3. **Sound designer/engineer:** This person should be familiar with collecting sound effects, creating song mixes, and choosing music as background for theater pieces.
4. **Theater manager:** The theater manager/scheduler should be contacted early in the process of show creation. He/she needs to know load-in, rehearsal and show dates and times. He/she will be responsible for making sure that the space has ample janitorial and security staff. He/she may also be in charge of hiring technical staff such as lighting designers, light and sound board operators. The theater manager may also provide staff to help load in any extra lighting and sound equipment required for the production.



Jennifer Lawson in "Tomorrow is Today" 2005
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

5. **ASL interpreters:** These are the people who are experienced with interpreting theater and music into American Sign Language.
6. **Set designer:** The set designer meets with the artistic directors to talk about their vision for the stage layout with sets.
7. **Set builder(s):** The set builder or builders take the design and create the set out of appropriate materials. If the set needs to be portable they will make it out of light yet durable materials and may choose to include wheels.
8. **Set painter(s):** The set painter or painters get together with the artistic directors to decide what the set should look like.
9. **Costume designer:** This person is responsible for designing, collecting, purchasing, and sewing the costumes for the show. The costume designer meets with the artistic directors to decide on the look of the show in order to design with that in mind. He/she also cleans and repairs costumes as needed.
10. **Costume manager:** This person may be the same as the costume designer. His/her role is to keep track of all the costumes before, during and after each show.
11. **Graphic designer:** A graphic designer is responsible for creating the postcard, flyer and poster design that uses the photos of the company members and that reflects the show content and message. The first draft of the program is written by the directors and then given to the graphic designer to be laid out.
12. **Publicity manager:** This person is in charge of writing press releases and radio announcements and getting them out to the appropriate local press, and then making follow-up calls. He/she also schedules radio interviews and photo shoots.



Lisie Rosenberg, Rhummanee Hang Jamila Jackson and Chandrika Francis in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Sample Pre-Production Timeline

Note: This pre-production schedule is for a process that begins with auditions in early January and finishes with performances in late May.

JANUARY

- Dates and times are set for performances, tech and dress rehearsals.
- Performance space is booked.
- Lighting and sound designers, stage managers, and ASL interpreters are contacted about dates and times for performances, technical and dress rehearsals.
- Graphic designer is contacted about deadlines for design work.
- Photographer is contacted about doing a photo shoot in February.

FEBRUARY

- Photo shoot takes place.
- Graphic designer begins working on postcard, flyer and poster design with the photos.

MARCH

- The company makes a final decision about the show title.
- The postcard, flyer and poster design is completed.
- Costume, lighting, sound and set designers meet with artistic directors to discuss preliminary design ideas.
- Publicity manager creates a press list, including local monthly publications, newspapers, radio and television stations.

APRIL

- Costume designers complete design and begin costume construction and collection.
- Lighting designer works on a design using the draft script. He/she attends at least two rehearsals to get an idea of the show content.
- Sound designer works on sound effects and backup music for specific scenes, in collaboration with the artistic directors and the company members.
- Set designer creates the final set design.



Company aerial dancers on the outside wall of McClymonds High School, Oakland
Photo by Catrina Marchetti

- Postcards, flyers and posters are printed.
- Press releases and radio announcements are written.
- Press packets are created that include the following: a press release, at least two company photos, a description of Destiny Arts Center (or your center/program), press articles about the group from past performances, a postcard or flyer for the show, and the business card of a contact person.
- Press releases are sent out to monthly publications.
- Postcards are sent out to the mailing list.
- Posters and flyers are distributed.
- Email invites are sent out to the email list.
- ASL interpreters are given scripts, lyrics, and CD's with show songs that have lyrics.
- Stage managers, light board operators and sound board operators are sent scripts and production schedules. See below for sample production schedule.

MAY

- All costumes are either constructed or collected, and performers begin to rehearse in them.
- Final lighting design is created when the script is finalized.
- Final sound design is created, and a CD is made of the entire show in order.
- Set designers purchase materials to build the sets.
- Set painters purchase materials to paint the sets.
- Sets are built and painted and the performers begin to use them in rehearsal.
- Press packets are sent out to local newspapers and television stations.
- Radio Announcements are sent to local radio stations.
- Email invites are sent out again to the email list.
- Another round of flyers and posters is distributed.



Production & Performance

Checklist 1: What needs to happen?

All of the people below need to be contacted and given schedules, and a list of what they are responsible for during the technical and dress rehearsal week and during the performances. See Appendix page 168 for a sample Production Schedule.

Checklist 2: Who are the people that need to be involved?

Note: Students or professionals, who are either hired or come in as volunteers, may fill these roles. Professionals may work with students as mentors in any of these roles. Some of the duties can be doubled up. For example, the House Manager may also act as the Head Usher. Neither the performers nor the directors should take on any of these roles.

PEOPLE IN THE THEATER

1. **Stage Manager(s):** Traditionally, a stage manager is responsible for calling the sound, lighting and set change cues in the show, and managing everything that happens backstage during technical and dress rehearsals as well as during performances. Because the DAYPC show is created and staged in such a short time, the artistic directors call lighting and sound cues to the light and sound board operators. The stage manager manages all of the backstage activity, including calling places for the top of the show and for different scenes, managing set changes, keeping track of props, costume changes, and set pieces, etc. The stage manager also stays in touch with the house manager at the beginning of the show to make sure that the audience is seated before he/she tells the performers to go to their places.



Amalia Mesa-Gustin and Mariana Martinez in "Tomorrow is Today" 2005
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

2. **Backstage assistants:** These are the stage manager's helpers. They assist with all of the stage manager's duties.
3. **Light Board Operator:** This person is responsible for taking lighting cues from either the stage manager or one of the artistic directors.
4. **Sound Board Operator:** This person is responsible for taking sound cues from either the stage manager or one of the artistic directors.
5. **Videographer(s):** The videographer(s) are brought in to videotape at least one of the performances. Ideally the show is shot with at least two cameras so that it can be edited using different angles.

PEOPLE IN THE LOBBY

1. **Lobby Manager/Volunteer Coordinator:** This person is responsible for coordinating all lobby volunteers and managing their duties. These duties include selling tickets, preparing programs, handing out programs, tearing tickets, bringing in baked goods for the bake sale, setting up and managing the bake sale and information tables, and decorating the lobby area. This person is also in charge of holding the money that is collected from ticket and concession sales.
2. **House Manager:** This person is responsible for communicating with the stage manager about when he/she should call the performers to places for the beginning of the show, based on whether the audience is seated. The house manager also communicates with the head usher about when to close the theater doors for the start of the show, and following intermission.
3. **Head Usher:** This person is responsible for communicating with the house manager about when to close the theater doors for the start of the show. He/she knows when, during the first 20 minutes of the show, latecomers can be let into the theater without disturbing the flow of the performance. He/she stands at the door inside the theater and opens the door at the pre-determined points in the show.
4. **Assistant to the Head Usher:** This person works with the head usher to hold latecomers outside the theater door until the head usher opens the door to allow them in.
5. **Other lobby people:** People to sell tickets and tear tickets, pass out programs, count audience members, and collect audience surveys. (See Appendix page 69 for a sample Audience Survey.)



Jelani Prosser in "Tomorrow is Today" 2005
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Journal Note:

Preparing for performance

BY SARAH CROWELL

Technical and dress rehearsals in the theater bring up new issues for students. The theater environment is unfamiliar. The rehearsals are long and boring. The youth are juggling school and rehearsals and can often be tired and grumpy. They can also get hyper and lose focus. We work with all the mood changes in different ways.

First, we begin to prepare the students for tech week way before it actually happens. We warn them over and over again that they will need to be focused and patient while we set lighting and sound cues. Second, we make sure that the youth have at least two moments in each rehearsal where they come together as a group. These moments are usually an opening meditation, practicing a full company dance or theatrical scene without interruption, and/or a closing ritual. It could also be a moment where the group gives props for a particular rehearsal. Third, we coordinate with parents/guardians and other community volunteers about having nutritious food at every rehearsal at a specified time. We also make sure that there are small breaks during which the performers can do their homework.

If the group energy is sluggish, we lead short meditations that focus on using breath to revitalize the mind and body, and short, vigorous physical and theater warm-ups. If the group energy is hyper, we do longer meditations and slower, calmer warm-ups. Even though we are focused on setting cues for the show, we are also running dances and scenes as frequently as possible so that the performers feel comfortable with the material.

Before each performance we get the company together in a circle and everyone holds hands. The directors say some words of inspiration and encouragement, and ask everyone to think of at least one thing that they will improve in their performance during that show. The circles always end with the traditional fists in the center of the circle and a rousing 1...2...3... hey!



Jaime Phillips, Kendra Staton, Rhummanee Staton and Zeneta Johnson in "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Journal Note:

Making the transition into the theater

BY SARAH CROWELL

As the production moves from the studio to the theater, there is a definite transition from a collaborative process, where the youth are involved in decision-making and artistic direction, into one where the directors take over every aspect of leadership. It is important that the directors speak openly with the youth about the necessity of this transition. It is usually a relief for the students to relinquish control and relax into preparing for performances. The only place I allow the students to take charge in this phase is when the lighting looks are being set during technical rehearsals. Student choreographers are allowed to have a say in the design of the lights for pieces that they have created. However, I keep even this input at a minimum, because there are many choreographers and many lighting cues, and I don't want the process to become too long and arduous. The directors make most of the decisions about lights and sound in the theater. They also lead opening meditation circles and warm-ups, and wrap up rehearsals and performances with a closing ritual that has been used in rehearsal sessions in the studio. This way the established rituals are translated into the theater, and they give the company a sense of continuity and comfort as they prepare for performance.



Dancers in "Fairytale on the Flipside" 2003
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Debriefing the Whole Process: Reflecting & Affirming

Intention

The intention of this phase is to reflect on the experience of creating and performing the show and to have the group members affirm one another for the work they did and the relationships they developed.

Introduction

The final phase of the creation process is not the performance! It is critical that the group have at least one session to reflect on the time they spent together creating and performing a show about their own lives. All of the phases of show creation have been part of a vulnerable, frustrating, exhilarating growth process. It is important to take time to look back and simply remember as many details as possible, starting with the auditions and going all the way through to the performances. It is also important for the youth to have the chance to affirm one another and themselves for all the effort and heart that they put into making the show a success. The group members have undoubtedly formed meaningful relationships, and they should be able to reflect on those as well. So, in the final session or sessions the instructors lead the group through a number of exercises that allow for reflection and affirmation.



Zeneta Johnaon, Angelina Johnson-Holman, Simón Hanukai and Sarah Crowell in rehearsal
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Included below are two different ways that the debriefing process can be approached, depending on how much time there is after the show. If there is only one session to debrief the show, use version one below. If there are at least two sessions to debrief, use version two below. The two session versions are virtually the same except that version two uses a different method of “giving props” that is more time consuming than that in version one, and breaks down what to cover in each debrief session. Both models leave each group member with something written about all the positive things that the other group members feel about him/her. Since the performance experience is fleeting it’s important for the students to have something tangible to take with them.

The debriefing process can also include a cast party after the show, a post performance retreat, and/or a written evaluation that the students fill out at one of the final sessions. (See Appendix page 170 for a sample Student Evaluation Form.)

Measurable Outcomes

1. Outcome: The students all have a chance to talk about something that they remember about the process of creating and performing the show.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- Everyone is engaged in the group discussion about the creative process and each student talks about at least one memory.
- The students listen attentively to one another as they share their memories.
- One student’s memory triggers another student’s and the discussion is lively and fun.

2. Outcome: Each student in the group has the chance to say or write something positive about every other student in the group.

HOW TO MEASURE IT:

- If the affirmation exercise requires that the students write something positive, everyone is actively writing during the entire exercise.
- If the affirmation exercise requires that the students say something positive, everyone easily finds something to say.



Session Outline–Version 1

If there is only time for one debrief session use the following session.

OPENING

- **Short Meditation: Reflecting on the Creative Process** (See Meditations page 109)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Reflecting on the Process**

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 40–45 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle

DESCRIPTION: Once the group has done the guided meditation above the directors ask each company member to share one thing that they remember about the 5-month creative process. This works best if it's done in a circle where each person shares in turn. If there is time, the group can go around the circle one or two more times sharing memories. The memories will inevitably trigger other memories and there should be a lively group discussion.

- **Giving props on backs** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)
- **Fill out Student Evaluation Form** (see Appendix page 170)

CLOSING

- **Pass the Squeeze/Pulse** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 122)
- **The instructors thank the students for their willingness to be so positive with one another and for their hard work and dedication during the whole process.**
- **They finish with the traditional: 1...2...3...hey!**



Cast of "INSight" 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Session Outline—Version 2

If there is time for two to four debriefing sessions use the following session outline.

OPENING

- **Short Meditation: Reflecting on the Creative Process** (See Meditations page 109)

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

- **Reflecting on the Process Brainstorm.** Same as above. Repeat this process at the various debriefing sessions. Each conversation will be different.
- **Giving props in a circle** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 121)
- **Fill out Student Evaluation Form** (see Appendix page 170)

Note: This should happen on the first day of the series of debriefing sessions.

CLOSING

- **Pass the Squeeze/Pulse** (see Group Bonding Exercises page 122)
- **The instructors thank the students for their willingness to be so positive with one another and for their hard work and dedication during the whole process.**
- **Finish with the traditional: 1...2...3...hey!**

Journal Note:

The power of reflection and affirmation

BY SARAH CROWELL

The reflection process is extremely powerful for the youth company members. When I take them on the meditative journey back through the months of rehearsals, script-writing sessions, performance preparation and performances, they remember all kinds of things that they had forgotten. They remember the high points and the low points, the hilarious moments and the sad, poignant ones. Inevitably, they remember all of these moments with a sense of awe and gratitude.

The affirmation process is also incredibly powerful for the group, especially after they've reflected on their five or six months of working together. Everyone gets to express something positive about every other person in the group. They may have felt these things, but not verbalized them. Now is their chance. Everyone also gets to receive positive feedback. It isn't often that teenagers get to hear the positive things that their peers feel about them. Sharing these feelings breaks down barriers and opens hearts in a very special way. It also completes the creative process in a way that makes people feel good about what they have accomplished together.

In my 12 years of doing this work I have never had a debrief experience where the students spoke negatively about their experience working with the company. They may remember things that were challenging about the process, but they always reflect on all of the experiences with a sense of humor and amazement. This doesn't mean that the process was flawless or that challenges didn't arise. As facilitators we need to be ready for anything. If something difficult comes up in the debriefing process, the directors need to give the group an opportunity to work through the issues in a way that reflects the spirit of the group up to this point. We need to talk about the issues candidly and offer the group a chance to solve the problems together. After working through the issues authentically and with care, the group can return to affirming one another and reflecting on the creative process as a path to growth and transformation.

Audition Materials

Audition Flyer:



YOUTH AUDITIONS!!

*Looking for talented teens 13-18 years to work with **DANCE/MARTIAL ARTS/THEATER COMPANY**. Must have some experience with hip-hop and/or modern dance and be willing to do spoken word, and work with a diverse group of youth to create an original performance piece to be performed all over the Bay Area!*

Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29th, 2004
4:30-8pm

BRING: yourself, energy, dance clothes
OPTIONAL: you may bring a dance, song, spoken word piece or any other talent that you would like to show – this will make your chances better!
(You must be able to rehearse on Mon. 4:30-8:30 & Wed. 4:30-7:30)

DESTINY ARTS CENTER
For Information call (510)597-1619

www.destinyarts.org

Sample Audition Sign-In/Evaluation Sheets

The following is a sample sign-in sheet, with a segment for evaluating the different styles of dance and theater that are covered in the audition. The sheet has room for four students per page. In this way, the panel of judges has one page to look at when the entire group is asked to split up into groups of four to perform the combinations that they have learned. Create as many sheets as you need, depending on how many youth you expect to come to the audition.

1. NAME:	_____	PHONE NUMBER:	_____
STREET ADDRESS:	_____	CITY	_____ ZIP _____ PARENT NAME: _____
HIP HOP:			
MODERN:			
THEATER:			
SOLO:			
2. NAME:	_____	PHONE NUMBER:	_____
STREET ADDRESS:	_____	CITY	_____ ZIP _____ PARENT NAME: _____
HIP HOP:			
MODERN:			
THEATER:			
SOLO:			
3. NAME:	_____	PHONE NUMBER:	_____
STREET ADDRESS:	_____	CITY	_____ ZIP _____ PARENT NAME: _____
HIP HOP:			
MODERN:			
THEATER:			
SOLO:			
4. NAME:	_____	PHONE NUMBER:	_____
STREET ADDRESS:	_____	CITY	_____ ZIP _____ PARENT NAME: _____
HIP HOP:			
MODERN:			
THEATER:			
SOLO:			

Monologues for Auditions

The following monologues were written by Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company members for a show entitled *Walk don't Walk ... a change between crossings* which premiered in May 2003. If there is time at the audition the students look over the entire monologue, practice how they want to present the piece, and then perform it individually for the rest of the group. If time is running short, the students are asked to choose a short segment of the longer monologue to perform for the group. The monologue does not have to be memorized.

Homeless Person

You better take care and watch what you do. You better watch. I'm your future. In distinct, but I'm there. It's an existence that happened because of you. And you and you, and yeah you. *(screaming)* But where are you! I need your mind that thinks for yourself. Nahhhh not you, or you. I don't need your petty change. Small change. Keep your change. I need CHANGE. But you ain't the one. Do you want change? I guess you don't. Since I don't hear you. I see it. Metal birds flying. Things burning. So hot! Colors of black and grey. Purple skies. Can't breath. Can't breath. My lungs are like violin strings. So tight. You better take care and watch what you do. You see, you're still asleep. Wake up! Just walking like zombies with no thoughts or cares in the world. My lungs hurt, like violin strings, so tight, so tight. And I see it. Makes my stomach twirl and spin like a carousel. Carousel? *(laughs)* Carousels no longer exist you see. You better think for yourself. Think! Wake up! See this now? See this now? See this nowwww! I can't find you. You ain't ... you ain't it. . Can't breath. Can't breath Have to make a choice. Walk... Don't Walk Walk... Don't Walk Walk... Don't Walk.

Person playing a video game

Take that. Gotta destroy the zombies and the mad scientist before they get me. Otherwise they're gonna create more zombies and then everybody'll be zombies. Take that! You're not gonna get me! Ah, man he got me. Where did he come from? You know, the world is like Resident Evil. Everyone is walking around like zombies. Bush is a mad scientist and he is the ruler over the mad zombies. Well, he says "Axis of Evil" a lot. Makes sense huh? Do you know he's against affirmative action? Hey, maybe he doesn't want me to be smarter than him. *Like telling a story to a little kid.* The zombies are everywhere, you know where else? In the Oakland school district. The zombies are getting rid of all the arts! I won't be able to play my clarinet anymore! Level 6, here I come. Take that you zombies! What? Again? Man! *Looses the game.*

More serious One zombie got my dad. I was four years old when he was killed. At the funeral home my grandma asked, "Do you want to see him?" I said no. I kinda regret not seeing him. He used to give me piggyback rides. I used to love watching him shave in the morning. I remember one day sitting on his shoulders and he said I would always be his angel. I think he's my angel now. Dad, help me get these zombies down here. *Gets back into the game.*

A girl in her room reading a magazine and listening to Britney Spears music on the radio. Her mom yells from the other room: "Turn that music down!"

My mom's from D.C. She says that since I was born in California I act like a ditz, like it's cute or something. Well, I like the word "wow". I also like the color pink. Oh yeah and I love Xena. I love strong women! Ya Ya

My mother was part of the Black Panthers. "Baby I did it for you," she says. I love to hear my mother's stories of her and daddy being in "the Movement." To be a woman at that time, a black

woman at that. She was so strong. I remember when I was really little; she was going out to a meeting. She was always going to meetings. I asked her: "Where are you going, mommy?" She said, "I'm going to make the world a better place.... for you." For me?! Wow! Does that mean I'm going to have to fight for *my* children?

Wait, what? Britney might hook up with Justin again? I mean not that I care or anything. Oh they were soooo cute together.

Oh crap I forgot about the peace march meeting. Time to take down the man, man! I want peace. It doesn't mean I'm going to get it. But it's my job to make sure we do. Darn Pigs not gonna take my mind, my voice. If they try I'll use my powerful kicking skill like Xena would/ya ya!

Be cool, black power.

Wanna-be Family

I was born into a white wanna-be-middle-class family. My mother raised us with education as a top priority. My parents believed in nonviolence, acceptance, happiness and love. Not going to college is not acceptable. We struggle to claim the middle class status. We struggle to purchase what we need. I was born into a family with all the values of typical, white, well-off hippies. I was born into a family being torn apart by illegal money. What I was born into could not last- my happy little universe is in the past.

