

Strong Community Makes The Best Performers

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Step 1: Build Strong Community

- Be mindful of language
 - Gender neutral
 - Get rid of “we all know” - if needed, replace with “some may be familiar with”
 - Intentionally build shared vocabulary
 - Bring everyone in on inside jokes/references
- Take time to learn about each other
 - Name Game
 - Either/Or Questions
 - Opening session question

Step 2: Encourage Play

- Never about perfection (time and place for performance mode)
- Always Try. Don't limit yourself.

Step 3: Success!

- Happy Members!
- Loving, encouraging, accepting community!
- Rehearsal environments that allow for experimentation and development
- Humans getting better at things they love!

Psychological Safety is about feeling comfortable speaking up, admitting mistakes and being part of a culture of learning without fear:

- The belief that the environment is safe for risk-taking
- Continuous learning
- Avoiding preventable failures
- Leaders have high standards while inspiring and enabling the team to reach them

Creating An Ensemble

- **Ownership:** Collaboration and ensemble-driven work help everyone stay responsible for their parts. My directing students and I have noticed that groups of actors invited to share their ideas are more likely to make clear characterization choices, treat others with respect, and memorize their lines responsibly.
- **Confidence:** In a room that values collaboration, everyone is less nervous and more confident because there is a feeling of being “in this together.” People feel supported, and their voices and movements become stronger as a result. They are also more likely to explore big choices in rehearsals and less likely to surprise castmates or you by doing something new and strange on opening night.
- **Inclusion:** Ensemble work invites everyone, no matter how much or little experience they have or how well they know each other, to participate. Sometimes, new actors come up with ideas that make your production better. Generating ideas in a diverse group, in which everyone's perspective is encouraged, makes better theatre. Inviting new people to join your group also helps prevent cliques, creating a welcoming environment in your school.

-Award-winning theatre teacher and director, [Liz Fenstermaker](#)

They believed in making “a community of artists with a common history and common vocabulary.”
-Moment Work, Kaufman and Barbara Pitts McAdams

“Ensemble doesn’t begin with the people, it begins with an objective.”

-Ensemble Theatre Making; A Practical Guide, [Rose Burnett Bonczek](#), [David Storck](#)

“An ensemble that works together and listens to one another both on and off the stage is essential in playbuilding.”

- Central questions/statement of intent
- Devise and Rehearse
- Polish
- Review and Reflect

-Education Projects Officer for Sydney Theatre Company, [Hannah Brown](#)

Bottom Line

- You need to create rehearsals that support and encourage exploration - not perfection.
- It is about supporting the singers we have and creating an environment where they can continually experiment and evolve.
- It is about welcoming everyone and the ways we can make them feel they belong.

Session Questions

- How/when to incorporate this work
 - As much as possible. Work with rehearsal planners. This work can be worked in regularly (after a break, before a business meeting, at the end of warm-ups) and can be 5 minutes or 30 minutes depending on rehearsal needs.
- Who to “pick on”
 - Sometimes as a leader you need to check in with people ahead of time to get volunteers to go first or try new things
- Getting rid of perfection culture is SO good for us. Both as members and leaders!
- It’s all about building trust
- “It’s only one night a week” stopped and explained why that is a joke to so many people in order to make the class a more welcoming and inclusive environment