

G.H.S. Theater Arts

Magic Circle

Handbook
2006-2007

G.H.S. Thespians

Sam Christie, **President**
Christine Greto, **President**
Katelyn Miles, **President**

Zach Lee, **Magic Circle Chair**
Tina Mediate, **Magic Circle Chair**
Johnny Rabe, **Magic Circle Chair**

Melanie Baker
Erik Breakell
Spencer Choi
Kit Fraser
Melissa Fulgieri
Jared Gelbs
Kelly Genovese
Kelsey Grant
Alex Halpern
Olivia Harding
Sarah Joe Wolansky
Teddi Josephson
Meghan Kerwin
David Lazarowitz
Erin Marks

Jack McKean
Meghan Kerwin
David Lazarowitz
Erin Marks
Jack McKean
Eliza McNitt
Melody Rabe
Zach Rebich
Zach Roberts
Emily Shaw
Sarah Stoecker
James Tanner
Christiana Ting
Matt Turzilli
David Wardell

Acting Teachers

Ms. Cirigliano

Mr. Kohn

Scene Auditioning Dates: February 7, 2005

Timed Runs: March 12, 2007

Technical Rehearsals March 24 & 25, 2007 (Sat. and Sun)

Performance dates: March 29-31, 2007

*"Allow me to explain about the theater business...
the natural condition is one of insurmountable
obstacles on the way to imminent disaster"
"What do we do?"
"Nothing. Strangely enough, it all turns out well."
"How?"
"I don't know. It's a mystery....."*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
START OUT QUESTIONS.....	1
WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE.....	2
HOW DO I START?.....	2
THE ROLE OF THE AUTHOR.....	3
A GUIDE TO WRITING FOR THE STAGE.....	4
SCRIPT FORMAT.....	5
A WORD ABOUT COPYRIGHTS.....	5
A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS.....	6
KINDS OF PRESENTATIONS.....	7
AUDITIONING YOUR PIECE.....	7
AN EXPLANATION OF READINESS.....	8
DECIDING ON A PRESENTATION.....	8
ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR.....	9
KINDS OF CONFERENCES.....	9
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED OVER TIME.....	9
DIRECTORS FOR '06-'07.....	10
DIRECTING IN MAGIC CIRCLE.....	10
DRESS REHEARSALS, FINAL REHEARSALS, AND SHOW RUNS.....	12
COMPETITIONS, AWARDS, SUB-FESTIVALS.....	13
QUESTIONS ABOUT G.H.S. THESPIANS.....	13

Quick Index

AUDITIONING YOUR PIECE.....	7
COMPETITIONS, AWARDS, SUB-FESTIVALS.....	13
CONFERENCES.....	9
COPYRIGHTS.....	5
DECIDING ON A PRESENTATION.....	8
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS.....	6
DIRECTING IN MAGIC CIRCLE.....	11
DIRECTORS FOR '06-'07.....	10
DRESS REHEARSALS, FINAL REHEARSALS, AND SHOW RUNS.....	12
GUIDE TO WRITING FOR THE STAGE.....	4
HOW DO I START?.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	1
KINDS OF PRESENTATIONS.....	7
READINESS.....	8
ROLE OF THE AUTHOR.....	3
ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR.....	9
SCRIPT FORMAT.....	5
START OUT QUESTIONS.....	1
THESPIANS.....	14
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED OVER TIME.....	9
WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE.....	2

INTRODUCTION

Magic Circle is presented by G.H.S. Theater Arts and G.H.S. Thespian Troupe. This is its fifteenth year. It will run on March 29-31, 2007 and will consist entirely of student written scenes, monologues, and plays. The production de-emphasizes the “*plastic*” elements of theater and focus on acting and writing. *Magic Circle* is an activity open to anyone interested in acting, directing, or writing, as well as anyone who wants to develop as a theater “*generalist*.” Unlike shows that require auditions, it is *Magic Circle*'s goal to involve as many students as possible. Students can become involved by connecting with others with whom they wish to work; they pursue the development of the project by meeting all applicable deadlines. Students have the opportunity, and responsibility, for creating their own performance opportunities. Also, students in second semester classes may be invited to perform.

START OUT QUESTIONS

The following are some answers to major questions typically raised by newcomers to *Magic Circle*.

How will works be submitted or chosen?

Magic Circle hopes to be inclusive, not exclusive, for all work, authors, and performers. Authors and working groups engage in a development process to ready their work for presentation. The work includes readings and conferences within a framework of specific but widely spaced deadlines. Student leaders/directors evaluate the readiness and completeness of written work during several audition sessions in early February. Groups determine their own readiness to present at a specific level. Only failure to rehearse and complete or develop work by the mid-March presentation deadline would keep a group from participating.