Chaos

I was born into stress, into a life of chaos

I was born into an inevitable life

I was born into a father that does not know how to truly love. His idea of love is materialistic.

I was born not to love. I still do not know love, the meaning of love. What is love?

I was born not to have relationships, not to have personal ties. As soon as I believe I love or get comfortable in a relationship it collapses.

Why? Why is life the way it is?

I sit and cry at the idea.

The idea that love has never come knocking at my door. Never come just to say hello.

The idea that life is supposed to be love, be a love that I have not yet conquered.

Struggle

I was born into a world of struggle. Watching my mother struggle to keep food on the table and clothes on our backs. Struggling just tryn' a make the next day. People just don't know how hard it is to be a kid in this world. They say that all we do is hang outside and go to jail. Well, stop taking everything away from us. Give us more things to do. I was born into a world of dreams that might not get accomplished. My dreams run wild. My dreams run free. When I close my eyes I don't know what my dreams are going to be. My dreams are almost like a mystery. When I get to the good part it always skips a scene. I was born into a world of struggles and dreams to accomplish my dreams. I have to go through struggles.

Materials for the First Rehearsal

Rehearsal and Class Schedule:

Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company Rehearsal and Class Schedule

Mandatory

MONDAYS	
Hip-Hop Dance Class	4:30pm - 5:30pm
Modern Dance <u>or</u> Martial Arts Class	5:30pm - 6:30pm
Rehearsal	6:45pm - 8:30pm
WEDNESDAYS	
Hip-Hop Dance Class	4:30pm - 5:30pm
Rehearsal	5:3pm - 7:30pm

Optional

SATURDAYS	
Martial Arts Class	12 noon – 1:30pm
Script Writing	11am - 2pm
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS	
Aerial Dance Rehearsals	Tuesdays 5pm - 6:30pm at aerial dance studio
Modern Dance	Thursdays 4:30pm – 6pm

Expectations of Company Members & Destiny Arts Center Ground Rules:

Expectations of Company Members

THE BASICS

1. **Come to all classes and rehearsals.**
2. **Be on time to all classes and rehearsals.** If you are going to be absent, you must call Destiny at 510-597-1619 and leave a message.
3. **Be at ALL performances.** If you are not able to be part of a performance for an acceptable reason, you must give the Directors at least 2 weeks notice. If a performance comes up at the last minute this rule will be waived, in special circumstances. If you cannot attend previously scheduled performances, without a valid excuse, you will be asked to leave the company.
4. **Be responsible about following ALL of the Destiny rules.** (See list of Destiny Arts Center rules below)
5. **Give 100%** in all that you do.
6. **Maintain your grades at school.** Bring in all written progress reports to the directors. If you are in need of tutoring we may be able to set up some time for a tutor to work with you on subject material that is causing you difficulty.
7. **Respect all members of the company and of your support staff.** This includes Junior Company members, the Directors, the choreographers, the stage crew etc.

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **Confidentiality.** Everything that is shared in rehearsal and script-writing sessions must be kept in the strictest of confidence.
2. **Active Listening.** When someone is sharing something with the group, each member must give his or her their undivided attention. Active listening includes: no interrupting, looking the person in the eye, and sitting up straight. Don't space out, don't talk to your neighbor and don't roll your eyes if you disagree with what the person is saying. You will have a chance to respond, but let the speaker speak first.
3. **Full participation.** Everyone is expected to participate in group discussions. If you consistently do not share in the group, you will be called on randomly to answer a question or share an opinion.
4. **Raising hands.** Every group member will talk one at a time. The instructors will call on those who have their hands up. If there is more than one company member raising his or her hand, the instructors will make a list of those members, put them in order and then allow them to speak in that order. In this way, company members can put their hands down and really listen attentively to the speaker, knowing that they will get to speak.
5. **Stay on the topic.** The group discussions will always have a theme. Keep the discussion rolling by bringing up ideas and thoughts that relate to that theme. Do not bring up random topics that are not related.
6. **Agree to disagree.** You are free to disagree with each other. This is what makes group discussion dynamic and interesting. However, do so with respect and courtesy.
7. **Right to pass.** If there is a discussion that requires that the group respond by going around in a circle, and you do not wish to speak at that time, you may say that you pass.

Expectations, continued

THE CONSEQUENCES

If you are consistently breaking the rules the following will happen:

1. **First Warning:** You will be given a verbal warning by one of the directors
2. **Second Warning:** You will be given a second verbal warning and your parent/guardian will be called to be notified of the problem.
3. **Third Warning:** A parent/guardian will be called in for a meeting with the directors. You will then be considered on probation where you will be given a two week period to clean up your act. During this time you may not break any of the rules. If you finish the two week period successfully, you will be off probation and go to a first warning status. If you do not finish the two week period successfully, you will be asked to leave the group.

DESTINY ARTS CENTER GROUND RULES

Respect Yourself and Others

- Everyone enter respectfully and prepare for class
- Wear the required uniform every class. No large jewelry or jeans allowed.
- Keep your uniform and dance attire clean & tidy
- No put-downs, abusive, vulgar language or gestures

Safety First!

- Keep personal possessions secured in your bag and avoid bringing valuables to the Center
- No fighting or horseplay

Be Responsible

- Be on time!
- Have everything you need with you for each activity
- If you have an injury, speak to your instructors about it when you arrive
- If you are going to be absent or late, please call Destiny and speak with an instructor or leave a message.
- Only practice martial arts during class or privately at home (not at school or on the streets)

Listen Attentively & Follow Directions

- Listen to instructions or feedback from adults or peers with focus
- Do what is asked with 100% commitment
- Be a role model for younger or newer students and educate your peers on respectful conduct

Keep Your School Clean

- Everyone will participate in SOJI. Soji is a Japanese word that means "service." At Destiny, service includes keeping our space clean and neat.
- Absolutely no food, gum or candy allowed in the Center unless given permission by an instructor.



Jamie Phillips and Jamila Jackson in "INsight," 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Group Exercises

Meditations

Meditating is a way of centering and relaxing a group. It is a way of removing attention from the worries of everyday life and taking the focus deeper. Every Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company rehearsal begins with a short meditation that concentrates on preparing the youth to work in a focused way together. Longer guided meditations are also used during rehearsal sessions as a way to allow youth access to deep feelings, and to give them imagery that motivates creative writing and that sparks interesting dialogue.

If you are in a school environment you may not want to call the following exercises “meditations.” You may choose to use “quiet time” or “focus time” instead. No matter what you call it, this time is invaluable for the students as artists in a creative process and as humans in a chaotic world.

Before every short meditation we have the students sit in a circle with their bodies in upright positions, either cross-legged, sitting on their knees, or sitting upright in a chair. We give directions to make the neck long, to straighten the back, and to relax the shoulders, stomach and space between the eyebrows. We ask the students to imagine their shoulder blades melting down their backs —



Meditation during rehearsal
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

anything that gives them the experience of being in an erect position while also being relaxed and open. Once the group is still and upright, every meditation starts with the same phrase: “Take a deep breath in ... and out... and gently close or lower your eyes.”

Before every long meditation we have the students lie down in a circle on their backs, with their heads in the center. They are as close to one another as possible without touching. The lights are lowered. The breathing and relaxation instructions are similar to the ones for short meditations, but more extensive. Those instructions are included in the meditation instructions below.

For some of the meditations, it is appropriate to take time afterwards to debrief the experience. Often we simply ask: “So, how was that meditation for you?” or we ask specific questions depending on the content of the mediation. For the longer meditations, there are suggested debrief questions included.

Note: You may choose to have music in the background for any of the meditations included here, as long as the music has no lyrics. In long guided meditations that give instructions for changes in location or mood you may choose to play a number of different styles of music that match each segment of the meditation.

Short Meditation — *Short & Sweet with a Welcome* (For the First Rehearsal)

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

As you are sitting here in a state of relaxation, notice the emotions that you are having here on the very first day of rehearsal for the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company. Notice if you are feeling excited or nervous. Notice the energy of the other company members around you. Are they also excited or nervous? PAUSE. Now, come back to focusing on your own breath going in and out. Don't try and change the way you are breathing, just notice it. PAUSE. Now put all of your focus onto your heart. This is the place in your body that beats on its own and keeps you alive. Notice it. Notice how it's beating. PAUSE. The heart is the place where I believe that we welcome people from. When I am being very welcoming to someone I am always coming from my heart. Now that you are focused on your own heart, think about extending the energy of welcome to your fellow company members. If you've been in the company before, extend your welcome to everyone in the circle, but especially to those who are new. If you are brand new to the group, extend your heart to the other company members in the circle and welcome them to this new beginning.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *Climbing the Mountain* (For the rehearsal where the students are setting goals)

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Now imagine yourself at the foot of a tall mountain. Marvel at the height of it. Maybe there is snow at the top. Maybe you can't even see the top. PAUSE. As you stand at the bottom of this very high mountain, you realize that you must climb to the top. Without hesitation you begin to climb. PAUSE. Imagine each detail of your journey. Imagine the rocks and the trees. Feel the effort that it takes to climb. Feel the sweat pouring down your body. Really be there in your climb. PAUSE. Now look up. You are really close to being at the top of the mountain. It's right there. Take the last few steps to get there. PAUSE. Now you are finally standing on the top! PAUSE. What does it look like?

Take in the view from the top of your mountain. PAUSE. As you are looking over the edge, imagine that the climb you just took is a representation of your audition to get into the company. You made it. You got into the company. Now you are looking over the edge at what is yet to come. Where do you go from here? Imagine that the view from the top of the mountain represents all of the things that you hope to accomplish while you are creating a show with this group. See each part of your view as your goals and expectations of yourself for the next part of your journey. Maybe the valley in front of you represents the way that you will improve your dance and theater skills this year. Maybe a city in the valley represents the new friendships that you will develop this year with other members of the group. PAUSE. Really get into creating your goals, and having them represented by a place on the other side of your mountain. PAUSE. Now, when you are ready, begin your journey into the place of your goals. Take the first steps. Know that you will make it to those places — those valleys, those new mountains, those cities filled with lights. Take your first steps with all the confidence and energy that it took for you to climb the mountain in the first place. Off you go, into a wild adventure! PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Post meditation writing exercise instructions: Now, everyone write down what you experienced in the meditation. Write about the climb. Write about the view from the top. Write about what the view symbolized in terms of your goals for being in the company this year. Even if you didn't get into the meditation, write what your goals are for your participation in the company. What do you want to give and what do you want to get out of the experience? What is the most important thing for you to experience with the process of creating the show this year? Answer any or all of these questions as you write.

Short Meditation — *Focusing On Sounds Inside and Outside*

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Put all of your attention on the sounds that you can hear in this room, and beyond this room. Really listen to everything — from the soft sound of your own breath or the breath of your neighbor, to the loud sounds of the street or the class going on in the next room. Count how many sounds you can identify. Make an internal list of the sounds. PAUSE. Now take all the attention you're putting into listening to the sounds around you, and turn it inward. Begin to listen to your own breath and your own heartbeat. Really hear the inside sounds as you heard the outside sounds. Notice how your heart is beating. PAUSE. Notice the way your breath goes in and out. Don't try to change its pace. Just notice it. PAUSE. Focus on how the breath feels as it passes through your nostrils — a little cool on the way in, a little warm on the way out. PAUSE. Stay with it for just a little bit longer. PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *In and Out*

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Notice your own breathing. Put all of your attention there — on your breath going in and out of your body at its own pace. Get into the rhythm of your breath. Really get into it. PAUSE. When you breathe in, say inside your mind, without speaking, "IN". When you breathe out, say inside your mind, without speaking, "OUT". PAUSE. In... out... in... out... Let the breath be like a massage to

your lungs, your stomach, your shoulders, your jaw, your eyes. If your mind wanders away from the breath, go back to repeating “IN” with the in-breath and “OUT” with the out-breath. PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *Melting Away Your Busy Day*

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Sit very quietly for just a moment. PAUSE. Perhaps this is the first time in your day that you have been truly quiet. Take this time to be very still and silent. PAUSE. Let all of the stress or tension from your day melt away in each breath. Let all of the experiences that you had today, anything that is in your mind and distracting you from being totally present in this moment, melt away with each breath. PAUSE. All of the worries and excitements of your day are gone and you are right here... in this room... sitting quietly... with your focus completely on your own breath. PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *Picture Yourself...*

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Put your focus gently on your own breath. Do not change the way you are breathing, but just notice the rhythm that it makes as it goes in and out. Allow everything that has happened in your day to slowly ... melt ... away... in your breath. Imagine that you left everything that you are thinking about... or worrying about... or stressing about... or even excited about... at the front door before you entered this room. You may pick it up on the way out, but for now it is at the front door and you are here. PAUSE. Now, picture yourself in your favorite place in nature. Maybe you are at the beach, or in a forest, or by a serene lake. Maybe you are in a soft green field, lying in the grass. Really let yourself go there. See yourself there. Feel yourself there. Smell the smells in this place. What does it smell like? Feel the wind or the spray of water or the gentle breeze. What does it feel like? Let yourself be transported there. Relax into this place. Let it take you away. PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *See Your Name in Lights*

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Let yourself get very quiet. As quiet and as still as possible. PAUSE. Now see your name in lights. Neon lights. What is the color of your name? Where is it? Is it on the side of a building or a movie marquee? Is it big or small? In cursive or black letters? Does the neon sign flash? What does your name look like in lights? Take time to really see your name ... in lights. PAUSE.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Short Meditation — *Reflecting on the Creative Process*

(For rehearsals after the performances are completed, where the students are debriefing the creation and performance process)

Note: The students have prepared for meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and sitting upright.

Put your attention onto your breath. Follow its natural rhythm as it goes in and out. Let yourself relax as you focus on the breath. PAUSE. Now, in this state of centeredness and relaxation, think back to the first moment of being in the company. Think back to the auditions and how you felt being in the room with all of the other students auditioning. PAUSE. Think back to the day that you found out that you got into the company. What did it feel like? Where were you when you found out? How did you feel? Who did you tell about it first? PAUSE. Now think back to your very first rehearsal, your very first script-writing session. What sticks out in your mind about them? PAUSE. Think back to the group bonding games, the theater games, the dance and choreography exercises, and the meditations. Which ones of them stuck out for you the most? PAUSE. Think about putting the show together and how you were involved in the creative process. PAUSE. Think about what it was like to be on stage in front of an audience. What were your high points? PAUSE. What were your low points? PAUSE. What do you remember the most about your own performance? What do you remember the most about other people's performance? PAUSE. Hold the entire company experience, from the auditions to right now, gently in your mind.

Now, take a deep breath all together and let it out.

When you are ready, gently open your eyes.

Long Meditation — *A Special Friend*

Note: The students have prepared for a long meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and lying very still in the circle.

Special note about this meditation: This meditation has worked well with groups of teens that are resistant to the idea of meditating. The storyline engages the students and they tend to report amazing experiences, which then hooks them into the concept of meditation.

I'm going to count from 10-1. When I reach the number 1 you will imagine yourself in a place that makes you feel very safe. 10...9...8...going closer to your place of safety, maybe a room or a place in nature ... 7 ... 6... walking or running to your special place ... 5 ... 4... you're almost there ... 3 ... 2 ... 1. There you are: in a place that makes you feel warm and safe and cared for. Notice what's around you. Notice the colors, the shapes and the textures. PAUSE. Really take in your surroundings. PAUSE.

Let yourself sink into the feeling of safety in this place. PAUSE. Now in the corner of the room or behind a tree — somewhere in this safe place, you see someone — someone who you know is very special. You get a very good feeling from this person even though you don't recognize the person at first. You walk toward them ... slowly. PAUSE. Then you recognize the person as someone who has really been there for you when things have been tough. Maybe it's a person who is alive now — a friend or a family member. Maybe it's a person who is no longer alive, but who takes care of you from wherever they are. Maybe this is an imaginary person who represents the feeling of protection and safety. See them. They are smiling and so are you. They reach out to greet you and you to them. Maybe it is a handshake. Maybe it is a warm hug. Receive the sweetness in the greeting. PAUSE. Soak in the good feeling that you get from being in this person's presence. PAUSE. Know that your time with this person is short but precious. Maybe you take this time to have a conversation about something that you've needed to talk about with someone you trust. Maybe you just sit in silence together. PAUSE. Before he or she leaves they want to tell

you something — something that they know is special about you and only you. Maybe he or she whispers it to you or writes it down. However he or she communicates to you, really hear what is said with your whole being. PAUSE.

Now your special friend has to say good-bye. Thank him or her for coming to your safe place. Say good-bye to each other in whatever way seems right in the moment. Now watch him or her walk away, knowing that he or she will always be in your heart.

Now I will count from 1-10. When I reach 10 you will be back in this room, alert and awake. 1 ... 2... 3... coming back into your body ...4...5... wiggling your toes ...6 ... 7... wiggling your fingers ... 8 ... getting closer 9 ...10. When you are ready, very gently open your eyes. Welcome back.

Post meditation writing exercise instructions: Write about your safe place. Really be descriptive. Write about meeting your special friend. Write about the message that your special friend gave you.

Post meditation debriefing questions: Does anyone want to share what their meditation experience was or what they wrote about it? What was it like being in a place that felt truly safe to you? Who was your special friend? What was the message you received from your special friend? Was the message surprising?

Long Meditation — *Artichoke*

Note: The students have prepared for a long meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and lying very still in the circle.

Special note about this meditation: Before doing this meditation make sure that everyone knows what an artichoke is. If they don't, explain that it is a vegetable with many spiny leaves that you peel off to get to the very soft, very delicious, very tender heart in the center.

Begin to focus on your breath, allowing each breath to become deeper and fuller in your body. PAUSE. Now I will count down from 10-1. As I count, you will focus on really relaxing your whole body while remaining awake and alert. You will focus on every part of your body becoming heavy and loose and relaxed. When I reach the number 1, you will be completely relaxed and completely alert. 10...9...8... relaxing your feet, your toes, your heels, your arches your ankles ...7...6... relaxing your calves, your knees, the front of your lower legs ... imagining them getting heavy and sinking into the floor... 5...4... relaxing your thighs and your hips ... feeling them getting heavier ... 3... relaxing your stomach ... from the inside out ... removing any tension that you may be holding there ... relaxing your chest, your shoulders, your elbows, your fingers ... all of them falling heavy into the ground ... 2 ... relaxing your neck, your throat, the back of your head, your jaws, your forehead, the space between your eyebrows ... and 1 ... you are totally relaxed and totally alert in this moment.

Now, imagine yourself as an artichoke. You are the artichoke itself that has all those spiny leaves on the outside covering the soft heart on the inside. I will now slowly ask you to peel away each leaf. Each leaf will represent something to you.

1. Imagine that a leaf represents the way that you think you look. This leaf represents your body, your face, your hair, and your skin. It also represents the way that you dress, your style, the way that you present yourself to the world, the way that others respond to the way that you look. Imagine that leaf, and then take it and peel it off.
2. Imagine that a leaf represents your friends. Picture all of the friends that are dear to you. Imagine all the things that you talk about, all the things that you've been through together. Imagine the leaf that is your friends, and then take it and peel it off.
3. Imagine that a leaf represents your enemies. Picture all the people in your life that you don't like or that don't like you for some reason. Imagine the feelings that you have about those people. Imagine the leaf that is your enemies, and then take it and peel it off.

4. Imagine that a leaf represents your gender — whether you are male or female. Imagine that leaf, and then take it and peel it off.

5. Imagine that a leaf represents your race, your ethnicity, the way that you identify yourself in the world in terms of race and/or an ethnicity. Imagine that leaf, and then take it and peel it off.

6. Imagine that a leaf represents your religion, the way that you and maybe your entire family choose to worship. Maybe this leaf represents your choice not to worship at all. Whatever your relationship to religion is, imagine it as one of the leaves, and then take it and peel it off.

7. Now imagine a leaf represents your family. Picture the family members that are in your life on a regular basis, or who you feel close to. Maybe that is your mother, your father, your grandparents, your sisters and brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, or a person that takes care of you and who treats you like family. When you have pictured that leaf as your family, take it and peel it off

Now that all the leaves have been peeled away, you are right in the center. You are right in the heart. How does it feel? Notice how it feels without all the leaves covering you? Who are you? Just notice. LONG PAUSE Now, with all of your identity peeled away, go outside into your daily life. Imagine yourself going to school, relating to your family or your friends. Picture yourself in relation to the ones that you love, the ones that you do not love and the ones that you don't even know. PAUSE. Notice how people look at you. Notice how you look at them. PAUSE. Notice how they talk to you. Notice how you talk to them. LONG PAUSE.

