

Creating Theater: Acting and Improvisation for Older Adults

Program Summary

It's time to laugh, explore creativity, and give expression to rich life in this 8 week Creating Theater Workshop. Meet and connect with other creative older adults while honing your acting, voice, and movement skills. Participants will work to perform written scenes from published plays. Participants will also create original scenes and monologues through collective brainstorming, journal writing, and improvisation.

Lesson Plans

Week 1

Class Objective: Orientation and preparing to act.

Sequential Activities: Introductions
Discussions of class objectives and outcomes. Goal setting exercise.
Introductory acting exercises: learning names, making acting choices, trusting partners, establishing eye contact.
What is acting? Exercise using familiar text – Pledge of Allegiance. Change circumstances surrounding the pledge. Changes of circumstance change how text is expressed.
Journal/exercise assignment

Social Engagement Activities: All of the above exercises are participatory. We work physically in a circle standing or sitting in chairs. Discussion is encouraged after each exercise. What did the exercise feel like? How did things change the second time through? Did emotions become involved? The discussions cultivate self-awareness and being in the moment.

Week 2

Class Objective: Creating "Where" on stage
Exploration of a Contemporary Play
Give Journal prompts/assignment

Sequential Exercises: Physical and vocal warm-up
Acting exercise – participants respond to environment and learn to create environment through physical action.
Participants work in small groups to improvise scenes in a given location.
Scenes are performed.
Group reads out loud a contemporary play. Choices of text will be made to suit the group. Possibilities include: *Doubt, Other Desert Cities, Homebody/Kabul.*

Social Engagement Activities: Participants work in small groups to improvise scenes. The scenes are improvised using movement only – no words. The who, what, and where information must come across to the audience through the group's acting. The exercise is participatory, creative, and collaborative. When scenes are performed, guidelines for feedback are introduced.

Class 3

Class Objective: Creating Sensory Awareness
Exploration of a second Contemporary Play
Journal Assignment

Sequential Activities: Physical and vocal exercises
Explanation of the use of sense memory in acting
Participants work in small groups to improvise scenes using sense memory
Add emotional memory to scenes. Improvise a scene about an object of emotional value.
Journal assignment – Write a monologue about your object of emotional value.
Read 2nd Contemporary Play. Choices include: *God of Carnage, August Osage County.*

Social Engagement Activities: Sense memory/emotional memory exercises prep the participants for memoir/journal writing. The group continues to work in a collaborative fashion, exploring the most effective methods of constructive feedback. The choice of plays to read and explore is based on presenting contemporary plays with contemporary issues for reflection and discussion.

Week 4

Class Objective: Transitioning into text
Reading of Original Monologues from journal assignments
Choose scene and scene partners for preparing a scene from one of the texts read in class.

Sequential Activities: Physical and vocal exercises
Reading of Original Monologues
Acting exercises to introduce acting with intention. Participants improvise scenes given different intentions and circumstances. Audience discusses how intentions come across through physical action.
Participants choose scene partners and a scene to work on from one of the texts explored.

Social Engagement Activities: Participants share original monologues for feedback in front of the group. Constructive feedback techniques continue to be explored as monologues are analyzed based on acting techniques given so far. Does the monologues have a clear who, what, and where? Does the main character have an intention? Through common vocabulary explored, a second draft is assigned.

Week 5

Class Objective: Explore Acting Techniques – Goal, Obstacle, Tactics, Expectations
Analyze chosen scenes finding character goals, obstacles, tactics, expectations
Rehearse scenes

Sequential Activities: Physical and vocal warm-ups
Acting exercises/improvisations – goals, obstacles, tactics, expectations
Working with partners, analyze chosen scenes using techniques listed above.
Read-through and begin to rehearse scenes. Try to get scenes “on their feet.”
Work through scenes in front of the group. Staging help given.

Social Engagement Activities: Participants are asked to work closely with partners to analyze and begin to rehearse their chosen scenes. They are then asked to put their work before the group for

feedback. Feedback should have a collaborative quality that focuses on the vocabulary and techniques established in class to move the scenes forward.

Week 6

Class Objective: Rehearsal

Sequential Activities: Physical and vocal warm-ups
Original monologues are revisited after being reworked at home
Rehearsal time is given for scene work
Feedback time in front of the group is given for scenes and monologues.
Discussion of final sharing of the work in class: what would we like to share?
Will the selections be memorized and performed or staged and read?

Social Engagement Activities: Scene work with partners. Feedback with group.

Week 7

Class Objective: Rehearsal of scenes, monologues, or other improvisational work developed in class that will be shared next week.

Sequential Activities: Physical and vocal warm-ups
Rehearsal and feedback
Run through of final presentation
Evaluation/discussion – Have goals been met? What has been discovered? If program continued, what would you like to explore?

Social Engagement Activities: Collaborative effort to create the culminating event which will include a selection of scene work, original monologues, and possible improvisational work that was developed through the acting exercises. End evaluation/discussion – begin the process of closure.

Week 8

Description of Culminating Event: Participants meet and run through the work to be presented. During the last hour of class, friends and family are invited to watch an informal showing of work. After the collection of work has been presented, the participants are invited to speak about their experiences and articulate the process and techniques explored in class. The audience is invited to ask questions or offer comments. Snacks are served.