How many pieces can I participate in?

There is no limit. One person could participate in any number of pieces, and even have a different role in each. **The only formal restriction is that a person cannot direct a piece for which they are also author or performer.** We hope people will exercise good judgement and not become involved in too many pieces, recognizing that over-committing can hurt all of the scenes with which an individual is involved. We also hope that everyone who wants to participate will be able to find an opportunity to do so.

What is the rehearsal schedule?

The student director is responsible for maintaining a plan for rehearsal and development as well as participating in the overall rehearsal schedule set by the Magic Circle Chairs and attending scheduled Magic Circle meetings. Groups will be required to participate in certain readings/presentations and rehearsals that are scheduled starting after mid-year exams, and are part of the overall plan for readying everyone for presentation. Everyone must attend the last two weeks of rehearsal, including the technical rehearsals on the weekend before the performances. Groups that miss scheduled rehearsal will be dropped.

How long can a piece be?

There is no predetermined limit. A work may be of any length. We believe that it is easier to focus, sustain, and develop a work successfully if it is of shorter length; long pieces might become unwieldy, and reduce the likelihood of successful completion. *Experience has demonstrated that a piece with a running time over nine minutes exhibits one or more serious problems.*

What shouldn't I write?

Scenes with multiple settings, scenes with complex technical effects, scenes with copied or derivative characters, parodies and SNL like skits, anything which is unnecessarily shocking, offensive, in bad taste, or mean spirited.

Where and how does a piece begin?

There are two major ways that work will get started.

GROUP WORK: A group of students may decide they wish to work together on an idea which they pursue using multiple improvisations, shaping it into a script. The group would consist of a number of performers, a student director, and an author who would supervise scripting at the appropriate stage. Under the guidance of the student director and using suggestions supplied by the author, the group would develop the performance piece.

INDIVIDUAL WORK: An individual may wish to author a script. Eventually the author will want (and need) to have the work read aloud. When doing so, the first step is usually to recruit a student director to guide the further development of the work. The selection should be a person whose judgement is trusted and with whom the author will be eager to work, or they can request a director be assigned to them. All student directors must be members of GHS Thespian Troupe. The next step would involve the recruitment of people to do the actual reading. It may be desirable to recruit people with no commitment beyond the initial reading, although it is generally more desirable to invite people with whom you plan to work "over the long haul." *The choice of readers/performers should be made so that both author and student director are satisfied. Author and director may select performers by any process they think is fair, but an informal reading is recommended. When inviting individuals to participate in the development of a work, everyone should be clear whether the involvement is short-term, conditional, or through to performance. All participants are expected to honor their commitments faithfully and behave ethically.*

What if my group or I encounter difficulty?

Besides suffering in silence you can: consult this handbook for advice or guidance, ask the Magic Circle Chairs or the faculty advisor for help. Your student director (see page 8) will be your chief source of help.

WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE

Choosing to write for theater is possibly one of the most exciting undertakings in which you can be involved. Like all other writing, it represents a concentration and focus of one's own ideas and feelings into an intense form. Like other forms of writing, it results from an ongoing process of invention, experimentation, exploration, and revision. Unlike all other forms of writing, the interaction with others - first, the actors and ultimately the audience - occurs where you can observe it, making the excitement and rewards for your efforts particularly keen. A substantial portion of the development process of theater writing occurs while interacting with the directors and actors using your material. Creative growth is increased enormously in this setting because it is much easier to assess the very life of the material. If you want to give it a try, you're probably ready to.

HOW DO I START?

First, some people simply can. They see a stage image in their head or hear a snatch of dialogue in their "mind's ear." Some people can hear the dialogue, and each line proceeds organically and inevitably out of the one before it. If you're one of the lucky ones, all you have to do is let your "characters" talk to each other.

Even if you have this gift, you will need to shape and define the result. You also need to be aware that, as Harold Pinter says, some characters tell you only so much and no more. You can't

make it about something it doesn't want to be, and just because you can hear your character say something doesn't mean you can explain it (besides, that's what directors, teachers, and literary critics are for).

Even if your scene or play doesn't start so easily, you will find yourself, from time to time, just having the dialogue come to you.