Now, very slowly return to the room and into your body. Bring with you the awareness of the meditation that you just experienced. Stay quiet and still for a little while longer. Now slowly wiggle your toes and your fingers. Take a deep breath in and then out. Take another breath in and out. When you are ready you will very gently open your eyes and, without talking to anyone, take a pencil and some paper, and go to part of the room where you can write quietly. Don't talk to anyone. If you fell asleep during the meditation, that's okay. I will give you something to write about that relates to the meditation in some way.



Amalia Mesa-Gustin in meditation
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Post meditation writing exercise instructions: Write about the experience of peeling away all the layers of your identity. Write about what you felt when you had peeled all the leaves away. Write about how you were seen and how you saw others from that place. If you didn't experience anything during the meditation, write about how you identify in the world. Write about what is important to you about your looks, your gender, your family, your friends, your race, your ethnicity, and/or your religion. Write about what your life would be like if you didn't have your connections to all of these things.

Post meditation debriefing questions: Does anyone either want to share their meditation experience or what they wrote about it? What was it like to peel away layers of your identity? Which ones were easy to peel away? Which ones were difficult to peel away? Why? What was it like when all of the leaves of your artichoke were peeled away? What was it like to walk around in your daily life without your "leaves"?

Long Meditation — *The Places Where You Get Stuck*

Note: The students have prepared for a long meditation as described in the introduction. The following instructions are given after everyone is quiet and lying very still in the circle.

Special note about this meditation: The facilitator should be sensitive to youth who may be claustrophobic or scared of the dark, when leading this meditation. If he or she feels that any of the youth may feel constricted or afraid during the meditation instructions, he or she may choose to change sections or not do this meditation at all.

Begin to focus on your breath, allowing each breath to become deeper and fuller in your body. PAUSE. Now I will count down from 10-1. As I count, you will focus on really relaxing your whole body while remaining awake and alert. You will focus on every part of your body becoming heavy and loose and relaxed. When I reach the number 1, you will be completely relaxed and completely alert. 10...9...8... relaxing your feet, your toes, your heels, your arches your ankles ...7...6... relaxing your calves, your knees, the front of your lower legs ... imagining them getting heavy and sinking into the floor... 5...4... relaxing your thighs and your hips ... feeling them getting heavier ... 3... relaxing your stomach ... from the inside out ... removing any tension that you may be holding there ... relaxing your chest, your shoulders, your elbows, your fingers ... all of them falling heavy into the ground ... 2 ... relaxing your neck, your throat, the back of your head, your jaws, your forehead, the space between your eyebrows ... and 1 ... you are totally relaxed and totally alert in this moment.

Now imagine yourself in front of a long dark tunnel. You are right on the edge of the tunnel, looking inside. You cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel. It's completely dark. Even so, something tells you to enter the tunnel. Something tells you that it is safe to enter the dark tunnel and take the long journey through it. So you take the first step into the tunnel. And then another. And then another, until you are walking at a pretty good pace. You can feel the sides of the tunnel as you walk. They are cold against your hands and they help to guide you. After a while you stop and turn around to look at the opening of the tunnel. You expect to see light coming through the entrance, but you cannot see any light from the opening or the other side. Then you realize that in this moment you are stuck in this place. The ground seems to get softer under your feet and it gets harder and harder to move forward. In this stuck place, think about what really makes you feel stuck in your life. What is it that keeps you from moving forward? What inside or outside of yourself is an obstacle to your forward movement? What is holding you back? PAUSE.

Then you look ahead again. You are almost ready to give up, but you see something far away in the distance. It is a tiny pinprick of light. You close your eyes and open them again, because you think that it cannot be. But there it is. It is definitely light — at the end of the dark tunnel. Something about seeing that light changes the feeling of despair and hopelessness that you have been feeling. All of a sudden you get a burst of energy. You pull your feet up and out of the mud

and begin to take one step and then another toward the light. The ground seems to dry up under your feet as you walk and it gets easier and easier to move forward. You start to run. And the light gets bigger and bigger. Closer and closer. As you are moving toward this light you realize that it represents something inside of you. What is it? What is it that moves you out of your stuck places? What is it that moves you forward? You keep going until you have reached the end of the tunnel. PAUSE. Then, when you walk out of the tunnel you are bathed in bright light. Notice your surroundings as you enter the light-filled place. PAUSE. Notice if there is anyone in this place with you. If so, who is it and what do you say to one another? PAUSE. Take in this place that is your very own world of light. LONG PAUSE.

Now, very slowly return to the room and into your body. Bring with you the awareness of the meditation that you just experienced. Stay quiet and still for a little while longer. Now slowly wiggle your toes and your fingers. Take a deep breath in and then out. Take another breath in and out. When you are ready you will very gently open your eyes and without talking to anyone take a pencil and some paper, that is in the center of the circle and go to part of the room where you can write quietly. Don't talk to anyone. If you fell asleep during the meditation, that's okay. I will give you something to write about that relates to the meditation anyway.

Post meditation writing exercise instructions: Write about what it felt like to enter the dark tunnel. Write about what it felt like to get stuck in the darkness. What did the stuck-ness represent to you about your own life? Write about what it felt like to finally get released from your stuck place. What did the forward motion represent in your own life? Write about what it was like to move into the light-filled place at the end of the tunnel. Did you meet someone in the light-filled place? If so, what did you talk about?

Post meditation debriefing questions: Does anyone either want to share what their meditation experience was or share what they wrote about it? What was it like being stuck in the dark tunnel? What did the stuck-ness represent for you? What was it like when you reached the light at the end of the tunnel? What did the forward motion represent for you?



Meditation during rehearsal
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Group Bonding Exercises

The following group bonding exercises are split into different categories so that they are easy to find and easy to mix and match as you plan your own lessons.

NAME GAMES

Goal: To give the students a chance to know each other's names in a fun, creative environment.

Repeat Name & Movement

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle with room to move around.

DESCRIPTION: Each person says his/her name while doing a movement or gesture. Then the whole circle repeats both the name and the gesture in unison. Go around the circle until everyone has had a chance to say his/her name with a movement.

VARIATION: Give guidelines for the type of movement that you want to see in each name/movement phrase. For example, everyone must incorporate a turn and a jump.

Ball Toss

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: 4 balls or 4 small objects that are easy to throw

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle with room to move around.



Photo by Schuyler Fishman

DESCRIPTION: Toss the ball to a particular person. As you toss, say the name of the person to whom you are throwing the ball. The person with the ball then does the same, tossing the ball to someone else. This continues until everyone in the circle has caught the ball. It helps to ask the youth to raise their hands until they have caught the ball so it is clear who is still waiting to catch it. Once everyone has caught the ball, repeat the game keeping the same order of people who are throwing and catching the ball. Once everyone has gotten the hang of the order, add another ball into the circle. Then there are two balls rotating around the circle in the same order as the names are being called out. Eventually there are four balls going at once.

Sit-Ups for Every Letter of Your Name

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting in a circle. When they do their sit-ups they lie down with their feet in the center of the circle and their knees bent.

DESCRIPTION: Going around the circle, each person spells out his/her name. For every letter of every person's name, the entire group must do a sit-up. Try to maintain a steady rhythm as you do this.

Name Circle Quiz

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle with their knees touching or almost touching.

DESCRIPTION: Go around in a circle. The 1st person introduces herself "Hello my name Jamila"; the 2nd person introduces himself and the 1st person "Hello, my name is Robert and this is Jamila. The third person introduces herself, the 2nd person and the 3rd person. "Hello, my name is Arienna and this is Robert and Jamila." This goes on until everyone has had a turn. It is most challenging for the last person, who has to introduce everyone in the circle.

Spin and Guess

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle almost shoulder to shoulder.

DESCRIPTION: One person volunteers to go into the center of the circle. She closes her eyes and spins with her arm stretched out in front of her until she stops and is pointing at someone in the circle. The people to the right and to the left of the person she is pointing to have to try and say his or her name. The one who guesses first gets to go to the center. Repeat until at least five students have gone into the center.

Getting to Know You

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners using one of the "Getting into Partners & Small Groups" games (see page 120).

DESCRIPTION: Ask students to introduce themselves to their partners giving a few details (name, age, school, why they want to do when they "grow up"). Then go around the circle and have each person introduce his/her partner to the group, using the information they have just learned.

Express Yourself

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners using one of the “Getting into Partners & Small Groups” games (see page 120).

DESCRIPTION: Each student is invited to ask his/her partner’s name and age. Then each person is asked to individually create a movement phrase, that lasts about 8 counts, to express something about themselves that they think is unique. Then they are instructed to teach their partner the phrase. This should take about 3 minutes. Then the large group is reconvened and each student introduces his/her partner by saying, “This is ____ and she is ____ years old”. Then they add their partner’s movement phrase to the end of the introduction. After every introduction, the group claps wholeheartedly. As always, a teacher’s demonstration of the exercise first is critical to setting high standards.

What’s in a Name?

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners with someone they don’t know or don’t know well. They sit cross-legged facing their partners, knee to knee. The atmosphere is quiet.

DESCRIPTION: Each student needs their partner the following questions:

- What is your full given name?
- What do you like to be called?
- Are you named after somebody?
- What does your name mean?
- Do you know why you were given this name?
- What is its origin/history?
- Do you like your name? Why or why not?
- Do you have any nicknames? Where did they come from?
- If you had a child what would you name him/her? Why?

After everyone has asked and answered the questions, they get into a circle and present his/her partner to the group, using the information they have just learned about him/her.

Note: Be aware that this may be a sensitive topic to some people. If some group members prefer not to be introduced with a great deal of detail, that’s okay.

Follow-up/Discussion Questions: Did you learn anything about yourself or your peers from this activity? Why are our names important? What do names mean to us? Do you know anyone that may have changed his/her name? Why do you think he/she did it? Do you think that pronouncing a name correctly is important? Why or why not?

CHECK-IN EXERCISES

Goal: To give the students a chance to assess their feelings and share them with the group.

Verbal Check-In

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Each student has a few minutes (up to the facilitator) to let the group know how he/she is doing, what’s on his/her mind, if there is anything bothering him/her etc.

Variation: The facilitator may choose to have the group check in about a specific issue. For example, the group may be asked to check in regarding their thoughts about a particularly noteworthy or controversial current event.

Highs and Lows Check-In

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Each student has a few minutes (up to the facilitator) to let the group know what his/her high and low moment of the day or week was.

Weather Report

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle

DESCRIPTION: Ask students to finish the phrase: If I were the weather, I would be _____. Students' endings to this sentence should indicate their moods. Go around and have everyone share. Examples: If I were the weather, I would be a bright, sunny day! If I were the weather, I would be cloudy with a chance of rain.

Movement to Express to the Group How You are Feeling

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Students individually develop a brief movement to express how they are feeling. Go around the circle and ask each student to do her movement for the group. The movement can be as simple as a sigh and a gesture indicating that the mover is tired, or the movement could be a series of jumps for joy.

TRUST EXERCISES

Goal: To help students feel comfort and trust with one another.

Warning: These exercises all require a great deal of care and concentration. The facilitator should be aware of this and give special instructions about how to make the exercises safe for everyone involved. If someone is not following instructions properly, the exercise should be completely stopped and the group addressed about safety issues.

Trust Falls in Partners

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners using one of the "Getting into Partners & Small Groups" games (see page 120).

DESCRIPTION: Varies depending on the level. See below.

Level 1: Have one partner face his/her back to the other partner. One partner is the "catcher" and the other is the "faller." Teach the "catcher" how to catch his/her partner in the best way — both hands out and one leg back to create a strong stance. Have the "catcher" tap the

“faller” on the shoulder and have the “faller” fall backwards with his/her body stiff. Have the “catcher” move back a little further each time he/she catches the “faller” so that it gets a little riskier each time. Never allow the distance to be so far that the catch would be impossible. Have participants switch roles.

Level 2: Stay with the same partner. Have the “faller” close his/her eyes when he/she falls.

Level 3: Have a whole group of “fallers” stand in a line facing a wall. Have their partners, the “catchers,” stand in a line about 15 feet behind them. Have the “catchers” tip toe toward the “fallers.” When they are a safe distance, the facilitator tells the “fallers” to fall.

Level 4: Repeat level 3, but have the “fallers” close their eyes. Always switch roles.

Trust Falls & Lifts in a Group

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a very tight circle, shoulder to shoulder.

DESCRIPTION: One person stands in the center of the circle with his/her arms crossed over his/her chest. He/she closes his/her eyes and falls in any direction. The people in the circle catch him/her gently and stand him/her up again each time he/she falls. He/she doesn't have to come to standing every time, but can just pass through the center of the circle like a pendulum and keep falling. Be sure that all the students in the outer circle use a solid stance when they are taking the faller's weight.

Variation 1: One person lies on the floor, stiff as a board, with his/her eyes closed. The rest of the group collectively lifts him/her off the ground by putting their hands and arms underneath his/her body. Be sure to put him/her down feet first.

Variation 2: The whole group is in a circle. The leader has every other person step back so that there are two concentric circles with an even number of people in each circle. The inside circle holds hands. The outside circle then stands in the spaces between the people in the inside circle and reaches through their arms to hold hands with the other people in the outside circle. The whole group then leans backward with their feet grounded and their bodies stiff. If the group leans at the same time no one should fall.



Trust falls in a group
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Variation 3: The group walks slowly and carefully around the room in different directions. When the leader calls out a student's name he/she shouts out "Falling" and begins to fall straight backwards with his/her feet planted in the ground. The rest of the group has to listen out for the students who are falling, and whoever is closest to him/her turns around to catch him/her before he/she falls.

Trust Walking / Running

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20-30 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Enough blindfolds for half of the group

SET-UP: Students get into partners using one of the "Getting into Partners & Small Groups" games (see page 120). One partner is blindfolded or has his/her eyes closed.

DESCRIPTION: The partner whose eyes are open leads the blindfolded partner around the room by standing behind him/her with both hands on his/her shoulders and gently guiding him/her. It is crucial in this game that the leader takes care of his/her partner, making sure that she/he doesn't bump into anything or anyone. As the partners become adept at moving around the room safely, the facilitator may instruct the leaders to move faster.

Variation 1: The leader brings the blindfolded person to different parts of the room and has he/she touch different things and experience them through touch.

Variation 2: Partners link arms and get into a circle with the rest of the group. The leader is on the outside and the follower is on inside of the circle. Everyone is facing the same direction. Leaders lead their partners around in a circle faster and faster.

Variation 3: The facilitator can tell the leader how to lead, i.e.: backwards, on all fours, using only one hand, etc.

Variation 4: Other great variations of trust walks can be found in the Exploring Power through Movement exercises (see Theater Exercises page 134).

Circle Chair

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Students turn so that they are all facing the same direction, looking at the back of the person in front of them. Make sure they are standing as close to each other as possible. Then, count to three. At three, the students should slowly sit down on the lap of the person behind them. If all the students remain calm, they should be able to balance as if they are all in chairs. If they are well balanced, the leader can count a rhythm for them to walk while they are still sitting on each other's laps.

Blind Circle

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Students turn so that they are all facing the same direction, looking at the back of the person in front of them. Tell the students to close their eyes and put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them and gently and respectfully memorize the way that person feels. They may touch the shoulders, hair, face and neck of that person. Then, count to three. On three, the group disbands and everyone walks slowly around the room with their eyes closed and their arms in front of them. There should be a number of helpers who stand around the room with

their eyes open to keep the group from bumping into anything. After about 30 seconds, the leader instructs the group to reassemble the circle in its original order by feeling around for the back of the person who was initially in front of them. Verbal coaching from the helpers is encouraged.

GETTING INTO PARTNERS AND SMALL GROUPS

Goal: To get the group into partners, for a partner exercise, or into small groups for an exercise that requires groupings of 3 or more, in a creative, fun way. This helps to prevent the same people from working together all the time.

Silently Find Someone Who...

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1-2 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students begin by standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs the group to silently find someone who "... has the same number of siblings as you do."

Variations: Find someone who was born in the same month as you were. Find someone who was born in the same year as you were. Find someone who has different color eyes than you. Find someone who has the same color eyes as you. Once you have found someone of that description face back to back or sit down. If you don't have someone put your hand up and partner with someone who has their hand up too.

Barnyard Scramble

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 2-3 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students begin by standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Count off by 5 (or any other number depending on how large you would like for the groups to be) while everyone is standing in a circle. Each number becomes a different animal. For example: ones are chickens, twos are goats, threes are ducks, fours are pigs and fives are dogs. Students have to find their group by making the sound of the animal that is their number.

Variation: Have the group close their eyes as they search for each other.

SCRIPT-WRITING EXERCISE

Goal: To prepare students for script-writing sessions.

Brain Drain

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone

Set up: The group is sitting cross-legged in a circle with their knees touching or almost touching, or they are sitting around a table together.

DESCRIPTION: The students are asked to take 1-2 minutes to write anything that is on their mind. The only rule is that they keep their pens writing on the page for the whole time. If they get stumped suggest that they repeat the same thing over and over until something else comes into their minds, or notice what's around them and report about it. Remind them that this is not a time to create brilliant writing. It's just a time to warm up the writing mind. When the time is up everyone puts their pens down and each person is asked to share the brain drain with the group if they want to. This can get pretty funny and warms the group up nicely.

AFFIRMATIONS

Goal: To give students the opportunity to express gratitude for one another, and to deepen the students' ability to affirm rather than be in competition with one another.

Giving Props

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing or sitting cross-legged in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The phrase "giving props" is a colloquialism for giving positive feedback to someone about something they've done that you appreciate or that you think deserves respect. The phrase is short for giving someone his/her "props" or their proper due. Listen to Aretha Franklin's song "Respect" and she sings about needing to get her props when she gets home from a hard day's work. When we "give props" at Destiny Arts Center, the instructor asks if anyone has a short, positive comment to make about any individual in the group. The comments can also be directed to the entire group. Examples: "I want to give props to Jamila. She really did her poem well today," or "I want to give props to the whole group, because everyone really gave 100% in rehearsal today," or "I want to give props to Robert because he was sweet to me even when my attitude was bad. He really helped me change my attitude. Thanks Robert."

Giving Props on Backs

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Pieces of butcher paper cut into sections that fit across the upper back, markers and tape

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle. The sections of paper, tape and markers are in the center on the floor. Everyone is instructed to take a piece of paper and tape it someone else's back, and then to return to the circle.

DESCRIPTION: Everyone is instructed to take a moment and think about the positive qualities of the people in the group. They are then instructed to take a marker or markers and write something positive about each person on the piece of paper taped to their backs. They can write a word, a phrase or a special note. They can put their names next to their comments if they want to. The whole process is fun because one person will be writing on a person's back while another is writing on theirs. When everyone has written something on everyone's back, the group returns to the circle.

Variation: This process can be done without taping the paper on each person's back. The paper is handed out and each person puts his or her name at the top of the page. Then the papers are laid out all over the floor and each person writes an affirmation on each person's piece of paper. If the group is large, there can be multiple sheets of paper for each person, or the paper can be cut into large chunks. One year the youth at Destiny Arts Center did the affirmations on the backs of the show posters.

Giving Props in a Circle

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: Varies, depending on the size of the group and their willingness to speak candidly with each other

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Plenty of scrap paper and pens or pencils for everyone.

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The leader of the exercise chooses a student who will receive props. He or she

sits in the center of the circle. Each student in the circle is allowed between 30 seconds and one minute to give that person props. One student volunteers to transcribe the comments made by each person and is given paper and pen or pencil to do so. The person in the center rotates to face each person who is giving him or her props. After everyone has given the person in the center props, the leader asks another person to move into the center and another person to transcribe the comments.

OTHER GAMES

Clap Circle

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle. There should be enough space between each person for them to turn towards each other.

DESCRIPTION: Students will start by standing in a circle with their hands together in front of them as if they just finished clapping. The facilitator starts by turning in either direction. The person toward whom they turn should also turn to face them. While looking into each other's eyes they should try to clap at the exact same moment and then turn and pass it to the next person. The group should work on being able to get all the way around without missing a beat. The facilitator can then tell the students to speed up, slow down or change direction.

Note: This activity can be prefaced with an explanation of the importance of working together as a group and a community. It may be a good idea to do this activity when the group first gets together and once more at the end of the process to see if it became easier. It can also be done right before show time to get the students focused and ready to work together.

Pass the Squeeze / Pulse

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 1-3 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle holding hands.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator begins by gently squeezing the hand of the person next to him/her. That person then squeezes the hand of the person next to him/her, and the squeeze or "pulse" travels around the circle until it reaches the one who began the pulse in the first place. The group should be instructed to squeeze gently!

Variation: The speed that it takes to get the pulse all the way around can be timed and the group can be challenged to do it faster as a team effort.

