

Drama Director

Overview

Drama is an exciting activity that is loved by everyone who participates and everyone who watches. With the ability to include campers of all ages and talent levels, drama can help any child gain confidence that never before existed. To watch a small child overcome their shyness and perform with ease in front of 300-400 campers and staff is an extremely rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Pre-Camp Tasks

Before arriving at camp, review all proposed play options with the Camp Director to ensure musicals are not repeats from recent years in addition to securing any scripts or music that is required. It is also a good idea to touch base with the music director whenever possible to bounce ideas off of them and to give adequate time to begin reviewing music. Remember that you don't need to be bound to any particular script, feel free to adjust plays to your liking.

Keep the plays short, 35-45 minutes is usually enough. Plays that run over that timeline tend to not be as well received. Choose plays that are well known, as the campers will be more enthusiastic to work on them and the audience will be more excited as well. It will also make your job a lot easier if the campers already know the songs ahead of time!

Once you have arrived at camp, and before the kids arrive, take some time to go through the drama closet – check out what costumes and props already exist, do microphone and lighting checks, and tidy up the Rec Hall and stage area.

Programming

The main programming for the Drama department is the 3-4 camper play productions and usually 1 staff production. Two weeks(sometimes closer to 10 days) per play is not a lot of time to pull things together so managing your days efficiently is key, especially with the amount of campers you lose on a daily basis for canoe trips, cookouts and intercamp.

Preparing for the Play

At the start of each session organize a small skit to introduce the drama program and each play before try-outs. Try to plan/make a list at the beginning of each play of the set pieces, props, costumes and other things that you may need. This way will ensure that you have time to acquire the items needed for rehearsal that may not be ready on hand or in the prop closet. Ric von Neumann is extremely valuable in creating movable set pieces or props. If you ask him in advance there is a chance he may be able to construct some of the things you may need.

Auditions

Once try-outs have begun, remember to keep detailed notes on each camper – you may think you'll remember them all but after so many auditions, the kids will blend together. If an eager child isn't ideal for a lead role, consider them for chorus or crew, it's a great way to make

everyone feel special. Make lots of notes. Large chorus groups for the young plays are an ideal way to maximize participation and create excitement for the big night. Make the auditions fun by starting with a quick game to get the campers interested and excited. It may even be helpful to take group photos in order to better remember the campers.

*** On this night, you will be up late – great night to be on Super Duty, request it/ offer trade!

The Early Days of the Play

Scripts should be given to the office as early as possible in order to give enough time to type/edit scripts whenever needed and make an adequate amount of copies. Only print script copies for the lead roles. The chorus and crew don't need the script and will only lose them once they have them. Please try to preserve paper by encouraging campers to keep their scripts on-hand and not lose them during the two week practice period.

Generally, it is best to start with script work (memorization) and songs and then move on to blocking and dancing (if needed). Always leave enough time to spend some one on one time with kids on stage; this can make a huge difference in their confidence level

In The Swing of Things

Once rehearsals are underway decide how to structure each day of the two week block – take a look at trip and programming schedule to have an idea of when kids are gone so surprises don't sneak up on you (these will happen no matter what but better to be prepared whenever possible). If you have a large cast for certain parts, you may want to use some individual choice periods certain weeks when possible to avoid pulling too many kids from other activities throughout the day. Post rehearsal schedules on the tuck shop each morning and remind campers to check it. Read the names at breakfast for the first few days before the kids get into the swing of things or they will forget to look. A weekly rehearsal schedule is ideal but posting one daily is more realistic as they will change daily depending on each day's accomplishments and due to losing campers for other activities, special programs and intercamp sports days.

When possible, for the younger cabins, cast kids in the same cabin in the same scene and work with Andrea to block those campers into Drama with their counsellor! That way their counsellor can be there to help 😊

*** Above the Rec hall door is a wooden slot for a sign, its tradition to post the show name above the door... make sure you take some time to make this sign/ ask for help from the art director! ***

It's Show Time!

Approximately 48-72 hours before the play, give a finalized cast and crew list to the office so programs can be produced.

Make sure a cake and pop request has been made to the kitchen (if you can pre-plan all four plays with the kitchen this is ideal – cupcakes also work great for this!).

Check pop inventory a few days before the play – kids look forward to a post-production party and love their pop!

On the day of the show, try to have two dress rehearsals; this can make a big difference in the final performance and is a good time to get everyone excited for the big night.

Before play night, prepare a small skit to present the morning of the play to introduce the night's program to all of camp.

Additional Notes

Remember to spend some time with the crew as well, they may not be front and center but they can be equally as keen and devoted to various aspects of production such as stage managing, lighting, props, costumes and sound.

Always be thinking of new creative and innovative ideas to keep play night fresh and exciting.

- How you can transform the theatre space?
- How can the campers contribute to set/props/costumes in their spare time or while at Art?
- How can you make this play unique and memorable?

During rehearsals short breaks can be beneficial- make a list of fun and educational drama games for the kids to take part in.

Try to plan special events for each cast like drama cookouts or showing a movie.

Awards

Awards are established for the Drama program, as they are for all camp activities, and can be reviewed or updated upon arrival at camp. You will find out at camp the requirements for Drama Awards.

Staff

Staff can be very helpful throughout play practices; either helping kids run lines, putting together stage blocking, teaching the crew how to work the lights or simply keeping kids quiet when needed. It is advised to have a staff member supervising the crew, especially those in charge of lighting during the actual performance.

At the start of the summer, work with your staff to figure out where their assets lie and how they can best help out to make each play a success. Some may be best working on songs while others may be good doing one on one work with kids. Four plays during a summer can be extremely exhausting and requires a good deal of energy at all times. Regaining your strength and excitement at the end of one play and the start of another can be difficult so rely on your staff and utilize them at all times.

During auditions you can have counsellors help by having their campers fill out each campers name on a sheet and check off whether they are interested in singing/dancing/acting/stage crew or any combination of the four. These sheets will be invaluable when trying to decide on casting, and finding an appropriate part for each camper that will be to their liking. Make your own notes on these sheets after they have been filled out about who may be a good fit for each part. Ask your staff to make notes about each child as well, it can be overwhelming to remember who is who when you meet 100 campers or more in a one or two day period. The counsellors are there to give advice on who they think would be good for each part as well. Use their advice! They will know which kids are eager to participate and which are shy.

The counsellors will also play a big part in reminding those campers with lead roles to rehearse their lines on a regular basis. They should also take part in going over lines with their campers to help prepare them for their rehearsal time.

Safety

While we always encourage campers and staff to have fun at everything they do, safety is paramount. Though Drama is usually a fairly physically safe activity compared for example to our water sports, emotional safety is something you should always keep in mind. Being on stage is often more scary for kids than diving off the tower. It is your job to keep the kids from getting into conflicts and provide a safe environment for them to rehearse. Encourage campers to step out of their comfort zone, and validate those who are encouraging and positive. This will help to create a positive learning and working space for your campers and staff.

Setting rules and guidelines in the rec hall will also keep the campers at your activity safe. Be sure to set boundaries and make sure all staff know and enforce the rules. Some suggested rules could be

- using the stairs instead of jumping on the stage)
- no running backstage
- no touching the equipment without permission

Summary

We know this is a lot of information. We do not expect you to memorize all of it. We do expect you to read it, take notes, and ask questions! We hope you are as excited as we are to have you with us on South Tea.