So you're still left with the question, "How do I start?" There are several answers that will work:

- 1). **ADAPT A SHORT STORY** - either transfer a short story to the stage, or adopt its plot elements to form the basis of your own work. As you progress you may find the need to deviate from the original, or that individual characters are starting to demand attention, have unexpected tendencies, or respond to gravities of their own. Be open to the possibilities and alternatives.
- 2). **REINTERPRET A CLASSIC** - a looser version of the above, relying on altering (or even parodying) pre-existing work to create an entirely different work. While Sophocles's version of *Antigone* is our first known version, there were others, and since then several authors have returned to it, or the myth that spawned it, to create their scripts. *The Infernal Machine* is Jean Cocteau's retelling of *Cedipus Tyrannus*. And look at what Tom Stoppard did to *Hamlet* to make it *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.
- 3). **IMITATION OF THE STYLE OF ANOTHER PLAYWRIGHT** - using the work of an already existing playwright as a model for your own. The work of Pinter, Chekhov, Mamet, and Ibsen seem particularly suited for this, as does some of the work of the absurdists; but anything that has a distinct sound or feel for you will work.
- 4). **DEVELOPING SCRIPTS BASED ON IMPROVISATIONAL WORK** - improvisational work can be re-invented, and over time, the better or more durable and successful elements will remain. As long as the basic elements of character improvisation or comedy improvisation are in place (character and setting are musts, with objectives, obstacles, atmosphere, props, snippets of dialogues, broad plot lines, divergent improvisations all providing additional foundations for development). If the piece is intended to run longer than a couple of minutes, it is desirable to develop the characters individually and outside of the setting and dramatic situation prior to bringing the characters together. It often becomes desirable for the script of such work to be written down at some point. This can be done in a variety of ways, including:
 - a. the author recording each attempt, either in writing or by electronic means, making insertions and revisions between attempts;
 - b. the author recording each attempt and creating a script prior to the next meeting;
 - c. each member participating in the improvisational work submits a script of their recollection of the work to the author who selects, connects, and shapes the contributions into a single composite work.

These steps can be combined or repeated over multiple working sessions to further the development of the script. At some point, if the desired end is a scripted performance, the script should become "fixed," which means that its overall shape and elements are decided, though revision is still probable to achieve a finished script. For an improvisational show, "fixing" the script would not be desirable.

THE ROLE OF THE AUTHOR

Authors of scripts have final *authority* on the language of their scenes but in order to exercise that authority in the best possible fashion, they need to incorporate the ideas and responses of others, including audiences. The author's work is not a loose guideline; actors will need to follow it accurately. Whether things go well or poorly, at every stage you will constantly be wanting to return to your script and tinker with it, or rewrite it all together. Usually you will approach this task with lots of input, some of which you will find useful, some of which you will find confusing and even wrong. You'll have your own judgement of what

you saw and heard, plus the ideas and suggestions of many others. Frequently, you'll get feedback you don't even want. It will be your responsibility to sort through, weigh, and sift it all, try to discover the underlying issues that created it, and find solutions and the specific language necessary to move on to the next stage. You will need to be ready for the next step on a deadline, because all of your fellow and co-operating artists are dependant on you. As a result, postponing the inevitable is a leak in the creative process. The only wrong work is no work! For better or worse, the work of revision, like the work of composition, can only be accomplished alone, in the company of your own imagination, judgement, and memory. Only the commitment to that particular fact of life will also allow you to participate in the more enjoyable aspects of group and ensemble work.

The written script is the property of the author, who has final say on its content. Any contributions, general or specific, intentional or accidental, immediately become the property of the author if incorporated into the script.

The author is responsible for immediately making sure that the Magic Circle stage managers have the most current revision of the script; failure to do so may result in elimination from the performance schedule.

A GUIDE TO WRITING FOR THE STAGE

There are no rules or formulas. There are a few basic guidelines (and *caveats*) that might shape your effort:

- Show it, don't tell it;
- Look to have an action or image replace a statement;
- Actors like lines that express their wants or actions;
- Narrative is structure, not content;
- When you find yourself writing from a philosophical idea or a symbol, start to worry; on the other hand, a powerful image is a great source of power;
- Dialogue is not always logical or linear;
- When people talk they don't always say precisely what they mean, nor are they heard exactly as they intend; oftentimes, each party has a very different purpose for engaging in the dialogue; most responses are *incompletely* direct;
- Try to determine if a character is in a scene only to be a "feed" (that is, give them an opportunity to say their lines so the plot can be revealed) for another character in the scene;
- How people say things reveals something about them;
- Most people can't explain...;
- Keep the drama on stage; don't talk about something offstage;
- The main character wants something (though what they say they want, or *seem* to want may not be *it*); the drama is over when they get *it* or recognize they can never get *it*;
- Drama begins when a state of equilibrium is disturbed; it is over when the state of unrest becomes a state of rest (entropy);
- Every single piece of the writing doesn't have to advertise the whole work; a nail doesn't have to be a house; to do its job a nail has to be a nail, and it has to look like and work as a nail;
- In a bad drama, someone says, "Hello Jack. I'm going to come over your house tonight because I need to get the money you borrowed from me." In a good drama they say, "Where the hell were you yesterday?" In particularly bad drama, melodrama, and soap opera, they say, "I need to get back that money I loaned you because of the medical problem I've never gotten over since I got back from Vietnam." The audience has been prepared for this line by an earlier, subtle remark, like, "I have to sit down because I just got back from Vietnam."