Untangle the Knot

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Everyone puts their hands into the center of the circle and holds onto the hands of two different people that are across from them with each of their own hands. The group has then formed a human knot — their arms are all tangled. Their task is to untangle the knot WITHOUT LETTING GO of anyone's hands. The knot is untangled when the group is standing in a circle again.

Note: If the activity is taking too long the facilitator can end it at any point and let the group know that they can give it another try at a later time.

Flip the Blanket

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: An old blanket with a big X made out of masking tape, taped on one side

SET-UP: The blanket is laid out on the floor so that the X is facing the top. Everyone in the group stands on the blanket.

DESCRIPTION: The task is to flip the blanket over without anyone stepping onto the floor. The group knows that the blanket has been flipped when they can no longer see the X.

Tips on making the flip happen: If the group is having difficulty being successful with this exercise the facilitator can give them hints. One way to make it work is for everyone in the group to move to one side of the blanket (this may require some people piggy-backing others to make room) and to have one person tuck the loose end underneath their feet. Then, one at a time they can stand on the part of the blanket that has already been flipped and slowly undo the rest of the blanket.

Pass through the Center of the Circle

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 2-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator instructs everyone to make eye contact with someone across the circle. Everyone is instructed to walk through the center of the circle and trade spots with the person they were looking at. Everyone must pass through the center of the circle but no one can touch anyone else.

Variation: The leader can change the way that people can walk through the circle to add an improvisational twist to the game. For example, the group may be asked to walk through the circle using different levels of movement (high/low), or expressing an attitude of silliness or grumpiness or superiority.

If You Really Knew Me

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are sitting cross-legged in a circle with their knees touching or almost touching.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor begins this exercise by giving an example of a completion of the sentence "If you really knew me you would know that...". For example: "If you really knew me, you would know that I graduated from Northern Hills High School." Each person in turn finishes the sentence. In the second round, the instructor invites students to go a little deeper in the information that they share. The instructor models this by saying something like: "If you really know me you would know that my father is Caucasian and my mother is African American". Each person finishes the sentence again in turn. This can go for two or three more rounds. Each time, the instructor role models the type of information he/she wants to get from the students, and models attentive listening as the group goes around again.

Note: It is especially important in the first few weeks of the program to keep this exercise light. This game has a tendency to get really intimate really quickly. Students do not need to give too much information right away or they end up feeling shy and vulnerable with each other. This exercise is good to do when the students are new to the group and then to repeat after the students know each other better. If the atmosphere feels safe to the students, they are likely to share intimate pieces of information. Be sure that you remind the students about the importance of confidentiality. Please refer to the journal note in Chapter 2 on page 15 for more about this game.

Silent Line Ups

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students stand together in a clump in the center of the room.

DESCRIPTION: Students are instructed to line up without talking. The order of the line can be determined by age, birthday, eye color, height or anything else the facilitator decides. The facilitator indicates what side of the room will be for what part of the line. For instance if you are doing birthdays, have one side of the room be for people born in January and the other side be for people born in December. Everyone else fills in the rest. If they need a hint about how to do this without talking, let them know that they can use their fingers to show numbers.

Touch / Don't Get Touched

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room.

DESCRIPTION: The goal of the game is to tap as many people on their backs as possible (lightly!) without getting your own back touched. The rules are that no one can stand with their back against the wall and everyone has to stay inside the boundaries created in the room. The next level of the game is to have everyone touch each other's knees without their getting their own knees touched. Finally, everyone has to try and touch each other's feet without getting their feet touched, while they are sitting with their bottoms on the floor and their feet in front of them.

Run Around — Freeze (with or without music)

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room.

DESCRIPTION: Students must be moving throughout the room, dancing or running, until they are told to freeze, at which point they have to hold whatever position they ended up in. You can do this with music and then just turn off the music when they have to freeze.

Group Poem

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Pieces of paper in long strips (4" × 11"), pens or pencils.

SET-UP: The facilitator has prepared a list of statements that need to be completed. The students are sitting cross-legged in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: Each student has a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. The facilitator reads out the first statement to be completed. The students are instructed to write down the statement and then complete the sentence on the top of the sheet of paper. Then they fold it over and pass it to the person sitting to their right. Then the facilitator reads the second statement to be completed. The students write down the statement and complete the sentence on the piece of paper, right under the place where the first statement has been folded over. When they finish the second sentence, they fold it over again and pass it to their right. The process continues in this fashion until everyone has completed all the statements. At the end, everyone should have a "poem" that they can unfold and read to the group. A sample list of statements to be completed is below, with sample instructions on how to complete them.

1. I am... (finish the statement with a feeling — one word)
2. because ... (finish the statement with a short phrase)
3. I love the holidays because ... (finish the statement with a short phrase)
4. I hate the holidays because... (finish the statement with a short phrase)
5. I feel ... (finish the statement with one word)
6. I feel... (finish the statement with one word)
7. I need ... (finish the statement with a short phrase)
8. I'm confused about... (finish the statement with a short phrase)
9. But I know one thing for sure... (finish the statement with a short phrase)

Choosing Sides

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: The leader creates a list of pairs ahead of time in which one thing is very different from the other, and usually compared as options. For example: apples or oranges, Coke or Pepsi, the beach or the mountains. The whole group is standing in the center of the room.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs the group to choose between one of the two options they are given. For example, they may be asked to choose whether they like apples or oranges better. Even if they like or hate both, they have to pick one. Then the group has to run to whatever side of the room represents the thing that they have chosen. For example, the group may be told to run to the right side of the room if they like apples and the left side if they like oranges, or they may have to run to the right side of the room if they like hiking as a form of recreation, or to the left side of the room if they prefer hanging out at the beach. They must be told that the movement must happen quickly without bumping into anyone.

Note: Let the students know that this is related to performance because when on stage you often have to make very quick decisions and can not stand around forever thinking what you'd like to be doing.

Create a Handshake

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners with someone they don't know or don't know well.

DESCRIPTION: Students are instructed to create an original handshake with their partner. They have the freedom to use different parts of their bodies, and are also welcome to use sounds. After they are done everyone gets into a circle and presents their handshake to the group.

Movement Telephone

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a straight line facing the back of the person in front of them, and all facing in one direction.

DESCRIPTION: This game is just like the game "telephone" you might have played as a kid — but using movements instead of words. The person at the very end of the line taps the shoulder of the person directly in front of him/her. He/she then shows that person a movement phrase that is about eight beats long. The only person who sees the original movement phrase is the person directly in front of the mover. The movement phrase is shown only once. The game is most interesting if this person is directed to do a movement phrase that uses different levels

and has a mild degree of complexity. Then the second person in line taps the shoulder of the person in front of him/her, indicating to that person that it is okay to turn around. The second person then repeats his/her rendition of the movement phrase he/she just saw. The third person watches and then taps the shoulder of the person in front of him/her. The game continues in this way until the person in the front of the line has learned the movement. Then that person shows the group what he/she has learned and the person who created the movement shows the original movement phrase as a comparison.

Variation: Have two lines going at the same time with two different movements and see which line gets their movement closer to the original phrase at the end of the line. This variation works well with a very large group, so the students don't stand around and wait for too long.

Clay Objects

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator starts by molding an imaginary piece of clay into an object with as much detail as possible and then demonstrating how it can be used. For example, he/she may create a hat out of the imaginary clay and then put it on his/her head. The group then guesses what the object is. Then that person mimes smashing the object back into a lump of clay and passing the lump to the person next to him/her. Everyone gets a chance to mold the clay into an object of his/her own choice.

Note: Encourage the students to really use their imaginations as they mold the objects and bring them to life.

Chocolate Bunny

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing or sitting in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: A student says to the person next to him/her, in an original voice, "Someone stole my chocolate bunny." The neighbor responds by saying, in his/her own original voice, "I don't think that's very funny," and then turns to the person next to him/her and says "Someone stole my chocolate bunny" in a different voice. The person next to him/her answers with, "I don't think that's very funny." The phrases get repeated around the circle, until everyone has had a chance to speak.

Note: Feel free to modify this phrase or create a new one if you feel that it is a little childish for teens, although surprisingly even high school students and adults usually get into the game as it is.

The Machine

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None.

SET-UP: Students are standing on one side of the room.

DESCRIPTION: One by one the facilitator asks the students to move to the opposite side of the room (which acts as the stage area) and start a simple movement and a sound that they can repeat over a long period of time. The students are encouraged to use different levels, sounds

and body parts. They are also encouraged to make their movements relate to the movements of the others in the group so that the whole thing looks and sounds like one big machine. After everyone has been moving in the machine shape for a while, they are asked to stop and brainstorm creative ideas for the function of the machine.

Who Are You?

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Paper, pens and pencils. These should be laid out in a central place in the room so that students can get them easily when it is time for them to write.

SET-UP: Students get into partners with someone they don't know well. They sit cross-legged facing their partners, knee to knee. The atmosphere is quiet.

DESCRIPTION: In each pair, one person will be the "asker" and one person will be the "responder." This will rotate back and forth. The most important thing in this exercise is that the asker listens attentively to his/her partner. No need to nod or respond, just listen deeply. The asker asks, "who are you?" over and over. The responder replies with short answers, one word or a short phrase.

For example:

- Who are you? A girl.
- Who are you? Biracial.
- Who are you? A student.
- Who are you? A sister.
- Who are you? A person who loves scary movies.

This continues for a minute exactly, and then the roles are switched. After both people in the partnership have been in both roles, the person who was the original "asker" asks the question, "Who do you pretend to be." The "responder" answers in a similar way as they did to the first question. Again, each partner will ask and answer the question for exactly one minute each.

The next question is "Who do you want to be?" The last question is "Who are you?" again. Each time the same format is repeated.

Post exercise writing instructions: Write about what you shared with your partner in the "Who are you?" exercise. Just write stream of consciousness style. Don't talk to anyone. You can write in whatever style you like — as if you are writing in your journal, poetry etc.

Post meditation debriefing questions: How was it to participate in the exercise? What was it like to talk about yourself? What was it like to listen? Was anything about what you said surprising to you? Did it feel different to answer each question? How?

Finish the Phrase

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None.

SET-UP: Students are sitting in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The group is asked to finish the following phrases going around the circle one at a time, using one word or a short phrase:

- One thing I know for sure...
- I care about...
- I believe in ...
- When I grow up I want to be...

Theater Exercises

The following theater games and vocal warm-ups are ideal for students who are combining dance and theater. Most of the exercises emphasize physicality in the theatrical experience.

Vocal Warm-Ups

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle

DESCRIPTION: See below for descriptions of exercises that warm up the voice in different ways.

VOICE PROJECTION

Note: Preparing to project the voice requires an understanding of using the diaphragm rather than the throat when speaking. Therefore voice projection practice is mostly a series of breathing exercises.

Practice breathing with hands placed on the abdomen near the diaphragm, focusing on pushing air outward. Imagine your body as a balloon that you are filling up completely with air and then letting out in short spurts.

Lie on the floor with one hand under the small of your back. With each deep breath imagine every inch of your body filled up with air so that there is hardly any space left for the hand to fit between the floor and the back.

Say a short phrase over and over getting louder and louder each time — the voice should not get higher in pitch only louder and, if anything, lower in pitch.

VOICE ANNUNCIATION

Massage all of your facial muscles.

Prune and Lion: While you say the word “prune,” contract your face, making it look like a shriveled up prune. While saying the word “lion,” expand your face as if you were roaring like a lion.

Tongue circles: Stick the tongue out and make big circles with it in both directions.

Repeat the following phrases over and over again in unison, while placing focus on pronouncing each syllable precisely, and slowly building up speed:

- Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue
- Red leather, yellow leather, red leather, yellow leather
- Unique New York
- A big brown bug bit a big brown bear
- Whether the weather is cold, whether the weather is hot, we’ll be together whatever the weather, whether you like it or not

VOICE NUANCE

Say a phrase in a different character: The leader chooses a short phrase. For example, “Will you please pass me the salt?” and says it to the group. Then each person repeats the phrase as a different character, going around the circle. For example, one person may choose to say the phrase as a little girl, another as a preacher, and another as a radio announcer, etc.

Say a phrase with a different “flavor”: A variation of the above exercise is to have the group repeat a short phrase, that the leader chooses ahead of time, with a different emotional nuance. For example, one person may choose to say the phrase in a soft, breathy voice, another in a loud angry voice, and another in a trembling, fearful voice, etc.

Am I...?

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: A stack of index cards with names of different famous people written on them, and some scotch or masking tape

SET-UP: Students begin by standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator places a card on each student's back with a name of a famous person or character on it without the student being able to see it. The students then walk around the room asking each other yes/no questions until they figure out their own identity. As soon as the student figures out who he/she is, he/she needs to become that person in speech and action. When everyone has figured out who they are, everyone stands in a circle and says their character's name and acts out a brief improvisation as that character.

Variation: The names on the cards can be people that the youth know in their community.

Sound & Movement Circle 1

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: One person volunteers to be in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle begins to move in an exaggerated, dramatic way, and the rest of the class imitates him/her. To switch out of the circle the person in the middle must move towards someone else while looking at him/her directly in the eyes and continuing to move in the style they have been moving. Then that person comes into the middle of the circle and begins to move in his/her different style. The group imitates the new leader. The activity is over when everyone has participated or when the facilitator feels like it's enough.

Variation 1: The students may be asked to keep a beat or a rhythm when they are in the middle of the circle.

Variation 2: The students may be asked to make their movements more rigid or fluid depending on what types of characters they are working on for the show.

Variation 3: The students may be asked to add sound effects to their movements.

Sound & Movement Circle 2

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator begins the exercise by asking for a volunteer to turn to his/her neighbor and do a short movement as if they are speaking to that person. That person then turns to the person next to him/her and repeats the original action, adding his own flavor to it. This continues around the circle until it comes back to the originator of the movement. The activity is over when everyone in the circle has participated.

Variation 1: Add a short phrase to the movement that gets passed along the circle. Possible phrases: How are you doing? Do you smell that? There's someone behind you. I think there is something unique about you.

Variation 2: Add a short vocalization or sound effect to the movement that gets passed along the circle.

Throw an Invisible Ball / Object

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator begins by picking up an imaginary ball, making eye contact with someone across the circle and “throwing” the ball to him/her. The way that the facilitator handles the ball will tell the group exactly what kind of a ball it is. The ball can be heavy, light, large, small, delicate, prickly, slippery, and so on. The facilitator tells the students that the object of the game is to keep the “ball” from ever touching the ground. They are encouraged to use their body, voice and imagination fully as the game progresses.

Variation: When one “ball” is going around the facilitator can add as many others as he/she feels the group can handle at the same time. Once the group understands the activity, the students can introduce the quality of a new “ball” that enters the circle.

Silent Conversations

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners facing each other.

DESCRIPTION: One student creates a short movement “sentence” with his/her body as if having a conversation with his/her partner. The movement is done in silence, should be at least 8 beats long, and should be accompanied by facial expressions that match the movement. Then the other student responds with a nonverbal “sentence” of his/her own. The students don’t touch. The movement phrases should be of comparable length. They go back and forth until the facilitator decides to end the activity or to ask the group to switch partners. The point of this activity is for the students to really explore their bodies and to understand how much of what is expressed on stage, and in real life, is done without speaking at all.

Variation 1: Use sound effects while moving, but no words.

Variation 2 : The facilitator can give a theme to the conversation and/or ask the students to act out a scene with specified characters. Sample scene: a teacher telling a student that if she is late one more time, she will receive an F in the class.

Silent Solo

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students spread out in the room so each of them can work on their own.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator asks the students to think of a character and a situation for the character. Then they are asked to do a short nonverbal, theatrical solo that indicates to an audience who the person is, where they are, and what they are doing. Sample situations: a little girl gets an ice cream cone and as she takes her first lick the ice cream falls to the ground; a person is being put to death in the electric chair; an old lady is walking slowly across a busy intersection. The students are given a minute to think of the character and the situation and figure out how to act out the short scenario. Then each student performs the solo for the rest of the group and the group tries to guess who they are, where they are, and what they are doing.

Variation: The facilitator can have characters and scenarios written up on small pieces of paper ahead of time and hand them out to the students to act out.

Group Montages on a Theme

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students stand together in the center of the room.

DESCRIPTION: The students are told that they are going to be given a number of different scenarios to act out nonverbally as a group. They are to create their own characters and make the scene as believable as possible. It is up to the facilitator to decide when the scene should be over or when to move on to the next scene. Here is a sample list of scenarios:

- in an overcrowded subway train
- at a political rally (pick the issue; either choose the characters or let the youth choose them)
- waiting in line at an amusement park ride
- at a movie (funny, sad, scary, etc.)
- at a little kids' party
- at a party for teenagers
- at a party for adults the age of the students' parents
- at school (in an exciting class, in a boring class, at lunch, etc.)
- in a silent choir
- at a bus stop; it's raining and the bus hasn't come for an hour
- at a protest
- at a school dance: some people are the students and some are the teachers
- being abducted by aliens: 2 people play the aliens

Variation 1: All of these can be done regular speed, slow motion or fast motion

Variation 2: The students can also be told that the scene needs a clear beginning, middle and end.

Across the Floor Fun

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: The instructor gets the group into lines and has them go across the floor in groups of no more than four at a time. The instructor lets the first group go, and then after a few seconds, the second group goes and so on.

DESCRIPTION: The instructor tells the students that they will be moving across the floor in different ways and to put all of their physical and theatrical energy into each crossing. This exercise helps the students combine exaggerated movement with theater, and prepare them for creating dance/theater work. The following is a sample list of crossings that are done either in slow motion or in regular time. Music can be played in the background for this exercise.

Slow motion:

- Running away from someone you're afraid of
- Running toward someone you haven't seen for a long time that you love very much

Regular time:

- Pulling something heavy
- Pushing something heavy
- Carrying something heavy
- Walking in a very cold place
- Walking on ice that starts to crack as you get half way across the floor

- Traveling in the desert after your water supply has run out, and then you see an oasis in front of you, but when you get to it you realize that it's only a mirage
- Running and crawling through a thick jungle (feel free to add an encounter with a vicious or tame animal at any moment)
- Walking as if you are following someone and don't want to be seen
- Walking as if you are being followed
- Coming home after you have received a horrible report card
- Walking, crawling, flying like an animal, reptile, or a bird

Moving through Space Fun

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room with space to move around.

DESCRIPTION: This exercise is very similar to the Across the Floor Fun exercise from above, but in this exercise all of the students are participating at once. The instructor tells the students that they will be moving through the space in different ways and to put all of their physical and theatrical energy into their movement. This exercise helps the students combine exaggerated movement with theater, and prepare them for creating dance/theater work. The following is a sample list of ways that they can move that are done either in slow motion or in regular time, for no more than 20 seconds each. Transitions between the different ways of moving happen when the facilitator says something like: "Freeze. Now, all of a sudden you are now..." Music can be played in the background during this exercise.

• **Walk around the room like:**

- You're being followed
- You're in a hurry
- You're a police officer on a night shift
- You're being chased/followed by a police officer
- You're crawling through jello
- You're crawling through feces
- You're crawling through chocolate syrup

• **You're walking through a jungle with a machete in one hand and trying to keep the leaves out of your face with the other** (feel free to add an encounter with an insect, reptile, or an animal).

• **You're walking on another planet where there is no gravitational pull**

Group Skits

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 20-30 min

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: The facilitator has prepared a list of scenarios to be acted out in small groups. Sample scenarios: a classroom is taking a test with a very distracted teacher; a preacher is giving a sermon to a congregation that is very lively (choose the topic of the sermon); a group of college students is having a heated discussion about a current controversial issue. The students are split into groups of 3-5 people each.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator gives each group a scenario for them to act out. The group then has 5-10 minutes to come up with and practice their scene. Then every group shares out what they came up with and receives feedback from the rest of the class.

Note: During the feedback session, the audience is encouraged to give at least two positive pieces of feedback for every piece of constructive feedback. This is sometimes called a “feedback sandwich,”: the two pieces of positive feedback being the bread and the one piece of constructive feedback being the filling.

Variation: When working towards a show that already has a theme, have the students create group skits based on material that is being discussed or written about for the show.

What Are You Doing?

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 min

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: As everyone is standing in a circle, one person begins to act out some type of movement. For example: brushing their teeth, swimming, playing video games, etc. Their neighbor turns to them and asks, “What are you doing?” They need to answer by saying something that is completely different from what they are really doing. For example: playing basketball, jumping rope, studying, etc. The neighbor then needs to start to do whatever the first person said. This continues all the way around until everyone had a chance to go.