- The sub-textual content of your writing may be more important than what is explicitly said; some writers find their early drafts are all subtext and that it has to be “covered up” in subsequent drafts;
- Dialogue about the past or memory is only useful if it has an effect on present action;
- If you can't muster love for your characters – ALL of them – you're unlikely to write them well;
- Characters who know each other well don't bring up information they both know each other would know (high context communication); such characters would wrangle over matters that they only would GIVEN the fact that they know each other;
- All dialogue is a negotiation over an object (people, space, timing, and even word selection can be one of these objects);
- All dialogue is about trying to change the other person;
- In actual conversation, people interrupt themselves and each other (to correct word choice or pursue a new idea that occurred to them), they digress while making their point, and *they use few adjectives*;
- If the dialogue isn't working as a straight ahead fact, try to do it as a conditional structure;
- When you stall, look backward for something you shelved and **re-incorporate** it.

What makes a scene move	What makes a scene slow
Events (discovery, decision, action, revelation, alteration) Mysteries Forwards Reincorporation Images Subtextual tension Theatrical Moments Humor Negotiation	Description Deviation from the now Gossiping Sidetracking Bridging Looping Joining and equalizing Gags

SCRIPT FORMAT

Standard script formats are important so that everyone who has to work with them, especially actors, know what to expect and can get at them quickly, especially when revisions are made at the last minute, etc.

Here are the basics:

- 1). Scripts should be double-spaced typed;
- 2). The character's name should appear CAPITALIZED and centered over the line;
- 3). Stage directions should be in parentheses, names capitalized, entire direction italicized or block indented or both);
- 4). Avoid acting instructions (eg. “lovingly” etc.) unless dialogue would be rendered unclear; good actors usually ignore them;
- 5). Every draft and revision should be dated on every page so that everyone can tell instantly if they are working from the current script;
- 6). For working/developing scripts, pages should be numbered clearly, with a restart from “1” at the start of each new section, where applicable; in longer writing they should also carry the act and scene number, where appropriate (eg. Act 2 - Scene 3 - page 16); this allows for updating a revised section without throwing the numbering off;
- 7). A typed page, prepared as above (12 pt. Times, double-spaced on a Macintosh) runs about a minute in performance.

A WORD ABOUT COPYRIGHTS

The government declares that a copyright is incidental to the act of creation, and is indicated to others by a clear display of copyright ownership on the document (or media). If you wish to register a copyright, the U.S. government does that for a nominal fee. You should consult government publications or websites, or other appropriate sources for a full understanding of copyrights.

Work done as part of the ***Magic Circle*** belongs to its author, though by presenting in Magic Circle, you agree that the G.H.S. Theater Arts Program may use the work to promote its program, as a model or demonstration, or for other classroom and educational use, including presenting the work in future productions (including proper author credit).

While we're on the subject of copyrights: since several script originating ideas involve the utilization of the work of others, please remember that while there is broad latitude for writing of this kind within an educational setting, attempts to take the work beyond the high school or to copyright it may constitute an infringement on an already existing copyright. Each case is unique, and you can't claim you weren't aware it was a problem.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

The purpose of ***Magic Circle*** is to provide the opportunity for students to create and participate in the excitement of original theater. Students have the opportunity to author original scenes for theater and to have them produced; in addition, ***Magic Circle*** offers an outstanding number of acting opportunities and leadership roles.

Participation in the ***Magic Circle*** production is open to all students. Creating the largest number of creative opportunities possible is one of its major goals.

In ***Magic Circle*** the author has enormous responsibility and authority. Besides originating the text that will be used in performance, authors will need to recruit students to act in their piece as well as select someone to serve as a student director for it. A list of "ungrouped" actors, authors, and student directors will be maintained so that they can also make the vital connection to each other which is necessary to advance their work. The inter-reliance of the members of the group, the commitment of its members to its success, and the organized co-operative channeling of its creative resources form the motivational force that will sustain the work over the long period of time involved.

Everyone engaging in the ***Magic Circle*** production will receive as much support and guidance as necessary to lead to the successful completion of the creative work. Several levels of outcomes are possible which is consistent with our view that this creative work is an ongoing process progressing through stages. Authors may choose to recycle their work for next year no matter what outcome they finally select. While an actual performance is what many will desire when they begin the process, **staged readings**, **open readings**, and **closed reading** (see KINDS OF PRESENTATIONS) are very satisfying and, frequently, more beneficial if properly matched to the current stage of the script's development.

Origins for scripts can include an original idea, an adaptation of a short story, material arising out of improvisational work, development from a fragment of dialogue, the combination of characters in a specific atmosphere or setting, the rewriting of an already existing work (so long as it doesn't violate someone else's copyright), the imitation of another playwright, or other sources. Examples of each will be provided at an early meeting.

Groups will develop their work in two major ways. One major way in which the work will proceed is with the supervision of the adult director during which models of the various ways in which the creative contributors can work will be demonstrated. Suggestions for major areas for exploration and development will be made as they are discovered in rehearsal, and goal setting for the individual group will occur. During this time, the group may also engage in guided improvisation to expand the concept surrounding the written material. The entire group, including the author, should be present at all such sessions. The second major way in which a group will work, representing a predominant amount of its time, is on its own. This will take

two forms: most times this will take the form of the author's ongoing revision of the script; at other times, the student director will follow the model established by the adult director and work with actors to explore the material and prepare readings for the author, who may, in turn, use the experience for further revision. The student director may also share observations or suggestions arising from the rehearsal with the author. The author retains final decision on the content of the script. The student director and the adult director must be present in all circumstances that bring the author and the actors into working contact around the script.

Original theater work progresses through various stages of completion and development. The author is the final judge of that level of readiness, and accepts guidance from student and adult directors in forming a decision.

The main *checkpoint* for all scripts is the three script audition sessions in early February. Not all scripts or all groups will proceed at the same pace or encounter the same challenges. Through the ways outlined above, the author's script and the group's work should have evolved since the last session. The checkpoint serves as an opportunity for the group to demonstrate this evolution by showing the ways in which artistic problems have been resolved and by identifying the new challenges ahead. What is important is that at each checkpoint the group demonstrate ways in which their work has evolved. The supposition here is that the demands of the craft of theater and writing for theater are such that most change is positive because of the co-operative circumstances under which it occurs and because of the powerful test applied through live reading and repeated rehearsal.

From late January through mid-March, rehearsals will take place for a small group of scenes each day. In the last 2-3 weeks, all pieces will be called to rehearse on a daily basis. At the end of March, authors will indicate at what level they believe their work should be presented. In the last two weeks of March, the specific times for each level of presentation will be scheduled. Also, at the end of March, all pieces will be presented for timed runs to evaluate their readiness and their proper running time.

KINDS OF PRESENTATIONS

The purpose of *Magic Circle* is to present as many student originated work as possible. As part of our philosophy, the circumstances of presentation must be suited to the readiness and nature of the work. Not all work will be presented in the same way. The following kinds of presentations are available:

- 1). CLOSED READING- a seated formal reading, including only the author, student director, dramaturge, and persons reading the script. A few guests of the author may be included.
- 2). OPEN READING - as above, except that a larger group of individuals are invited, or the general public is invited to listen.
- 3). STAGED READING- a performance with an audience, either invited or general admission, which involves basic blocking and staging, theatrical lighting, and performers using scripts.
- 4). PERFORMANCE - fully staged and memorized presentation with an audience.
- 5). PRIVATE STAGING - a specially arranged private version of either a staged reading or performance.

AUDITIONING YOUR PIECE When we talk about *auditioning a piece*, we mean an informal, staged reading of a work-in-progress where you show you are committed to your piece and have made some preliminary organization in order to have it presented. We do not select or reject pieces at this or any other time. Your presentation demonstrates that your piece has a place in the show.

While we are eager to produce every piece in *Magic Circle*, it is imperative that every piece be at the highest possible state of readiness. Therefore we ask all authors who are serious

about producing their work, **to audition their pieces** for us, so that we can see what state these works are in, discuss suggestions for further development and refinement, and to solidify a rehearsal schedule.

Our experience has shown that most people do not start working in earnest on the pieces that involve them, both as writers and authors, until they have to actually put them up in front of others. The most frequent **Magic Circle** comment we hear after performance (and, often, just before) is that people wished they had started working sooner. This might be owing, in part, to the fact that most people work harder under pressure, but it also reflect that aspect of theater which, by its nature, has a very concrete side founded in minute and complex details moving in real time which makes it both believable and artistic.

Your auditioned piece does not have to be in its final form, but it should be presentable and be complete, at least in a rough fashion. After presenting the piece, you probably revise the piece several times, probably much more than you expected. We want all participants to see **Magic Circle** as a process through which pieces are shown and refined periodically in order to have the best chance of achieving our highest standard of excellence.