Owning the Space

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 15-20 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing throughout the room with space to move around.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator asks the students to slowly close their eyes and takes them through a meditative journey. They are instructed to have one of their lines from the show in mind as they go into the meditative journey. If they do not have a line, they can make one up or pick somebody else’s.

Sample meditation script:

As you close your eyes begin to acknowledge your posture and every inch of space that your body covers. I want you to really concentrate on your feet. How do they feel? Do they hurt at all? Are they tired? Focus on the way the floor/ground feels under them. Move your toes around and really try to extend and spread them out. As you do that I want you to imagine that you are on stage, getting ready to be in the dream show of your life. Everyone that you care about is out there in the audience anxiously waiting for the lights to come up. The importance of this show suddenly sinks in and hits you like a MACK TRUCK! It’s suddenly too much, just way too much for you to handle. You feel scared. Anxiety hits and you blank out on all of your lines. Your hands begin to sweat and maybe even twitch a little. Become aware of your body. Can you feel your heart beating? Are your feet stable on the floor or are they kind of wobbling? What does your posture feel like right now? Concentrate on it. Spend a few seconds sinking into your anxiety. Still holding on to all of this, slowly begin to open your eyes. You feel afraid to make eye contact with anyone else. You feel like everyone is staring at you, but you can’t get yourself to look back at them. Start to slowly move about the room. How does it feel to be walking? How does it feel to be this afraid of everything around you? Do you feel alone? Now on the count of three I want you to start saying your line. How is it going to come out? What is it going to sound like? Is your voice going to tremble at all? How loud is it going to be? One, two, three... (Everyone says his/her line) You feel like it sounded horrible so you try again... One, two, three... You can’t take it any longer. You find a quiet place where you can be on your own and slowly close your eyes again.

Now slowly everything begins to settle. You realize that the reason you were cast in this role is because you are by far the best person for it. You think about all of the work that you have done, all of the late night rehearsals, all of the sacrifices you made to be here. As these thoughts enter your mind, you begin to feel your posture slowly change. You are no longer slumped. You are no longer slouching. Instead, your back is getting straighter, your head is now higher, your feet are planted and it feels like they are rooted into the ground. Your feet own the ground! Every inch of it! Not just the area where you are standing, but the whole stage. Every single inch of the stage is now an extension of your feet. Your hands also feel different. They are no longer sweating. Go ahead and rub them a little bit. Rub all of the anxiety right out of them. Now as you get ready to open your eyes once more, the world seems like a completely different place. You are no longer afraid. There isn't a worry in your mind. Go ahead and slowly open your eyes. Look at the world around you. Feel free to smile or even laugh. Stretch if you need to. You can't believe that there was a time when you felt fear. The idea of fear is now so far from you that you can't even remember what it felt like. Go ahead and slowly begin to walk around. As you are walking do not focus on the people around you. Instead I want you to really concentrate on the way your body is feeling now compared to way it was feeling earlier. How do your feet feel as they touch the floor? Take your time with each step. Now get ready to say your line again, but this time there will be no more anxiety. Your voice will no longer tremble. There will be no more hesitation or fear. Ready...one, two, three...(everyone says his/her line). Great, now one more time. Truly become your character, with even more passion, more strength. One, two, three... (Everyone says it again). Excellent! And one last time. Make this the best. Make sure that you're not only using your voice, but you are speaking through your body as well. Get ready, one, two, three...(Everyone says his/her line). Very good! Now, go back to a place where you can be alone and gently close your eyes.

There is a feeling of pride and self-respect pulsating all through your body. You now know that there is a reason that you have this role, regardless of its size. You now own not only your voice and body, but also the whole stage. The space is completely yours. Now, as we are coming to the end of this exercise, I want you to quietly begin to whisper to yourself, "I own this space," over and over again. However fast or slow you say it is completely up to you. Keep repeating it over and over again, and slowly start to get louder and louder. Speak with not only your words but also with your body until you reach the peak of your power and then stop, take three deep breaths in and out and slowly open your eyes.

Note: Feel free to modify any of the text to make it your own as well as vary the sound and the intonations of your voice to make certain parts stand out. Feel free to also improvise on the spot if you feel that it is suitable. It may also be a good idea to insert pauses wherever you feel it is appropriate for students to have time to act out what you are saying. You should definitely rehearse this out loud a few times before you do this with students. Be aware that this is a pretty advanced exercise and requires a lot of trust and respect within the group. We would also highly recommend that you follow this exercise with a debrief session where students can share with the group how they felt throughout the exercise.

Exploring Power through Movement

These exercises are taken from the Theater of the Oppressed curriculum by Augusto Boal

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes each

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Blindfolds for everyone

SET-UP: Students are split up into partners.

DESCRIPTION: The following three games are great ways to build trust as well as discuss the concepts of power, authority and complacency with students. The series of exercises following are best done back to back.

BLIND CARS

Everyone is told that they are responsible for one another's safety. Ask someone to volunteer to be the car and the other the driver. Let them know that they will switch roles eventually. The "cars" will now close their eyes (if they have a hard time doing it the facilitator can have a few blindfolds available) and the "driver" will be responsible for maneuvering them around the class without having them touch anything at all. The driver guides the car by using different motions as signals. The car must respond to the signals by moving in the predetermined way. The signals are:

- To move the car forward place a hand between the car's shoulder blades
- To move the car backward place a hand on the small of the car's back
- To stop the car the driver simply lets go
- To move the car to the right place a hand on the car's right shoulder
- To move the car to the left place a hand on the car's left shoulder

Note: The driver can only grab the car with both hands if they are about to run into something.

BLIND SOUND CARS

This is the same as Blind Cars, but the driver is not allowed to touch their car. Instead the driver chooses a distinct sound that is their signal to the car to follow. The driver leads the car around the room using the sound. The facilitator can instruct the driver to get further and further away from the car as the car becomes more comfortable following the signal. It is up to the facilitator when to have the partners switch roles.

COLUMBIAN HYPNOSIS

Have the partners choose who will be leader and who will be the follower first. Make sure that before they begin this activity the leader asks the follower if they have any physical ailments that they should be aware of. For example: bad knees, back, etc. Each leader places his/her hand, palm forward, in front of the follower's face. The follower is now completely "hypnotized" by the hand and the leader moves the follower around the room by moving the hand around at different levels. The follower maintains his/her relationship with the hand right in front of his/her face. The leaders are instructed to be completely respectful of the hypnotized followers, and watch for their safety. At the same time the leaders should do their best to challenge the followers with new and interesting ways to follow their hands. The facilitator should have them switch roles when they feel it's time.



Columbian hypnosis exercise
Photo by Schuyler Fishman



Columbian hypnosis exercise
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Variation: After both partners get to be the leaders and the followers, the facilitator breaks the class up into groups of four by bringing two sets of partners together. Then they get into a straight line facing one direction. The person in the front leads the person behind them, who leads the person behind them, who leads the final person with the same hand-to-face relationship as above. The line becomes a snake that moves through the room.

Post activity discussion: It is very important to get the group together after all of these activities, and discuss how in our daily lives we act as leaders and followers, hypnotizers and the hypnotized. The listed variation of Colombian Hypnosis is a great way to break down most power structures, whether a business, a school district or even a government of a country. For example, in a school district, a student follows a teacher, a teacher follows a chair of the department, a chair of the department follows a principal, a principal follows the district, the district follows the state, and on and on, but the first and last never get to communicate to one another. What is lost in this type of a chain? What can we learn from this activity? How can we empower ourselves within a chain such as this?

Image Theater

These exercises are taken and modified from “Theater for Community, Conflict and Dialogue” by Michael Rohd.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR ALL EXERCISES LISTED BELOW: Butcher paper that is taped up on the walls and markers

Note: Before beginning the following series of activities the whole group should brainstorm a list of issues that they would like to explore. The facilitator initiates this discussion by asking the following questions: What are issues that are important to you as young people right now? What makes you angry? What is exciting to you? What do you think needs to change? What are current social and political issues that are important to you? What have you been hearing about in the news? After a list of issues is created, the group comes up with single words that relate to these issues. For example: love, taxes, war, self-esteem, school, poverty, racism, denial, media, junk food, control etc. The goal is to have a list of 20-30 single words written up on the butcher paper by the end of the discussion.

Special note: The following series of activities should be done in order at first, but can then be done separately.

Self-freeze

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

SET-UP: Open space for students to spread out and move around.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator tells the students that on the count of three the group will freeze in the feeling, image or character that he/she calls out. For example: “On the count of three I want you to let me see that you’re scared. Now on the count of three let me see that you are really frustrated with something. Now I want you to let me see how a person looks if they get startled by something.” And so on. The facilitator challenges everyone to use their space, and lets them know that their facial expressions are just as important as their body movements.

Partner Sculpt

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-15 minutes

SET-UP: Students get into partners facing each other.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator asks the partners to choose who would like to be the “sculptor” and who would like to be the “clay” first. The facilitator calls out a word from the list that the group came up with, and the sculptor uses the word to sculpt the person who is the clay into a shape that relates to that word. When all sculptors are done, the facilitator and the sculptors walk around and look at everyone’s art. This is called a “gallery walk.” When all sculptors have returned to their image the facilitator calls out, “clay, relax” and then they switch roles. This

can be repeated for as long as the facilitator feels it is necessary and then the group can move on to Group Sculpting.

Sculpting guidelines: Sculpting should be done quickly. The images can be realistic, abstract, concrete or symbolic. THERE ARE NO WRONG IMAGES! The images do not have a meaning, but can come from a gut response, a feeling or an emotion. The sculpting process happens in silence, and the sculptor needs to be extremely respectful and gentle in the way they move the clay. He/she should be considerate about where he/she put his/her hands, and when it comes to sculpting the facial expression, the sculptor can demonstrate what they are looking for and have the clay imitate the expression. No hands on faces. The facilitator should be very strict about these rules. This should definitely be something that the facilitator demonstrates before the activity begins.

Group Sculpt

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 10-20 minutes

SET-UP: The class is broken up into groups of 4-6 and everyone chooses a number (1 through however many people are in the group). There is open space for students to spread out and move around.

DESCRIPTION: The facilitator calls out a word from the list the group came up with, and the first person begins to sculpt the rest of their group. When the first person has finished creating their “sculpture,” the second person gets to sculpt the group. This goes on until everyone has had a chance to be the sculptor. The group still needs to work quickly and in silence. The facilitator asks the group to remember each set of shapes so that they can be repeated later.

Note: It is up to the facilitator if he/she wants to discuss the images after they are completed.

Slide show

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

SET-UP: The group has done the Group Sculpt exercise from above and they are still in their groups of 4-6 people.

DESCRIPTION: The groups now have between 4 and 6 “sculptures” that they created in the Group Sculpt from above. Now the facilitator has the group move into the first sculpture and freeze. Then the group has 8 counts to move slowly from sculpture to sculpture, making the transitions smooth. In this way the sculptures become like a slide show with slow dissolves.

Variation: Each group can create a slide show around a particular theme. For example, one group might create a slide show about homelessness, another about the power of women, and another about stereotypes. In this way the group can choreograph movement that relates to a theme or themes from the show they are co-creating together.

Dance & Choreography Exercises

The following exercises give students an opportunity to use their dance skills in a variety of different ways, from simple warm-up exercises to basic outlines for creating solo, partner and group choreography.

Follow the Leader

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are either standing in a circle or in lines facing the front of the room.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs the rest of the group to follow his/her movements as he/she moves very slowly using different levels and positions. This exercise can be used as a warm-up, so the leader should be aware of what kind of movement he/she models. It can be movement that stretches and lengthens the muscles. At Destiny Arts Center we respectfully call this exercise “Fake Tai Chi” because the quality of the movement is Tai Chi like. The leader has the group follow him/her for about 30 seconds and then points to someone else in the room or says his/her name and that person begins to lead the group. This transition should happen smoothly so that if someone were to walk into the room he/she would not see the group stop at all between leaders.

Aerobic Exercises

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Jump ropes for everyone

SET-UP: Students are standing in lines facing the front of the room or standing in lines on one side of the room for across-the-floor exercises.

DESCRIPTION: All dance instructors have exercises that are included in warm-ups to develop the aerobic strength of the students. The following are a few examples of aerobic exercises that we use at Destiny Arts Center as warm-ups in rehearsals where the students have already taken a dance class, or as a fast, easy way to get the youth warmed up for a dance rehearsal if they have not already taken class:

- Jump rope for 3 sets of 3 minutes with the last 30 seconds being as fast as you can go.
- 3 sets of 25 jumping jacks, 10 push-ups and 25 sit-ups, while the group counts out loud
- 5 minutes of simple, upbeat hip-hop movement to a medium-paced hip-hop beat lead by the instructor, or a combination of different youth leaders
- Across-the-floor exercises that focus on simple runs, jumps and leaps.

Advanced Dance Movement Practice

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are standing in lines facing the front of the room or standing in lines on one side of the room for across-the-floor exercises.

DESCRIPTION: All dance instructors have exercises in their classes that develop advanced dance moves. This is a list of exercises that we practice at Destiny Arts Center after a good warm-up,

to develop a vocabulary of dance movement that can be used in student and adult choreography. Each movement is broken down thoroughly and repeated across the floor or in place:

- Across-the-floor barrel turns, grand jetés, stag leaps, hitch kicks, cartwheels and side leaps
- Pas de chats in parallel and turned out with different arm patterns
- Toe touches
- Jumps where the legs are turned out and the toes are touching in the air
- Jumps where the body is in a pike position with the hands reaching for the toes in the air

Moving Through Space

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students begin standing in a circle.

DESCRIPTION: The following are instructions the leader gives as the students are doing the exercise. The leader can do the exercise with the students while he/she is talking the group through the different phases. In this way the movement is modeled easily and the exercise can flow:

- Begin to walk around the room in any pattern you like. Do not move in a circle. Just walk in different directions around the room.
- Focus on the way that you are moving. Do not bump into anyone. Keep your focus centered on you.
- Notice the way your feet hit the floor as you walk.
- Notice the way that your arms swing as you walk.
- Now bring your focus into the room more.
- Notice the way the space changes as your bodies move through it.
- Now begin to walk faster while still being aware of your surroundings and the way that your own body is moving. Make sure not to bump into anyone now. Be especially aware of everyone in the room.
- Now walk even faster.
- Now begin to jog.
- Now begin to run.
- Faster. Faster. Freeze.
- Return to walking around the room in different directions.
- Now, as you are moving through the space, you can either walk or run. Do one or the other and switch at least every 5 seconds.
- Now skipping to your movement. So you can walk, run or skip through the room.
- Now add standing still. So you can walk, run, skip or stand still. Do not do one thing for too long. Keep switching.
- Notice how the different movement qualities change the energy and patterns in the space.
- Now, as you continue to move through the space either walking, running or skipping, instead of just standing still, make a shape when you freeze.
- Now when you make a shape, make it with someone else in the room. Create a partner shape, making sure that you are touching your partner. Hold the shape for a few seconds and then move on.

- Continue to walk, run or skip between the poses.
- Notice the way the room shifts and changes as the shapes are created and released.
- Now, when you make a shape, do it in trios.
- Continue to walk, run or skip between the poses.
- Now, make a shape with larger groups until the whole group has created one big shape together.
- Hold that shape for a few moments. Take 3 deep breaths together.
- Now release the shape.

Solo Improvisation Practice

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-10 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students begin standing in lines facing the front.

DESCRIPTION: Students are instructed to begin walking around the room in different directions. Then the leader tells the students to begin doing any kind of improvisational movement they want to as long as they are stretching and warming up. Then the leader tells the group to explore using different levels as they are moving through the space. The students are encouraged to reach up as high as they can and go to the floor and come back up, to create a dynamic movement improvisation. They can begin to add jumping to their level exploration as they warm up. The students are then encouraged to move using different speeds. They can back and forth between slow movement, medium-paced movement and fast movement, while they are also working with levels. Then leader tells the group to move using different qualities of movement. The qualities can be: swinging, hanging, sharp, smooth, light, heavy, spinning etc. The leader does this exercise for long enough so that the group is really working their bodies and coming up with interesting movement.

Mirroring

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners and stand facing each other about 2 feet apart.

DESCRIPTION: The following are instructions the leader gives as the students are doing the exercise:

- Pick who is Person A and who is Person B in your duet.
- Person A is the leader first. Person B is the follower.
- Person A is now going to do very slow, concise movement that Person B can follow easily, as if Person A was looking in the mirror and Person B was her reflection.
- Everyone, make sure that you keep good eye contact with your partner.
- Leaders, make sure you do movement that your partner can follow easily, and make sure you go slowly enough that your partner can follow. This is not a competition. This is a cooperation exercise.
- When you are ready, switch the lead. Now Person B is leading Person A. Try to make the switch so that I don't notice who was leading and who was following.
- Now that you're comfortable with the exercise, leaders can do your movement a little bit faster.
- Switch the lead again.

- Continue to do movement that is faster and more complicated. Play with using levels. Go to the floor and come up. Reach side to side. Stretch as far as you can. Use your legs as well as your arms.
- Switch the lead again and continue moving.
- Stay focused on making sure that your partner can follow you! Keep the eye contact. Stay connected.

Variation: This exercise can be done where the follower is standing behind the leader and they mimic the leader's slow, deliberate movements as if they were the leader's shadow. This is called shadowing.

Weight Exchange

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 5-15 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students get into partners and stand facing each other about 2 feet apart.

DESCRIPTION: The following are instructions the leader gives as the students are doing the exercise:

Level 1: leaning toward each other using the hands

- Put your hands up in front of you with your elbows bent and your hands right in front of your shoulders.
- Lean into your partner with a straight body (do not bend at the waist) so that your hands meet and you take the weight of your partner in the middle.
- Lean out again and release the connection and come to standing.
- Lean in and out, discovering how to do it with the least effort possible.

Level 2: leaning toward each other using different body parts

- Now that you have discovered where the center of your balance is as a duet, try leaning into and away from each other using different parts of your body. You can lean from shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, hip to shoulder, thigh to back, etc. Use the same counterbalance energy as when you were using your hands.

Level 3: leaning away from each other

- Grab the right wrist of your partner.
- Lean away from each other with your bodies and arms straight. Really take the weight of your partner.
- Now imagine that you are sitting in a chair while you are still using the counterbalance of your partner. You should be able to fall into the position and trust that your partner has you.
- Stand up and do the same thing using your left hand. This time see if you can get into the position by falling backward and having the sensation of catching your partner.

Level 4: playing with off balance shapes

- Now that you are working well with your partner, have one person in your duet stand in a firm stance with their legs bent, back straight and stance wide. Let the other person play with going into shapes that they would not normally be able to do if they did not have someone to counterbalance their weight. One person is the base and the other person can create interesting shapes with the support of the base.
- Take risks. Your partner will not let you fall!

Creating a Short Solo

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Students are spread out throughout the room with space around them to move freely.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs the students to create between 8 and 32 counts of movement to a piece of music that is chosen ahead of time. The leader may choose to give some guidance to the students about what qualities of movement could appear in their choreography.

Examples of qualities to use are: swinging, hanging, sharp, smooth, light, heavy, spinning etc. The music is played while the students work on the solo choreography so that they are both inspired and connected to a rhythmic structure. The leader walks around the room as the students are creating movement to give ideas to anyone who is stuck, to watch movement that is finished and to encourage those who are working well. When everyone is finished creating his/her solo, the leader may choose to ask each one to show his/her movement phrase for the rest of the group.

Variation: Have the students do their choreography to music selections of different speeds and textures and encourage them to notice how it changes the movement.

Creating a Short Duet

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Have each student create a short solo using the guidelines from the “Creating a Short Solo” exercise above. Then have the students get into partners.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs the students to teach each other the short solo movement phrase that they have already created. Both of them will then know twice the amount of movement than they did originally. Then they are instructed to create transitional movement so that the two solos can be strung together seamlessly. Finally the partners show their duet choreography to the group.

Creating a Short Group Dance

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 3-5 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: None

SET-UP: Have each student create a short solo using the guidelines from the “Creating a Short Solo” exercise above. Then have the students get into groups of 3 or more.

DESCRIPTION: The leader instructs each member of the group to teach each other the solo choreography that they created. Then they are encouraged to put together the different pieces into a whole group dance. They work together to decide where each segment of choreography fits into the whole and what the transition movement will be. Finally the groups share their choreography with the group.

Variation: The group breaks up the chunks of choreography so that, for instance, two members of a quartet do their segment of movement while the other two do theirs. There are many ways to mix and match the choreography into an interesting series of movement. Let the youth be creative.

Creating and Blocking Movement with Text

The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company often creates dance/theater pieces that combine some sort of spoken word piece with movement. There are many ways to combine text and

movement. The following is a list of ways that we combine them, along with a few guidelines and suggestions about how to make the combination successful.