In order to audition a piece you must sign up on the **Audition List**, which will be posted in the Theater Arts classroom several weeks before the audition dates.

By this point, you must have selected a director and cast members (remember, you can be an actor in your piece but you may not direct it). Your commitment to any of these people is only as firm or as tentative as you have made it in working with them. Changes in personnel that you feel you need to make or are comfortable making can be made at any time just so long as you notify us. By signing up you are making an artistic commitment to present the piece and to take necessary steps to develop and refine it. You can withdraw a piece at any time if you change your mind, but once withdrawn it is unlikely it can be put back in.

AN EXPLANATION OF READINESS

With a great many contributions and potential contribution, the readiness of scripts to be performed is an important issue. Readiness is the result of several factors: how hard people have been working on the project, the natural talent of the author, the experience level of the author and the other people working on the script, the talent of the actors and director involved in producing the script, and the willingness and ability of the author to see difficulties in the script as well as his ability to absorb input about the problems that exist.

Because **Magic Circle** is a public show, we need to maintain certain standards of quality when (1) people are paying to see the show, and (2) the reputation of the show, the Theater Arts program, and the school are all riding on the continued level of quality work. We also feel that it is important that everyone who writes does get a chance to be produced, because the experience of seeing your work performed in front of a live audience is the best way to learn about writing for theater.

As a result, some works may get designated for showing in a workshop setting. This is an invite only performance, usually scheduled before a regular performance. If you have pieces placed in a workshop performance, we hope you will encourage people to attend. Your willingness to work hard and prepare your piece for that setting is an indication that you are ready and willing to be part of the larger working unit of **Magic Circle**. Also, performing in that setting may give you the insight and opportunity to revise your script to ready it for performance (if invited for the regular 7:30 p.m. shows; such an invited will be limited to a very small number of pieces). People who do not continue to work on their scripts, or show disdain for having it exhibited in that venue, have really missed the meaning of **Magic Circle**, and show the very lack of experience that keeps them from understanding what *readiness for the stage* really means.

DECIDING ON A PRESENTATION

Mr. Kohn will work with each performing group and author to oversee preparation of performance pieces, and to help each group to determine the overall readiness of a piece, the appropriate level for its presentation, and its appropriateness for presentation in a particular venue.

In the unusual event that a group is not satisfied with the outcome of this informal process, its author or student director may request a REVIEW, which would include the *Magic Circle* chair(s), the members of the G.H.S. Thespian Troupe, the members of the group in question, and Mr. Kohn. The members of the group will present their piece and their justification for their level and kind of presentation. Questions, suggestions, discussion, and further opinion may be offered by the Thespians as well. Mr. Kohn will make a determination based on the meeting.

ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR

(Mr. Kohn)

Magic Circle is based on the work and efforts of students working cooperatively. When necessary, the faculty advisor to the project is available for help and consultation. Where necessary, he:

- 1). Provides exercises and models for script development;
- 2). Works individually with student authors (*WRITING CONFERENCE*);
- 3). Supervises and coaches student directors;
- 4). Offers/provides direction to individual scenes (*PERFORMANCE CONFERENCE*);
- 5). Provides "Director's suggestions" to scenes;
- 6). Suggests/supervises improvisational work with groups;
- 7). Attends readings/stagings as scheduled and shares responses and reactions with the student director and author at a *SCRIPT CONFERENCE*;
- 8). Co-ordinates readings/stagings;
- 9). Assists and advises chairman with preparations for production;
- 10). Facilitates the *Magic Circle* development process
- 11). Arranges awards and recognition portions of the program.

KINDS OF CONFERENCES

While a script is under development and on its way to performance, several parties beside the author will of necessity have input into the final product. The first necessary step is to determine whether the problem that needs to be solved is in the text of the script, the staging, or the acting. These are interrelated issues, and sometimes a change in one area can overcome a problem in another. The people collaborating on the work must determine what changes are necessary or will be the most powerful; this is achieved through co-operation and exploration and can only be successful in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Ultimately the group is trying to determine whether there are moments in the real time staging that do not convey meaning or maintain momentum. A determination such as this requires ongoing vigilance and creativity to provide an adequate answer.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED OVER TIME

- Fully memorized pieces show better;
- Most pieces can be cut more;

- Most dances get choreographed too late;
- Almost everybody signs up for the last day of scene auditions;
- Most pieces would benefit from further active staging elements and blocking;
- It isn't a movie, it's THEATER; They are different. Very different.
- The Stage Managers wind up compensating for a lot of people's negligence;
- Monologues longer than a couple of minutes are governed by the law of diminishing returns and get less interesting the longer they go on;
- Specific is always interesting;
- If you piece is composed of multiple scenes you still need to cut it to its dramatic core;
- An incredible number of people decide they should drop their piece during the ten days before the show; they shouldn't
- Monologues that focus on painful or traumatic memories are generally perceived as indulgent unless kept short and include a performance that demonstrates some variety.