1. Monologue with movement

The speaker can do a monologue standing still while dancers are moving behind and/or around him or her. This movement can either represent what the speaker is saying in a literal sense, can accent portions of the monologue with movement that compliments the words, or can contrast the words completely. The speaker can also be moving in similar ways while doing the monologue. Examples:

Movement as a literal representation of the text: The speaker says “I learned to be quiet at an early age because no one ever listened to me.” At the same time she says this, a group of dancers is upstage acting out the scene of a little girl trying to be heard but being ignored until she stands by herself with her hands over her mouth.

Movement as accent to the text: The speaker says the same thing as above. A group is standing in a clump on the other side of the stage from her facing the back. When the speaker says “quiet” the group turns to the front in unison with their forefingers over their mouths saying shhhhhh. After the speaker says, “no one ever listened to me,” the group falls forward onto their hands with their ears to the ground.

Movement as a contrast to the text: Using movement as a contrast to what the speaker is saying can also be interesting. For example, the speaker could be talking about growing up too fast while a group of dancers is moving around the stage in super slow motion. If the dancers were doing a literal translation of what the speaker was saying, they would, perhaps, be moving around the space in fast motion. In this case they are doing the opposite in order to provide an obvious contrast to the speaker’s words and thus to highlight them even more.

2. Using video as backdrop

The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company has often used video as a theatrical backdrop to dances or dance/theater pieces. One year the video was used to give abstract visuals to



Backdrop video with live dance, “INsight,” 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

recorded narrations that happened between scenes. Another year a girl wrote a monologue about feeling that she had lost her childhood innocence as she grew into her teens. The monologue was used in the show, accompanied by a video slide show of photos of her as a little girl, a young teenager and an older teenager. See Chapter 4 page 78 for the monologue.

3. Taped voiceover with movement onstage

The speaker or speakers may choose to have their voices recorded so they can dance while their own voices are being heard. They can use the movement in ways that are described in the above examples. They also have the new option of having their own voices heard without actually speaking them, and thus being able to do more aerobic movement with the words.



Cast of "Tomorrow is Today," 2005
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Script with Lighting, Sound & Stage Notes

INSight – Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company Production, 2004

First Half

From backstage mic: WARNING. Fourteen, fierce females created this show. It may contain material that will open your heart, make you laugh or make you cry. It may help you recognize the true nature of a situation that you weren't able to understand before. It may... give you — INSIGHT.

Audio: “INSight” dance music comes on

Lights: Stage lights come up on dancers – colorful and fun

“INSight” Dance (choreography by Angelina Johnson-Holman)

Audio: “INSight” dance music fades out

Lights: Stage lights change to theater look with front light

Jennifer: (talking to the audience) Girls? ya'll came to see a show about girls? What's wrong with you?

Zeneta: What are you talking about?

Kendra: Yeah, you're gonna ruin the show.

Lisie: Hey, don't mess it up for all of us.

Rhummanee: I agree with Jennifer, I don't know who decided to do a show about girls. I can't stand girls!

All the girls begin to argue — improvisation

Jennifer: (from the side) This is exactly what I'm talking 'bout, females can't even get along enough to begin a show. You know what...this is what girls are...

Lights: Stage lights come down as video goes up

Video: Girls Are... video plays

“Girls Are...” Video

The Girls are... video has footage of the company members acting out the different things that the girls say they are. The following is the voiceover on the video:

Girls are... Moody, Jealous, Passive/aggressive, Trifling, Wrong, Messy, Sensitive, Fake, Wrapped up in

their issues, Superficial, Psycho, Drama queens

Lights: *Stage lights come back up as video finishes*

“We Are Girls”

Zeneta: Hey, wait a minute we’re girls.

Kendra: Yeah, we can be all those things sometimes, but that’s not who we are.

Jaime: For a bunch of trifling, passive/aggressive, sensitive drama queens we sure worked hard to put a great show together.

Lisie: All those hours at Destiny for what? For nothing? We better get on with it.

Arienna: (pointing at the audience) Uh huh, and look at all of them out there, they’re waiting on us.

Rhummanee: You got a point.

Jennifer: (thinks for a moment and looks around at everyone) Alright, you’re right. You’re right.

Kendra: I told y...

Rhummanee & Jennifer: A...hey, don’t push it. You’re right. Let’s do this.

Everyone keeps talking as they move into a clump center stage. When they are in place they get quiet.

Lights: *Lights change completely to indicate that the “real show” has now begun.*

All: We are girls

Amalia: ...between the ages of 13

Jaimie: ...and 18.

All: We are girls

Angelina: With stories to tell.

Mariana: Stories that we didn’t even know...

Chandrika: ...were worth telling.

Dessie: But now we know they are.

Jamila: We are girls

All: United as one

Kendra: Coming together to tell our stories.

Jennifer & Rhummanee: To be seen for who we really are.

Lights: *Lights go to black and then come up on the girls who are standing in a tight circle downstage facing out. The circle rotates. When each girl gets to the front of the stage in the circle she introduces herself as follows:*

“Intros”

Zeneta: I don’t know how it would feel to be seen by others. I’ve never just been myself altogether, only when I’m alone or in my dreams. If I could truly be seen by just one person, maybe then I could really let go and finally be who I am.

Kendra: A time I felt unseen? I don’t know – today, yesterday, probably tomorrow. Every day I feel so looked over and unvalued, because since maybe I’m not the funniest apple on the tree, or certainly not the prettiest, it’s like people think I’m unworthy to talk with them or something. I feel so resentful and inadequate and ... unseen.

Rhummanee: I was kickin’ with a bunch of my friends on the weekend. I was 11 years old. All of my friends were black. Then a black woman got out of her car and walked over to us with a big attitude.

She started going off. She kept saying: "You need to hang out with your own kind!" I kept thinking: And who would 'my own kind' be?

Jamila: I overheard my grandmother talking about some girl one day. She said the girl's mother didn't have a real job. She said the girl only loved that black man because he was her father. She said the girl wasn't going to make it because she was black. She said she was ugly. Then I realized my own grandmother was talking about me.

Jaime: Everyone knows what they want me to be, but not what I want to be. I'm like a bee, buzzing from flower to flower to some unknown destination. I just mold myself into what everyone else wants so that they can feel alright about themselves. I'm the person in my family who picks up the pieces of everyone's failed dreams.

Angelina: Welcome to "Black People 101". I will be your instructor for this evening's first lesson. Listen carefully. Black people do... drink kool aid, eat collard greens and fried chicken and go to church on Sunday.... Black people don't ... River dance, go on wilderness hikes or do flying trapeze. What's up with the stereotypes?

Lindsay: Warning: I might try to stab you in the back, make you feel ugly or steal your man, with my light "mixed people" skin, and my curly hair, right? Wrong! What you don't know is there's nowhere for me to fit. All mixed people don't want your man, your friends and we're not all cocky. I just want to belong. Some say they don't like being put in a box. Well, I wish I could find one.

Arienna: My mother grew up trying not to be seen. On the other hand, my father is a political activist who bikes around in tie-dye dresses and has been arrested so many times for trying to make a difference that I can't even count them. I guess that's why I prefer to be nothing more than a shadow.

Dessie: I'm blonde, I'm skinny and I try to look at the world through rose-colored glasses. No one ever sees me. I've never even seen myself. It's easier to try and fit into stereotypes than to show people who I really am.

Lisie: I don't even know what to say about my identity. It's something I'm comfortable with, yet scared of at the same time. Especially when it means being labeled or stereotyped. I just wanna be seen for what's inside.

Mariana: People ask me: Where are you from? China? Japan? They always think I'm Asian. It drives me crazy. I'm not Asian. Not that there's anything wrong with that. It's just that I'm not. My name is Mariana Martinez. Does that sound Asian to you?

Amalia: How am I supposed to tell you who I am? I'm everything, mixed with the blood of everything, everyone. Cuban, Italian, Chinese, African, French ... I can't explain my feelings, because I'm confused, confused about who I am and where I come from. Why does it matter who I am?

Chandrika: Sometimes I feel empty, just hollow inside. You ever feel like that? Like every day you're just going through the motions, but you're not ever really there? I would love it if the whole world would just see me, but I have to see myself first.

Jennifer: Why am I here? Nobody seems to notice me. Sometimes I do things to get attention. Like act dumb, hurt myself, and even hook up with the wrong people. Most of the time I don't even know if I want to be seen. So stop looking.

Lights: *Lights fade to black onstage and then come back up on the radio station booth located downstage left.*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

The scene opens with lights coming up on the two radio hosts sitting at a radio station booth set piece. There are bulletin boards, posters, microphones and an audio control panel visible to the audience. The front of the booth displays the Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y logo. Both radio announcers talk into microphones.

Jazzy J: Wake up wake up — all you positive radio listeners. You're getting a REAL start to your day today, 'cause you're TUNED IN to Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, where we don't just wait for destiny to happen to us...

Delirious D: ... we actively create it every day!

Jazzy J: Good morning. This is 'Jazzy J'

Delirious D: And this is Delirious D.

Jazzy J: ...and you're listening to the "Wake Your Soul Show" where we help your mind, body and soul to get up in the morning!

Delirious D: Wake up listeners! The sun is shining and don't forget your sun salutations this morning. As you know, we're here to educate you, inspire you, and provide you with in-sight...hmmm insight, I like that word, Jazzy. I bet you know what it means.

Jazzy J: I'm glad you mentioned that. Let me look it up in my mental dictionary right quick.

Audio: Page turning sound effect plays

Jazzy J: Okay, here it goes. Insight... 1. the power or act of seeing into a situation

Delirious D: Wow, that's really intense.

Jazzy J: But that's not all... 2. the act or result of understanding the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively

Delirious D: Wow, I like that. I'm into the intuition part. I'm really an intuitive person. (keeps babbling)

Jazzy J: (interrupting) We know all that. (Rolls her eyes)

Delirious D: And we're gonna open up the lines to our listeners and see if they have any requests for us today.

Audio: Phone ringing sound effect plays

Lights: Kina Shallow appears in "phone light" which is on the opposite side of the stage as the radio booth. The phone light has a small table with a phone on it that Kina Shallow is talking into.

Jazzy J: Thank God! We got a call on the request line.

Delirious D: Caller you're on the air. Who are we talking to?

Kina Shallow: Ummmm. This is Kina.

Jazzy J: Kina? Kina who?

Kina Shallow: Kina Shallow.

Both radio announcers look confused and amused at the same time

Jazzy J: (to Delirious D) Ok, let's give her a chance. (to Kina Shallow) What can we do for you today?

Kina Shallow: Can you play "In Those Jeans" by Ginuwine? (Note: this is a song that the youth have choreographed a dance to that represents the way that popular media sexualizes young women)

Delirious D: (to Jazzy J) Oh noooo! Kina is shallow.

Kina Shallow: Huh?

Jazzy J: Uh, no no no no, nothing... Just for you Miss Shallow, we'll play "In Those Jeans".

Delirious D: ...but listeners, let me warn you, this is not the kind of thing that you would usually hear on Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, but we're going to play it anyway, just so that you can know what some folks out there are listening to.

Jazzy J: Don't go out and buy it though. Listen with critical ears y'all and we'll check back with you after the song. Any final words, Kina?

Kina Shallow: Uh, yeah... Can I send this one out to my man?

Delirious D: (slightly sarcastic) Sure...

Jazzy J: He just bought me some new jeans and I wanna let him, and everyone else out there in radio land, know that they fit jussstttt right.

Delirious D: Ok ok ok thanks Kina Shallow.

Lights: *Phone light out*

Jazzy J: Here's your song.

Audio: *"In those Jeans" dance music comes on*

Lights: *Radio Booth light goes out and after 3 seconds red lights come up on stage*

"In those Jeans" Dance (choreography by Lindsay Ducos)

Audio: *"In those Jeans" dance music fades out*

Lights: *Stage lights go to silhouette after the dance and radio booth light comes up*

Jazzy J: For those of y'all who just tuned in, that was "In Those Jeans" by Ginuwine. We just wanna remind you that we do not endorse this kinda music people, but we can't ignore its existence.

Delirious D: Oh Jazzy J, that was definitely rough for my soul. I make a point of only listening to enlightening, uplifting music that's really good for the chakras. I have to say, that was painful.

Jazzy J: I feel you, Delirious D. Let's ask our listeners what they thought about it. The lines are open. Tell us how "In Those Jeans" affected YOU...

Audio: *Phone ringing sound effect plays*

Lights: *Phone light comes up on Jamila*

Delirious D: Wow, we have a caller already.

Jazzy J: Caller, you're on. Tell us what you're thinkin'...

Jamila: Hi, um, I was just listening to that song and I felt compelled to call in.

Delirious D: Uh huh, go on.



"In Those Jeans" dance in "INsight," 2004

Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Jamila: Well, I listen to Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y regularly, and I don't expect to hear that kinda mess on a conscious station. It's a reminder of what I have to deal with every day. Same old same old. Dudes tryin' to holler at me. So I want to let those guys on the street know what I think. This is for you!

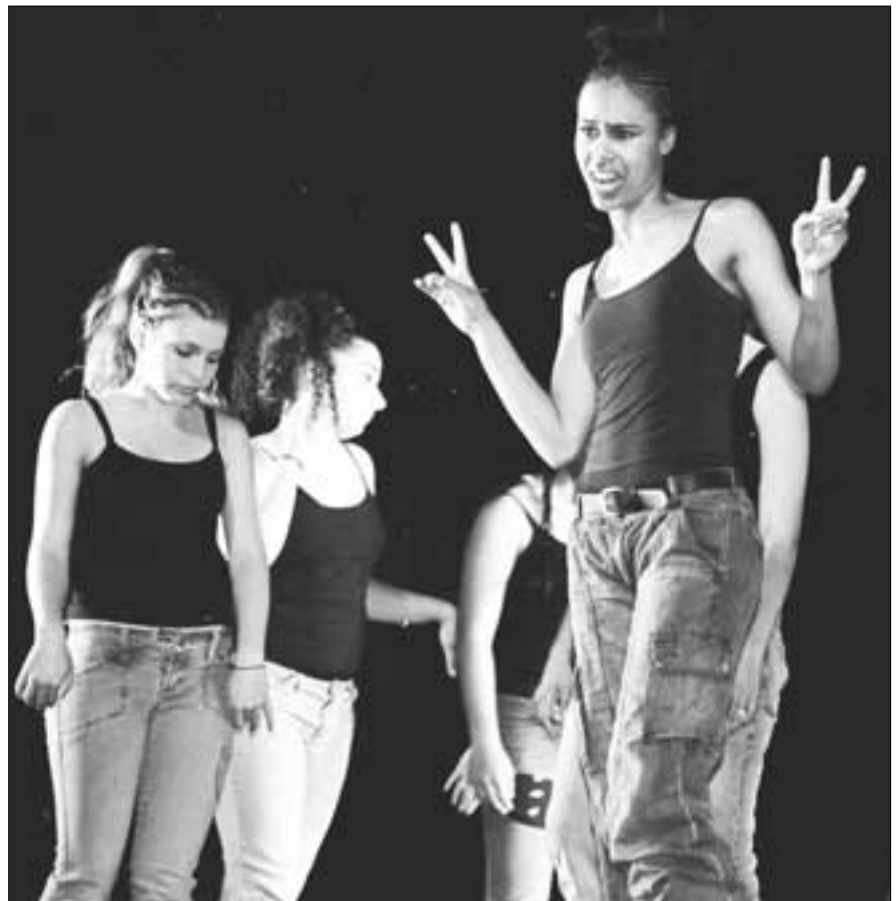
Audio: *Slow, angry beat comes on*

Lights: *Phone light goes out as Jamila walks onstage. Stage lights come up on a scene with Jamila in front and the dancers around her acting like obnoxious men heckling her*

"Addicted to Your Stares" Poem with Movement (poem by Jamila Jackson)

Jamila: I'm trying to stay calm, but I'm getting frustrated
Every single time you look at me I feel a little more degraded
See, at first I was flattered, you led me to believe that your opinion really mattered
and I became addicted to your stares
I paid more attention when I got up in the morning to what I should wear
It's like my hair had to be just right, my jeans fit real tight 'cause if not then you won't say anything and
I won't feel right
This has gone way too far
I don't even know you
You're the guy on the corner, outside the liquor store, standing up, laying down, wandering around
But it doesn't really matter
'cause you always got something to say
and no, your eyes never stray slowly down from my face to my chest and my hips and stay that way
it's always:

Jaime: hey lil' mama



"Addicted to those Stares" poem in "INsight," 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Jamila: or...

Rhummanee: come here shorty

Jamila: It's like a demand. You reach out your hand and if I tell you I already got a man then you just wanna be my "friend."

Well take your eyes off my chest then

Lights: *Bring up phone light and bring stage lights to silhouette as Jamila walks back to the phone and picks it up. The dancers onstage pose.*

Jamila: And Ginuwine asks me if there's any more room "in these jeans"

no, there is no more room for you in these jeans, are you crazy?

The only way you like them is if they're so tight I can hardly breathe

Trust me, God did not put me on this earth so that you could be pleased

Jazzy J: Those were powerful words, sistah. Hey, thanks for callin' in! Keep speaking your mind! Don't let anybody shut you down.

Jamila: I won't.

Lights: *Phone light out*

Audio: *Slow, angry beat fades out*

Delirious D: Finally somebody who's been paying attention to what we're saying here at Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y.

Jennifer: You just heard from a caller responding to a song we played earlier in the show called "In Those Jeans." You go girl! Thanks for taking us to the next topic of the morning.

Dessie: We're about to give you some facts about girls and young women in the media that will really boggle your mind and rattle your insides. Brace yourself...

Audio: *Eerie instrumental music comes on*

Lights: *Radio booth light fades out and stage lights come up to theater look with front light*

"Statistics" Dance/Theatre Piece

Jamila: In all forms of media we are being bombarded with images of sexuality, often dominated by stereotypical portrayals of women and girls as powerless, passive victims.

Kendra: The average North American girl will watch 5,000 hours of television, including 80,000 ads, before she starts kindergarten.

Arienna: Commercials aimed at kids spend 55% of their time showing boys building, fixing toys, or fighting.

Zeneta: They show girls spending 77% of their time laughing, talking, or observing others.

Lindsay: Boys in commercials are shown out of the house 85% of the time, and more than half of the commercials featuring girls place them in the home.

Chandrika: Magazines are the only medium where girls are over-represented.

Kendra: 70% of the editorial content in teen magazines focuses on beauty and fashion, and only 12% talks about school or careers.

Jamila: The average American woman is 5'4" and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds.

Angelina: Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.

Jaime: 80% of American women are dissatisfied with their appearance.

Rhummanee: Discontent about body image correlates directly to how often girls read fashion magazines.



"Statistics" piece in "INsight," 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

Chandrika: 42% of 6-8 year old girls want to be thinner.

Lisie: 46% of 9-11 year-olds are "sometimes" or "very often" on diets.

Arienna: 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.

Zeneta: 91% of women recently surveyed on a college campus had attempted to control their weight through dieting.

Mariana: 35% of "normal dieters" progress to pathological dieting.

Lindsay: In the United States, conservative estimates indicate that after puberty, 5-10 million girls and women struggle with eating disorders.

Amalia: Americans spend over \$50 billion on dieting and diet-related products each year.

Jaime: Every year 50,000 people die of eating disorders in the United States.

Lights: *Lights fade to black*

Audio: *Eerie instrumental music fades out*

Video: *Jaime's video plays*

All the dancers leave the stage except for Jaime and a group of 6 other girls. They set up in their positions for the dance/theater piece that goes with a video backdrop that has images of Jaime standing in different positions, interspersed with images of women on television in commercials that are selling make up, shaving cream etc. All of the women are extremely thin. The video contains the following voiceover:

"The Trophy" Dance/Theater Piece

(written by Jaime Phillips)

Who am I? I begin to wonder. It's almost like I have no identity. Everyone knows what they want me to be, but not what I want to be. I am like a bee, buzzing from flower to flower to some unknown destination. I just mold myself into what everyone else wants.



Jamie Phillips in "INSight," 2004 Photo by Schuyler Fishman

I feel like I'm in a competition. I started as the bronze, then silver, and worked my way up to gold. I finally am the "trophy," the prized possession waiting to be placed on the shelf with the rest of them.

The only way I could see my way out was to be the "trophy." I had to fit all descriptions even if it went too far.

I began to try to be the "trophy" by not eating. It started off with breakfast and then turned into lunch. My body no longer could take eating. I didn't realize what I was doing to myself, what I was becoming, until it was too late. My body was weak. I felt like there was no turning back.

Now I'm trying to realize who I am.