DIRECTORS FOR '06-'07

Directors are assigned to scenes are experienced and qualified theater students who are members of G.H.S. Thespian Troupe #243. If you have someone from among that group of students who you would like to have direct your piece, you may make a request to one of the Magic Circle Chairs or to Mr. Kohn. The assignment of directors to pieces is a careful process, and because of the complexity and numbers of scenes, some requests may not be fulfilled. You must have a student director for your piece and you cannot select directors outside of this list.

DIRECTING IN MAGIC CIRCLE

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Directors have to communicate with the authors to make sure they are presenting the author's ideas.
2. Make sure your rehearsals are scheduled and that everyone attends
3. Have your pieces rehearse at least twice per week
4. Get new actors involved
5. Rehearse at times other than your official scheduled rehearsals
6. Make sure everyone has a t-shirt
7. Part of what you do when you direct is to make sure the scene is "paying off;" that there are not places where the audiences feels it is slow or empty. Toward that end, you will work on pacing and action, but one thing you must look for are places you can make little cuts (or maybe ones that are not so little) which will make the piece more effective.

SPECIFIC ADVICE ON TEMPO:

Generally Magic Circle scenes should be crisp in their presentations which keep the audience closely chasing the development of the piece. Pickups ups should be sharp and energetic with pauses only coming when they are earned. Scenes that have "dark moods" should not be allowed to overly slow tempo for more than two or three minutes unless there is a strong stepping up of the stakes. Variety is the key in to engaging the audience in this case. Also, the dark mood will be enhanced by there being some other "colors" in the scene.

SOME WISDOM ON THE ROLE OF IMPROVISING IN THESE REHEARSALS:

There are times during all rehearsals where improvising , whether intended or not, will occur. Often this is fun for the people rehearsing the scene. Sometimes improvised material is helpful, or amusing, or a cover for a mistake, maybe just a much needed break. Improved material may be included in the actual script if the author wants to include or adapt it. In the

last two weeks of rehearsal, improvisation should not be a part of rehearsal runs, since time and continuity are primary during that last rehearsal phase. Ideas may be contributed afterwards, but rehearsals should stick to the script.

THINGS A DIRECTOR SHOULD BE ATTENTIVE TO:

1. Direct for pace
2. Direct for Variety
3. Direct for image
4. Make everything specific.
5. Add details.
6. Show change
7. Don't direct into mood; remember "mood" spelled backwards is "doom."
8. Good directors know when to direct against the mood and play opposite the text.

KINDS OF REHEARSAL YOU MIGHT CONDUCT:

Clarifying the existing script through blocking, staging, and guiding acting choices (DIRECTING).

Developing the actual text of the script with results that alter the text (DRAMATURGY)

DIRECTOR COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt consult and confer regularly with your authors to help each scene to be the best it can be, encouraging them to rewrite, focus, and edit their work, and to make sure that all such rewriting results in new scripts being distributed to actors and to the stage managers.

2. Thou shalt see Time as sacred and that which wastes it, whether it is the undue length of your scenes, anyone's tardiness or absence, or the lack of preparation of yourself and your players, as the greatest enemy.

3. Thou shalt rehearse regularly all scenes at least twice per week as well as making sure your scenes rehearse when scheduled in the Magic Circle rehearsal groups.

4. Thou shalt make sure everyone in the scenes has purchased and is wearing t-shirts.

5. Thou shalt meet regularly on Thursdays, promptly at 2:20 for updates.

6. Thou shalt not let authors talk directly to actors, though they may from time to time observe.

7. Thou shalt not make any technical, sound, or prop demands of crew for the first time during the last week.

8. Thou shalt rarely, if ever, ask for special consideration for rehearsal schedules; thou shalt keep a patient and gracious demeanor about all such time intensive matters, and encourage that demeanor in all others.

9. Thou shalt insure that all scripts are properly memorized.

10. Thou shalt be good natured and upbeat, and remember that everyone wants to drop their piece during the last ten days.

DRESS REHEARSALS, FINAL REHEARSALS, AND SHOW RUNS

CONDUCTING DRESS REHEARSALS

During Dress Rehearsals:

- Everything must run every day.
- You better have checked to make sure the stage managers have most recent copies of your scripts
- You should be adding costumes and props. No one should be doing a scene with elements like these added for the first time in front of an audience. If your scene has a food prop, see me before you integrate it into your scene.
- And, if your scene needs directions or development, please take time other than (and that doesn't interrupt the flow of) the scheduled time and work on it.
- Each Magic Circle scene should run without stopping in five minutes intervals. Stage Managers for each rehearsal station should enforce this. While some pieces are over five minutes running time, several are under and it should average out in the long run. Stage Managers, to help the flow, please announce the "on deck piece" for your station and make sure they are waiting and ready. And if they aren't ready, skip them, and make them wait until the piece you took instead has run.
- Thank your stage managers.

PROCEDURES FOR THE FINAL REHEARSALS AND RUN:

- You cannot watch the show from inside the theater. This is true even if the most wonderful scene in the world is running. There will be video and audio feed in the green room. You should only be in the theater if your scene is running or "on deck", or if you are required for a setup purpose for either scene.
- Keep your scripts organized, somewhere. I suggest your locker or backpack. If you want a file folder you can leave in the file cabinet in rm 612, ask me. If you leave scripts around (green room, hall floor, any ol' place) they may be lost. This could leave you in a disastrous situation as we go to perform. Also, hold onto all scripts through the assemblies which are a week or two later on the day before vacation.
- Under no circumstances should you ask for a copy of the script from the prompt book, even if you lost yours and you are going on stage right now!
- Put all costumes and props after all rehearsals and shows; this is not only to keep the hallway and classrooms neat, but also so you have them; many times people will leave things around and miraculously they will be there when next needed, but there is a strong likelihood you may not be so lucky.
- If the running order puts two scenes you are in next to each other, try to plan performance details (such as costume changes) so that you can accommodate the fast transition. The stage managers cannot stop the show so you can get ready.
- The Saturday Night call is at 5:00 pm so that all ten minute plays can run at that time, since they will not have been rehearsed in several days.
- We will do warm-ups for the Magic Circle performances at 7:00 pm each night. Starting at 6:45 pm you may not run any further scenes. Between the time of the call and that time you may run scenes as you see necessary.
- Thank your stage managers.

HOW WE RUN, HOST, AND DO SCENE TRANSITIONS

1. Scene A is on; when it ends; blackout
2. Blueout to clear scene A; scene B can start setting
3. Host lights come on; next scene ("scene B") is announced.
4. AT THE SAME TIME, set up of scene B is done.

5. When host completes announcement we go to Blueout
6. When opening of Scene B (both setup and performers) is set, we go to blackout
7. Lights up on scene
8. Other notes:
 - Do your set up and clear quietly. It is an unimportant and invisible activity.
 - Every scene clears chairs and tables to back wall.
 - Every scene gets chairs and tables from back wall.
 - Please remove any props from stage on clear.
 - If you have a scene that requires clean up, have it planned in advanced, practice it, and do it right during performance. The scene after you is not expecting the hazards of your mess.

COMPETITIONS, AWARDS, SUB-FESTIVALS

There are several awards as part of the festival, The Lillian Butler Davey Communications Awards, run under the auspices of the English department, offers a category in Drama which is judged as part of Magic Circle. In addition, the Ten Minute play festival gives awards for that portion of the festival. Finally, all authors receive a certificate for having their work performed. All awards are announced in a short ceremony and celebration following the closing performance on Saturday night, which we hope everyone connected with Magic Circle will attend..

Anyone who is part of Magic Circle on Thursday or Friday but not part of the Saturday Night Performance, please attend anyway so we can end this together... also, after the Saturday performance, we will have our brief ceremony to honor all the authors in Magic Circle and announce the winners of the Lillian Butler Davey Awards for Drama. Everyone should attend, since we want to thank the authors for their work.

Anything entered in the Lillian Davey Competition must be performed Friday afternoon (we start at 2:30). Judging is done in that setting, in performance. Authors, it is your responsibility to make sure your scene can go to qualify. The performance order will be chosen at random and posted that day. This is a free performance, and we hope you will encourage friends and family to turn out to see your work.

QUESTIONS ABOUT G.H.S. THESPIANS

Who are the Thespians?

Thespians are members of an international honor society for theater, the International Thespian Society, which is a division of The Educational Theater Association. Thespians earn their membership by meeting a set of requirements. An applicant must have either acted in three separate plays and have held one *position of responsibility* in a non-acting aspect of theater (tech, production, etc.) OR by having held a *position of responsibility* and meeting backstage commitments on two other productions (30 hrs. each) as well as participating in one performing situation. The overall standards for Thespian credit have been roughly consistent since 1987, and can be reviewed on the Theater Arts Website. Thespians provides service to the Theater Arts program, and have a variety of responsibilities. Thespians have no special privileges nor do they receive preferential treatment of any kind. Thespians are providing the organizational energy and commitment and serve as student directors and leaders to produce *Magic Circle*.