I am still the people around me. I try to fight it, but that's all I know. I've begun to realize who I am and what I want out of life, but I continue to overlook it because it's not what makes those around me happy.

When will I learn to live for myself and make myself happy?

Lights: Lights fade out on stage and the radio booth light comes up

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Jazzy J: You are still listening to Radio DESTINY. We have spent the morning giving you the 411 on young women and the media. And what a journey we have taken together!

Delirious D: Whew! It's a wonder we make it in this world when there's so much stacked against us.

Jazzy J: 80% of American women are dissatisfied with their appearance. Can you believe that?

Delirious D: Actually, I can. It's not pretty, but, as they say, the truth shall set us free.

Jazzy J: You got that right!

Lights: Radio Booth light goes out and lights onstage are dark for the beginning of Kendra's video

Video: Kendra's video plays

The video has a "slide show" of photos of Kendra as a little girl and goes into photos of Kendra as a teenager. The final image of the video is of a blossoming rose. The monologue is done as a voiceover so that the images match the words. Kendra is sitting on stage in position for her dance that happens directly after the voiceover is finished.

"The Risk to Blossom" (written by Kendra Staton)

It never used to be like this. I was wild, I was free, I was open...Beautiful in every sense of the word. You know how kids are. Yeah, it was definitely never like this. There's no one-way to describe what happened, because I don't even get it. It's called growing up. It's called acne, and stretch marks, and teenage-hood and awkward and boys and unprepared. It's called fear and unworthy and food and shyness and grades. Suddenly, instead of walking slowly with life hand in hand, life was happening to me at a sickening pace and I just had to shut it out. My biggest enemy was my appearance. Acne mostly. I felt like I'd been forced to wear an "ugly" mask against my will and because of it I was incapable of being liked or beautiful or worthwhile. I wish I could tell you I've changed. Wish I could tell you some inspirational story about realizing my beauty lies within. But I guess I can't. Not yet.

Someone once said “then the day came when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” I’m just hoping my day is soon.

Audio: “Beautiful” music comes on

Lights: Lights come up onstage

“Beautiful” Dance (choreography by Sarah Crowell & Kendra Staton)

Lights: Lights fade to black at the end of the dance and the radio station booth light comes up

Audio: “Beautiful” music fades out

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: Radio DESTINY conscious listeners! This is Delirious D, and you just heard “Beautiful” by Christina Aguilera. Jazzy J was out of the sound booth when I put that song on. She’s not too crazy about Christina, but we got it past her this time!

Jazzy J: *From backstage* I heard that!

Delirious D: Whoops. My bad! Anyway, since Jazzy J is out of the booth that means I get to give you this Month in the Stars report, where I tell you what’s going on in astrological terms. The month of May brings opportunities to look inward and discover the true calling of your spirit. With much of the world around us in seeming chaos, it is now vital that we each look within in order to understand that which is around us. Find the light of your inner spirit and realize that its power can penetrate any darkness that surrounds your life.

Lights: Radio Booth light goes out and lights come up onstage for the dance that is accompanied by the video backdrop.

Video: Jennifer’s video plays

The video is a voiceover of the following monologue with images of Jennifer looking at a courthouse, standing on a bridge, and walking through a tunnel. She walks through the tunnel toward the camera that is seeing her through metal bars. At the end of the monologue, she opens the bars and looks up with a smile on her face. The video is a backdrop for Jennifer’s dance solo.

“Freedom” Dance/Theater Piece (written by Jennifer Lawson)

Within everyday that goes by I sit and cry and wonder why?

Why am I here? Nobody seems to notice me.

Do I want to be seen? Sometimes I do want attention so I do things to get it.

Like act dumb, hurt myself, and even hook up with the wrong people

I thought that going into a bank with a fake ID to open an account for some guy that I thought I knew was worth it. I thought I would never get caught. But instead I ended up face down with a huge cop on my back. And then I was in jail. Yeah, I said it – jail. A small room with four dirty walls.

Court rooms with DA’s and judges who decided that the Home Supervision program was good for me.

I have to call someone and tell them every single move I make.

“Hi this is Jennifer Lawson I’m leaving for school”

“Hi this is Jennifer Lawson. I’m home from school.”

“Hi this is Jennifer Lawson. I’m leaving for Destiny.”

“Hi this is Jennifer Lawson. I’m home from Destiny.”

If you’re thinking about doing something stupid, don’t do it.

You don't want to be like me — another African American added to the statistics of those who are not supposed to make it in life.

You have freedom now. Keep it.

Think about your future, I've thought about mine.

It's my time to help you because I don't want to see you fall. When you come to a situation that is bad don't be afraid to walk away. Don't be afraid to fly.

Lights: *Lights fade to black at the end of the dance and the Radio station booth light comes up*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: (talking to Jazzy J who has just walked back into the booth) Thank you for flying back in Jazzy J! I was getting kinda worried about you for a second.

Jazzy J: Don't worry about me. I should be worrying about you. I can't leave you alone in the booth for more than a few seconds. I heard that Christina Aguilera song that you played and you know how I feel about that. Well, I ain't hatin' though. That song is actually not all that bad.

Delirious D: See, you have to keep an open mind.

Jazzy J: But I gotta say, you really made it up by playing something by Ms. Dynamite. Not too many folks out here have heard of that strong female MC from England. You go!

Delirious D: I had to make it up to you.

Jazzy J: Okay people, now that I'm back on the air, it's time to really get down with our noontime flash-back of the day.

Delirious D: Guaranteed to have positive lyrics. I'll talk with you later. Peace be with you.

Jazzy J: We're gonna play you some Aretha! After all those intense statistics and information about girls and women in the media that we heard this morning, we need to get some woman power up in here. Let's groove to this next track called "Pride!"

Audio: *"Pride" music comes up*

Lights: *Radio booth light fades out and stage lights come up on large group modern dance*

"Pride" Dance (choreography by Liza Cirolia)

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and Radio booth light comes up*

Audio: *"Pride" music fades out*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: I'm so happy that Jazzy put that track on the air. I feel it just brought the spirit of feminism back to Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y. And now I'm going to play for you this amazing track that I found by this awesome new group called Chaos. Okay, it's very inspirational and I really want you guys to just take it in. Here it goes.

Audio: *"Chaos" music comes up*

Lights: *Radio booth light fades out and stage lights come up on a small group hip-hop dance. The dancers are wearing hats and work with them during the dance*

"Hip-Hop Hat" Dance (choreography by Angelina Johnson-Holman)

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and Radio booth light comes up*

Audio: *"Chaos" music fades out*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: And now... since we're here to educate you, we thought you'd be interested in what is going on in the world today.

Jazzy J: Check this out. I was riding in my brother's car the other day and that hater was listening to 109.3, which as you know is owned by CLEAR CHANNEL...

Jazzy J: ...and I heard this commercial for some kinda "educational institution." You know what I'm talking about Delirious D. It was so...what's the word?

Delirious D: It was so ... so... Ridiculous!

Jazzy J: Yeah ridiculous. So I figured we must play it for y'all.

Delirious D: Since we've already been critiquing popular media, here is an advertisement that will really burst your bubble. Listen to this ad, and then let us know what you think of it.

Audio: National anthem plays as the Assimilation School teacher enters carrying an American flag

Lights: Stage lights come up on the Assimilation School scene. The "teacher" is in the center and there are "students" sitting on the floor all around her. They look eager and enthusiastic.

"Assimilation School" (scene written by script-writing group)

Teacher: Are you a foreigner or just plain ethnic? You don't need to feel like an outsider looking in anymore. Just come on over to the dynamic Assimilation School where for the small fee of your dignity and culture ...

Student: That's all?

Teacher: Yes, we'll teach you how to be accepted in this great nation of ours. Maybe you've already completed the first session where you learned to eat right, speak white and be a "real" American? Well now we offer a follow up session that deals with the problem of your inconvenient accent, your troublesome skin color and all of the other setbacks that come with being "ethnic." We guarantee that after completing our program you will be able to fully enjoy the liberties that come with living the American dream. Here is a story of complete success in less than 90 days:

Arnold Schwarzenegger: Hi. I'm Arnold. When I first got to this country I was just a big bundle of foreign muscle. Now thanks to the Assimilation School, I am the ultimate American "Governator." I can't wait to take the second session and lose this dirty accent.

Students: Sighs of admiration

Teacher: And now we have our next guest. Come on out.

Shakira: Hi, I'm Shakira. applause You know the famous singer from Colombia. I knew that for Americans to enjoy what I was singing about I would have to look just like them. So I contacted the Assimilation School and before I knew it, I was white as ever, and selling records like hotcakes. And notice, no accent.

Students: Applause and cheers.

Teacher: Do you think you have a problem? Do your kids ask you not to pick them up from school because they're embarrassed of your ethnicity?

Students: (with dismay) Mhm!

Teacher: Don't you just want to give up your cultural idiosyncrasies and jump into the "melting pot" of America? Our motto at Assimilation School is... "We will assimilate or die trying." That's the sacrifice we're willing to make. Now, repeat after me. We will assimilate or die trying...

Teacher: chants the motto while getting up and linking arms with students in a line

Audio: "Die Trying" music plays

Lights: Stage lights fade to black and then fade up on the Gunshot dance. This is a large group dance that has music with periodic gunshots in it. The movement is a mixture of modern, jazz, hip-hop and martial arts. It is sharp and intense.

“Die Trying” Dance (choreography by Lindsay Ducos)

Lights: Stage lights fade to black at the end of the dance and the radio booth light comes up

Audio: “Die Trying” music fades out

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: Can you believe that?

Jazzy J: I know. Wasn’t that crazy? Assimilation School! Tryin’ to tell us that our names aren’t beautiful. And the idea of a “melting pot” is madness!

Delirious D: I’d like to think of this country as more of a ... a stir fry.

Jazzy J: Stir fry, yeah. I can feel that. Together, yet unique at the same time.

The characters do an improvisation on the whole stir fry name thing while the transition happens

Lights: Radio booth light fades out and stage lights come up on a classroom scene.

“What’s in a Name?” (written by Rhummanee Hang)

The lights come up on a classroom scene. There are 4 chairs set up in 2 rows of 2 and a “teacher” is standing at the front of the group. Rhummanee is sitting in the back of the “classroom.” She says the first lines of the monologue from her seat facing the audience and then slumps in her chair, as she becomes part of the classroom scene.

Rhummanee: What’s in a name? When I was younger I hated the first day of school. No one could ever get my name right.

The teacher character is taking attendance. She is holding a clipboard and a pen.

Teacher: John?

Student: Here

Teacher: Kate?

Student: Here

Teacher: Jane?

Student: Present

Teacher: Rhu, Rhu, Oh wow, Rhum-manee? Hang? Is Hang here?

Rhummanee: Rhummanee (pronounced RAH mah nee)...It’s Rhummanee Hang (pronounced HONG).

Audio: Traditional Cambodian flute music comes on

Rhummanee stands up, moves center and addresses the audience. The classroom scene exits as she moves center. They take their chairs with them.

Rhummanee: People couldn’t say my name so I created one for myself — Alexandra. Everyone can say that right? I’m Khmer, which means Cambodian in my language. A lot of us don’t have “American” names, so we just pick one. My brother Koeun is known as TJ. My sister Ummra goes by Michelle. I call my sister-in-law Debbie, who was born Truc. My cousin Sonita, Lily. Other cousin Vamnara, David, and Savvy, Irene. Our names are beautiful but I didn’t see that at first. Then in the 5th grade I told my teachers to call me by my real name – Rhummanee.

Then I started taking an interest in my roots.

Cambodian dancers enter upstage of Rhummanee and begin their dance while she finishes her monologue.

Conversations with my mother taught me about the Pol Pot regime, otherwise known as The Killing Fields Era — what tortures my mother went through, enslaved by her own people. I started watching traditional Khmer dances and fell in love with their beauty. And Khmer songs...the lyrics were poetry – the Classics though. The new Karaoke stuff just ain't working for me. I'm a descendant of a once vast empire with great kings and queens. My roots are rich in culture. So now when I say my name I know who I am.

Rhummanee exits the stage when her monologue is over, and the Cambodian dance continues. When it is done, the lights fade to black onstage.

Lights: Stage lights fade to black and radio booth light comes up

Audio: Traditional Cambodian flute music fades out

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Jazzy J: Okay, I got a question for y'all. Have you ever had to fill out one of those forms where they make you check what race you are? And they give you like three to five different boxes to choose from?

Delirious D: Yeah, I know what you're talking about, Jazzy J.

Jazzy J: And they make you choose one box?

Delirious D: Mhm. What's your point?

Jazzy J: Well, I don't have any problem picking one box myself. I go ahead and check African American, but what about all those folks out there that have more than one to check? What do they do?

Delirious D: Hmmm.... That's a really good question. Why don't we open up the lines and see what our listeners have to say about this?

Jazzy J: Let's do it! We want to know. What do you check, and how do you feel? Our telephone lines are open. Come on people. Give us a call at 510-D-E-S-T-I-N-Y.

Delirious D: Let us know what box or boxes you check.

Audio: "Choose a Box" music comes up – this is a beat that has an urgent flavor

Lights: Radio booth light fades out and stage lights come up

The lights come up on the entire company walking around the space each holding a piece of paper and a small pencil. Each time they repeat the "Check a box" round they motion with the pencil as if they are checking a box on the paper.



"Choose a Box" piece in "INsight," 2004
Photo by Schuyler Fishman

“Choose a Box” Dance/Theater Piece (written by the whole company)

Group chants: Check a box, choose a box, check a box, just one box, ... (4 rounds)

The group eventually ends up standing in shapes that look like boxes. They are grouped according to which box they say they check on forms. The movement shows that they are stuck in the boxes. They mime touching the sides of the boxes to show how small they are.

Box #1:

Zeneta, Angelina, Kimisia, Jaime, Danielle: I check African American.

Zeneta: ...because it's the only box I can check.

Angelina: I don't know if I have another race in my family. I never asked.

Kimisia & Jaime: I'm proud of the race I am.

Jaime: ... but sometimes I wonder why there isn't just an African box because we only live in America. America has in no way included us in "their" world. We were placed here.

Box #2:

Eden, Miranda, Lisie, Navarra & Molly: I check Caucasian

Abbey, Giana, Arienna, Rhea, Zoe, Amanda: Or white

Lisie: Sometimes I'll mark off 'other' and then fill in 'Jewish' in the line next to the box.

Zoe: Jewish isn't a skin color or a race.

Molly: It's an ethnicity, a religion, a history that's molded us into a community rich with culture.

Abbey: I'm not just a white girl. I'm not just Jewish. I'm not just blonde. I don't like to be categorized.

Arienna: It's just a box. I don't have any emotions about it.

Giana: I'm pretty much Sicilian and Southern Italian.

Rhea: I'm Russian, Irish, German and Scottish, but sometimes I draw my own box and put "short" next to it.

Miranda: I'm basically Russian and Irish. This whole box thing is just a part of our daily routine.

Eden: I'm a Polish Jew, El Salvadoran, Greek, English, Irish and much more, but I'm frustrated because all of that can't fit into a box.

Navarra: I don't think they want to know my heritage, just the color of my skin.

Box #3:

Rhummanee: I usually choose 'Asian' or 'Asian American' or 'Asian/Pacific Islander'. Sometimes they actually have a Cambodian box. I check that one, of course.

Rose: I check Asian American, but if you fit into more than one box which do you check?

Box #4:

Katiana, Lena, Lindsay, Chandrika: I check other ...

Jamila, Zakiya, Amalia, Kendra, Rochelle: or multiracial.

Lindsay: ...because I'm mixed. I'm used to doing it. I've done it so much that I don't even care anymore.

Lena: There's no box that fits what I really am, which is Ukrainian and Lebanese.

Chandrika: If I had to choose just one race I'd check African American because although I'm half white I am also a person of color.

Jamila: Even though most of the time I look like I identify as black, I am half white and I'm proud of it and it should not change your view of me.

Kendra: I would just check African American 'cause that's totally true, but I feel awkward like I'm not black enough to check that, but to check white would be denying a whole quarter of my heritage.

Zakiya: I feel so annoyed. I'm none of those things that they look for. I'm Caribbean and Swedish.

Katiana: Black, white, Native American. The state needs my survey filled in so they know how many blacks, whites, whatever exist. It's stupid, but I don't complain. I'm multiracial and I'm glad to let you know it.

Box #5:

Amalia: If they have a biracial or multiracial box I'll pick that one. Sometimes I check Caucasian and Latina.

Mariana: I'm Latina. We're all different, but we just get one box. Can we at least get some countries or regions or something? People have totally different cultures if they're from the mountains of Bolivia or the beaches of Cancun.

Breaking out of the boxes:

Lisie: We can't pretend that we're color blind and not check any boxes at all.

Kendra: Because I guess there's some value to all this counting and measuring.

Zeneta: But wouldn't it be cool if we didn't need boxes?

Giana: What if we could take the time to tell the story of who we are, and where we come from?

Rose: What if we could share a taste of what our grandmothers told us as we sat at their feet?

Amalia: What if we could relay the lessons that our grandfathers taught us as we walked alongside them?

Group: Who would we be then?

Group chants: Check a box; choose a box, check a box, just one box, ...

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black as dancers exit saying the chant*

Audio: *"Check a Box" music fades out*

Lights: *The stage lights come back up on 4 girls who are still staring at their papers from the previous piece.*

Audio: *"Light chocolate/dark chocolate" music comes up – this is a melancholy beat with no lyrics*

The following piece is a dance/theater piece where Chandrika and Jamila speak the poem and Lindsay and Kendra do most of the movement to express what the poem is saying. The speakers and the dancers relate to each other at certain points in the piece.

"Light Chocolate/Dark Chocolate" Poem with Movement (poem written by Jamila Jackson)

Chandrika: I have dreamt a broken child's dreams it seems

Jamila: I am tossing and turning my forehead is burning

Chandrika: I have this fever inside of me

Jamila: on one side I have shackles of rust and chains of mistrust

Chandrika: they hold me they mold me to the dry hot parched dust

I have the bloody cry of a fresh whip beating, light chocolate,

Jamila: dark chocolate,

Both: our chocolate flesh

Chandrika: on the other side I have pale rich roots. English queens and kings a past that rings with Irish struggles pale frail bodies weak with the troubles, of gray bleak days, and cold hungry nights

Jamila: I have struggled to breathe in conditions you would not believe

Chandrika: I am beaten down time and time again

Jamila: but my heart keeps beating

Both: keeps bleeding

Jamila: and my people stay strong 'cause our future goes on and on and on

Chandrika: I have memory of a white slave master his eyes full of lust who thinks nothing of raping a girl 14 on that same dry dust

Jamila: but we help her, we bathe her

Chandrika: we feed her, we raise her

Jamila: I have upper-class upbringings in Upper East Side New York

Chandrika: a dinner with 7 courses

Jamila: and more than three forks

Chandrika: I have uptight lives

Jamila: no hugs

Chandrika: cold love

Jamila: I have this nightmare each and every night

Chandrika: I am torn between worlds each one filled with terror and fright

Jamila: one is of music rhythm and color

Chandrika: the other bleached completely white

Jamila: like a double dutch game. I wanna jump in but something holds the real me within

Chandrika: so I hang back and watch for a taste

Jamila: silent tears streaming down my face

Chandrika: I have blood that is mixed twisted and swirled

Jamila: roots spreading throughout the world and... I have a problem...

Both: I have a problem

Chandrika: as I look down on this paper trying to see

Jamila: how all of me is going to fit into a box

Chandrika: — or three

Jamila: but I stop and simply go down the list and check

Chandrika: "other"

Jamila: as if none of this even exists

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and radio booth light comes up*

Audio: *"Light chocolate/dark chocolate" music fades out*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: Wow! That was something.

Jazzy J: Yeah! Thank you for your honesty, people. We know that the conversation about race is important, but it's not always easy. Let's keep talkin' about it with an open mind.

Delirious D: And heart!

Jazzy J: Right.

Delirious D: Today is a special day. We have some local talent here who would like to share her inspirational voice with you.

Jazzy J: This is Caitlin and she's gonna sing for us.

Caitlin: Thank you for having me. This goes out to all the women tuning in to Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y.

Special Radio Guest Song

Jazzy J: That girl could sing!

Delirious D: Mhmmm.

Jazzy J escorts Caitlin out of sound booth while Delirious D says the following

Delirious D: Alright... before we move on to our evening show, I would really like to bring us back to where we began this morning – defining the word INSIGHT.

Jazzy J: Good idea. Let's remember what the dictionary tells us about it.

Delirious D: Why don't you go ahead and remind us, Jazzy J.

Audio: *Page turning sound effect plays*

Jazzy J: Insight... the power or act of seeing into a situation; the act or result of understanding the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively.

Delirious D: Yeah, but you know what; I think the word insight has even more meaning than what the dictionary is telling us. My intuition tells me that insight is also the act of looking inward.

Jazzy J: Yeah! In.... Sight! I get it.

Delirious D: It reminds me of this quote I read a while back. "I shut my eyes in order to see."

Jazzy J: But what if you shut your eyes and you don't like what you see?

Delirious D: Maybe that's the point – to look at ourselves in a real way no matter what we see.

Audio: *"Fight" music comes in – this is a strong beat with no lyrics*

Jazzy J: I think you're right. It's a struggle though. Sometimes it feels like a never-ending battle.

Delirious D: True! You gotta do the battle on the inside in order to come back out and be In Sight, to the world. Then you can make a difference.

Jazzy J: Listeners. How are you hiding from your own strength and your own power to make a positive change in your life and the lives of others? What is your inner battle?

Lights: *Radio booth light blacks out and stage lights come up on martial artists center stage and aerial dancers in the air.*

This scene combines martial arts fight choreography with aerial dance. The aerial dancers are suspended by ropes and are wrapped in stretch fabric. By the end of the dance they emerge from the fabric in a "birthing" motion.

"The Inner Battle" Martial Arts Fight Scene with Aerial Dance

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black at the end of the dance.*

Audio: *"Fight" music fades out*

INTERMISSION

Second Half

Audio: *"Hip-hop medley" music comes in*

Lights: *A variety of different stage lighting looks come up on different segments of the dance*

"In the Mix" Dance Medley (choreography by Paula Dewart)

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and radio booth light comes up*

Audio: *"Hip-hop medley" music fades out*

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Jazzy J: This is Jazzy J, and we're coming at you from out of the mix.

Delirious D: And this is Delirious D. Welcome to the Evening Show — a time to go inward as the sun is setting.

Jazzy J: Before the break we were talking about going inside of ourselves in order to really see who we are, and how that can sometimes feel like an endless battle.

Delirious D: That's right, and every night we open up our telephone lines to the youth in our community and ask important questions. You may have guessed what tonight's question is already. Here it goes...

Jazzy J: Despite your battle, when you go inside and really face yourself, who do you find? And what's the vision you have of your future, despite your battle?

Delirious D: I think it's time for you to do the talking and for us to sit back and listen, so go ahead and give us a call at 510-D-E-S-T-I-N-Y.

Lights: Phone light comes up

The next bunch of callers crowd into the phone light fighting for the phone. D and J improv responses to the callers and slowly get more and more aggravated.

Jazzy J: Wow. We got a bunch of dreamers out there! Let's get to 'em. Caller you're on the air.

Rhummanee: I just wanna say, I don't need to go deep inside to find myself. I'm right here. I don't have no big inner battle either. The only battle I got is with my teachers and my mother. She gets on my last nerve. Anyway, you wanna know what my vision is? I'm visionin' about gettin' me an Escalade with some spinners, and a slappin' sound system.

Group: Heyyyyy!

Mariana: grabbing the phone from Rhummanee My vision is to win me the lottery. Forget the inner battle! I just wanna get paid.

Group: Awww, yeah...

Amalia: grabbing the phone from Mariana I know what I want for my future!

Jazzy J: Please, tell us.

Amalia: I want to get on the TV show "Bachelorette" and find myself a super fine, incredibly rich man to marry!

Arienna: grabbing the phone from Amalia You wanna know what my vision is for the future, right?

Delirious D: That's we want to know.

Arienna: Well, I've always wanted to look just like Pamela Anderson and thanks to advances in plastic surgery, from what I've seen on "I Want A Famous Face" I know that my dream can finally come true.

Group: Ahhhhhhhhh...

Delirious D and Jazzy J: Ewwwwww!

Kendra: grabbing the phone from Arienna I wanna be a super star! I just know I'm the next "American Idol."

Group: Cheer. Improv other lines until interrupted.

Jazzy J: Hold on. Hold on. Hold on! We need to stop the calls for just a moment to collect ourselves.

Lights: Phone light out

Delirious D: Can we just play a song that will inspire the true visionaries inside of us because I am HURTING?

Jazzy J: All right, I've got just the track for that. It's a piece from the Middle East, and even though most people associate it with turmoil, their music is like poetry to my soul.

Audio: "Belly dance" music comes in

Lights: Radio booth light blacks out and stage lights come up on dancers doing a belly dance

"Poetry to My Soul" BELLY DANCE

(choreography by Holly Gibson, Tanja Odzak and Jill Parker of Ultra Gypsy)

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and radio booth light comes up*

Audio: *"Belly dance" music fades out and a phone ring comes in immediately*

Delirious D: Oh I feel so much better, all right callers; once more let's really go down deep inside. Who do you find, and what is the vision for the future?

Audio: *Phone rings*

Delirious D: Caller, you're on.

Lights: *Phone light comes up*

Zeneta: Hello. Am I on the radio?

Delirious D: Yes you are. Who are we talking to?

Zeneta: This is Zeneta.

Jazzy J: Talk to us, Zeneta.

Zeneta: I consider myself to be a true visionary!

Delirious D: Great!

Zeneta: I'm envisioning getting as far out of here as I can.

Delirious D: What do you mean by that?

Zeneta: Well, let me break it down to you like this. I always tell my mother that I didn't come from here — that one night she was abducted by aliens and they planted a seed in her body and then I was born. I mean I'd rather come from aliens than be from here. People are so messed up. Let's get all the happy people and move far far away — like to another planet. I don't want to think about racism and poor education and war, or about this whole inner battle thing. I just want to smoke a joint, drink a Slurpee and watch "Days of our Lives". Come on aliens. Come get me. Get me out of here — beyond the stars and the rainbow and into the clouds. Take me away!

Lights: *Radio booth light goes out and lights come up onstage for the dance that is accompanied by the video backdrop.*

Video: *Zeneta's video plays*

The video starts off as a series of images from television, mostly commercials about body lotions etc. The women in the commercials all look very happy. The images are accompanied by the Bobby McFerrin song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." While this song is playing the dance onstage is robotic and overly happy. Then the music changes into a loud, rock and roll song and the video images change from happy commercials to a combination of commercials and images of war and homelessness. The dance also changes to one that is frantic and frenetic. The dance ends with all of the previously "happy" dancers coming to the front of the stage and "melting" down to the floor with desperate looks on their faces. The final video image is of the atom bomb exploding.

"Don't Worry, Be Happy" Dance (choreography by Zeneta Johnson)

Video: *Zeneta's video goes off*

Lights: *Stage lights fade to black and the phone light and the radio booth light come up. Zeneta goes to the phone light and the radio announcers are sitting in the booth looking flabbergasted*

Zeneta: Yeah, I got visions for the future. I wanna dream about a kinder nation with nice people...all asleep dreaming together...rainbows, lollipops and galaxies far away! Maybe we should all go to sleep for 5 years and dream a different world... I mean what's real really? I don't think I can really handle what's going on. I'm taking my spirit, and whoever else wants to come with me, to our true home in the sky. Somewhere far away. Only thing is, I need a ride. Zeneta sits down and mimes picking up a TV

remote control and “turns on the TV.” But while I’m waiting I might as well watch some American Idol or an episode of South Park. Leans forward as if looking into a TV. Take me away.

Lights: Phone light out

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Delirious D: That’s not a vision. It’s a fantasy. You can’t turn a blind eye to what’s really going on.....

Okay reality TV... is that real? I mean is Simon real? A real pain, if you ask me. ... you want to talk real? Instead of eating worms on “Fear Factor” why not go to Baghdad ...that seems ... pretty scary to me.... you want gross... look at someone whose legs are blown off.... like we’re watching people eat worms and jump out of moving cars while other people are being blown to bits in this stupid war, their livelihoods stolen away by multinational corporations and they never show us what’s really going on. They act like it’s not really happening, like going to war is like having a picnic ... they just give us one woman after the next getting plastic surgery cause she thinks she is really ugly or really fat and we all just sit there and watch it and act like it’s really important and the world is really a mess... I mean get real, America get real.

Jazzy J: Delirious D! has to shake her a bit to get her out of her daze of anger You’re speaking the truth, and it’s important to remember that we’re all in different stages of our battle.

Delirious D: You’re right. *(Looking calmer, but still shaken.)*

Jazzy J: Folks, if you’re still listening, we are coming to you from Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, where we’ve been digging deep inside and bringing out our truest selves. It’s not always easy, but we’re keepin’ it real!

Lights: Radio booth light blacks out and stage lights come up on 4 dancers sitting in a line at the front of the stage in meditation. A group of dancers with black scarves over their heads enter. They do a dance in silence behind the meditating dancers and then all of them exit with the scarves dragging behind them.

“Removing the Veil” Dance (choreography by Lindsay Ducos)

Audio: Aerial dance music comes in

Lights: Stage lights change to reveal a group of aerial dancers who do a dance that is light and care-free.

“INsight” Aerial Dance (choreography by Amelia Rudolph, Artistic Director of Project Bandaloop)

Lights: Stage lights fade to black and then come up on a dance piece by guest artists from the California School for the Deaf. They dance and rap in sign language that is voice interpreted. The rap is called “Listen to the Silence with your Eyes.”

Audio: Aerial dance music fades out and then the Listen to the Silence with your Eyes music comes up.

“Listen to the Silence with Your Eyes” Dance and Rap

(choreography and rap lyrics by California School for the Deaf students – directed by Doralynn Folsé)

Lights: Stage lights fade to black and radio booth light comes up

Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y

Jazzy J: This is Jazzy J

Delirious D: And this is Delirious D

Jazzy J: It's finally time for us to say goodnight here at Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, and we just want to thank you for spending the day with us.

Delirious D: We've really enjoyed taking this journey with you.

Jazzy J: ...the journey to our true selves.

Delirious D: Don't forget to stay TUNED IN, if you know what I mean.

Jazzy J: And, don't forget to share your insight.

Delirious D: Remember that it's not just about what we've learned today, it's about what we're going to do with it tomorrow...

Both: ...and every moment after that.

Lights: *Radio booth light goes out and stage lights come up on the whole company saying the following outros:*

Angelina: My name is Angelina, and I know that there comes a time in your life when you have to take that journey to self-discovery, and I'm doing that right now, and I realize your friends and family will always be there for you in discovering who you are.

Arienna: My name is Arienna and I know that no matter how much easier I might find it to hide in the shadows its okay to shine.

Jennifer: My name is Jennifer. I've been digging deep to find my true self. Now I don't need anybody else to make me happy. I have myself.

Mariana: My name is Mariana and I know who I am and hope that all of you take the time out to know who I am too.

Jaime: My name is Jamie. I'm beginning to understand who I am and trying to make myself happy.

Zeneta: My name is Zeneta and I realize it's up to us to make the world a better place. Vote NO on Bush!

Rhummanee: My name is Rhummanee. Everything that has happened to me so far has made me, me. I love who I am and who I'm becoming.

Jamila: My name is Jamila. I'm not going to let what anyone says or thinks about me bring me down. I'm planning on taking all the opportunities laid out for me, and rise and shine.

Amalia: My name is Amalia, and I learned that people will like me for who I am and not what I am.

Lisie: I'm Lisie. I always know that even though my identity is easily distorted by other people's perception of it, I always know who I am.

Chandrika: My name is Chandrika and I know that no matter what I'm feeling there is always something beautiful inside of me.

Kendra: My name is Kendra and I know that I don't know...and that's okay.

Lindsay: My name is Lindsay and I guess it's better not to have a box then to feel sad and ordinary about the one that you do have, but in the end I still want to be seen.

Dessie: Hi, my name is Dessie and I know that I have enough strength inside of me to handle...anything.

Each company member exits after she has said her piece. When everyone is gone, drummers set up onstage and start to drum as the dancers prepare to do their African dance finale.

Lights: *Stage lights come up on the drummers and then on the dancers as they enter for the finale dance.*

African Dance

(choreography by Naomi Diouf, Artistic Director of Diamano Coura West African Dance Company)

Lights: *When the dance is over, the lights fade to black and then come up after a few seconds on all*

Publicity & Production Materials

Sample Press Release:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2004

For more information:
Sarah Crowell 510-597-1619 X 102

Getting Insight Through The Hearts And Minds Of Our Youth

The journey from invisibility to empowerment — it's a hard, often illusive path for young people in today's society. But for the fourteen fierce females of the acclaimed **Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company**, their personal journeys come to the stage as they grapple with issues of identity, racism, sexism, body image, and other challenges in the company's latest original production *INsight*.

The young performers, ages 13–18, tell their own stories in a high energy production that includes spoken word and poetry, theatre, hip-hop, modern and aerial dance, and martial arts, all woven together with the hilarious radio personalities from Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, the conscious station on a mission to bring the invisible *into sight*.

Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. on both Friday May 7 and Saturday May 8, with a special **Mother's Day Performance at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday May 9, 2004**. The shows are slated for the **McClymond's High School auditorium at 2607 Myrtle Street (26th near Market) in West Oakland**. Tickets are **\$12 for adults and \$6 for youth** under 18. Group rates are available.

The Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company is a program of Oakland's **Destiny Arts Center**, a community organization working to empower youth through arts education and violence prevention, in a collaborative environment that promotes peace.

Company member Jamila Jackson explained part of what drives these talented young women, "Our shows are for all ages, but we think it's really important for adults to see our performances because it helps them understand how deeply we think about issues and how serious we are about making a difference in our society."

"Everyone has a story to tell," explained Sarah Crowell, one of the Company's Co-Artistic Directors. "When young people tell their stories and we really listen to each other, we become a community that sees one another. And as we become more visible to one another and to ourselves, it becomes possible for real transformation to take place."

For more information, tickets or directions, call Destiny Arts Center at (510) 597-1619.

#

*Company directors and youth members available for interviews
Other individual and group photos available digitally*

Sample Radio Announcement:

INsight RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT 2004

The acclaimed Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company presents *INsight*, a high-energy production featuring hip-hop, modern and aerial dance, spoken word and poetry, theatre, and martial arts, all woven together with the humorous radio personalities from Radio D-E-S-T-I-N-Y, the conscious station on a mission.

Performances are on Friday, May 7th and Saturday, May 8th — both nights at 7:30 pm, and a special Mothers' Day 3:00 pm matinee on Sunday, May 9th. Catch the performances at McClymonds High School Auditorium, 2607 Myrtle (at 26th St. near Market) in Oakland. General Admission is \$12 and youth ages 18 and under are \$6. Proceeds benefit Destiny Arts Center. The event is wheelchair accessible and ASL interpreted. For more information, call 510-597-1619 or visit www.destinyarts.org.

Sample Production Schedule:

INsight Production Schedule

NOTE: All of the following rehearsals take place in the theater.

Monday, May 3	9:00 am–4:00 pm 9:00 am 4:30–6:00 pm 6:00–7:00 pm 7:00–9:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting load-in and focus; aerial rigging* • Sets are delivered to the theater • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Aerial dance rehearsal* • Dinner break • Lighting cue-to-cue rehearsal for first half of the show
Tuesday, May 4	9:00 am–4:00 pm 3:00 pm 4:30–5:00 pm 5:00–6:00 pm 6:00–7:00 pm 6:00–9:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting designer puts finishing touches on lighting • Soundboard operator arrives and sets up soundboard, sound system, and headsets (for communication between the light board, soundboard and backstage) • Stage manager arrives and sets up the backstage area • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Lighting cue-to-cue rehearsal for first half of the show • Dinner break • Lighting cue-to-cue rehearsal for first half of the show
Wednesday, May 5	3:00 pm 4:30–5:00 pm 5:00–6:00 pm 6:00–7:00 pm 6:00–9:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting designer arrives and sets up light board • Soundboard operator arrives and sets up soundboard, sound system, and headsets (for communication between the light board, soundboard and backstage) • Stage manager arrives and sets up the backstage area • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Lighting cue-to-cue for second half of the show • Dinner break • Lighting cue-to-cue rehearsal for second half of the show
Thursday, May 6	4:30–6:00 pm 6:00–7:00 pm 6:30–9:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Dinner break • DRESS REHEARSAL
Friday, May 7	10:00 am–12:30 pm 12:30 pm 2:30–4:30 pm 4:30–5:30 pm 5:30–7:00 pm 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Lunch break • DRESS REHEARSAL • Artistic Directors give notes • Dinner break; Company members prepare for the show • Company and Artistic Directors make a good luck circle to get ready for the show • SHOW TIME
Saturday, May 8	3:00–5:30 pm 5:30–7:00 pm 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Dinner break; Company members prepare for the show • Company and Artistic Directors make a good luck circle to get ready for the show • SHOW TIME
Sunday, May 9	12:00–1:30 pm 1:30–2:30 pm 2:30 pm 3:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company warm-up; run select dances and scenes; Artistic Directors give notes • Snacks served; Company members prepare for the show • Company and Artistic make a good luck circle to get ready for the show • SHOW TIME

*The aerial rigging and aerial rehearsals refer to the aerial dance component of the DAYPC program. Ropes are rigged from steel beams in the ceiling of the theater and they extend all the way down to the floor so that the dancers, who are equipped with harnesses, can connect to the ropes and be suspended from them. Amelia Rudolph, Artistic Director of Project Bandaloop, a professional aerial dance troupe based in Oakland, CA, runs the aerial dance program. www.projectbandaloop.org

Evaluation Materials

Audience Survey:

Audience Survey –Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company

*Thank you for taking the time to complete. Your opinion is important to us!
Please fill out and drop in the survey box in the lobby or give to any usher.*

1. Is this your first time attending a DAYPC performance? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, how many have you attended _____
2. How did you hear about the show? ☐ Newspaper ☐ Radio ☐ Poster/Flyer ☐ Mailing ☐ email
☐ Friend ☐ Other _____
3. Do you think ticket prices are: ☐ Expensive ☐ Reasonable ☐ Cheap
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest how would you rate:

Production Values (light, sound, sets, costumes)	1	2	3	4	5
Content	1	2	3	4	5
Skill level of students	1	2	3	4	5
Parking/Access	1	2	3	4	5
Location	1	2	3	4	5
Overall	1	2	3	4	5
5. Would you recommend the show to a friend? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Your Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male
7. Your Age: ☐ 10-18 ☐ 19-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ Other: _____
8. Ethnicity _____
9. Household Size: _____
10. Annual Household Income:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 or under	<input type="checkbox"/> \$16,000–\$30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$31,000–\$50,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$51,000–\$70,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000+
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Student Evaluation Form:

Student Evaluation Form –Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company

Please put an X in the box that best describes your opinion of the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company program:

1. I think the program and activity I participated in was: ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Great
2. I feel I benefited from this program: ☐ Not at all ☐ Some ☐ A lot
3. I thought the people who run the program were: ☐ Not Helpful ☐ Somewhat Helpful ☐ Very Helpful
4. Would you tell a friend or schoolmate to come to this program? ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ Yes

Mark the box to the right that best describes how you feel. (Check or "X")

- | | BETTER | WORSE | THE SAME | DON'T KNOW |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. Because of this program, my success at school (job/training) is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Because of this program, my understanding of who I am and what I can do is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Because of this program, my ability to communicate is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Because of this program, my ability to learn new things is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Because of this program, my ability to connect with adults is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Because of this program, my ability to work with others is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Because of this program, my fitness level and overall health and wellness is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Because of this program, my modern dance skills are: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Because of this program, my hip-hop dance skills are: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Because of this program, my theater skills are: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Because of this program, my script-writing skills are: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Because of this program, my confidence in myself is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Because of this program, my sense of comfort around people who are of a different race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age or ability is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Because of this program, my ability to perform in front of a group of people is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Because of this program, my ability to build new friendships is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Because of this program, my ability to develop relationships with positive adult role models is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Because of this program, my commitment to sticking with something is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Because of this program, my interest in continuing my participation in the performing arts is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Because of this program, my interest in pursuing the performing arts as a career is: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

24. What were the high points of your experience working with the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company?

25. What do you feel you learned during the process of creating and performing the show this year?

26. What were the challenges in your experience working with the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company?

27. Any other comments...

A Word about the California State Performing Arts Standards

We developed this curriculum in the context of the California State Performing Arts Content Standards. These standards offer educators guidelines that can frame their work in the broader field of performing arts education and serve as a valuable evaluative tool. The California standards are comprehensive and we suggest that you refer to them online as you read this guidebook. They can be found at www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp.

Whether you are in a school setting or not, we encourage you to read these standards, and/or the standards that have been created for your state. The standards are an excellent template for the development of a well-rounded dance and theater program that covers the areas of artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, aesthetic valuing, connections, relationships and applications in each subject area. This guidebook brings the standards to life by providing a specific way to implement an integrated dance/theater program that focuses particularly on creative expression, connections, relationships and applications.