***IB Theatre -* The Journal**

*“The journal is not directly assessed or moderated but, since what it contains will reflect the sensibility of*

*individual students, and will contain their responses to the different areas of learning, it should be regarded*

*as a fundamental activity of the course.”*

***What is the Journal?***

Students should keep a journal from the outset of the course. This is the student’s own record, charting development,

challenges and achievements. The aim of the journal is to support and nurture development and reflection, and it is

expected that much of the students’ assessed work will emerge from it. Students should also be encouraged to explore

connections between different areas of learning throughout the course.

 ***Focus and Selection of Material***

The journal should contain an objective review of the work done during the course, and the student’s reflection on

his or her own progress. It should ***focus specifically on learning experiences***, rather than being simply a record of

triumphs or an exhaustive chronicle of everything the student experiences in theatre. Therefore, ***students should***

***select carefully those experiences from the course that illustrate personal growth and understanding of theatre***.

It should indicate development and progress that reveal the extent and direction of the student’s journey

throughout the course. Challenges and obstacles in activities should be included, as well as steps forward.

Students ***should develop a critical relationship with theatre*** and may use the journal to debate theory and practice

in their own work. They may use it as a space for experimentation, where different stylistic approaches to acting

or theatre design could be articulated either in words or visuals. Critical responses to external productions should

also be included, where students can test their own ideas about performance against what contemporary

productions offer.

Students ***should not*** use the journal to engage with their personal emotions, but ***should strive to reflect on and***

***analyse their experiences at various stages of development***. Before adding anything to it, students should ask the

questions “Why am I including this?” and “How is this a reflection of my experience of theatre, my discoveries in

theatre, and the development of my knowledge, understanding and skills?” Students should draw upon the journal

as a useful resource once they start work on their ***Independent Project Portfolio***.

***What should the Journal look like?***

As the journal is the student’s own record, charting development, challenges and achievements, students are free to

determine what form it should take (written, audio and / or visual).

Physically, it could be a bound notebook, a ring binder full of papers, a collection of electrical particles on a computer,

or an audio tape: this list is by no means exhaustive. The form that it takes is completely up to the individual student.

***Suggestions for the Journal:*** *Writing, drawing, diagram, collage, chart, tape recording, blog, commonplacing*

*(the act of selecting important phrases, lines, and / or passages from texts and writing them down; the*

*commonplace book is the notebook in which a reader has collected quotations from works he or she has read.*

*Commonplace books can also include comments and notes from the reader; they are frequently indexed so that the*

*reader can classify important themes and quotations related to particular topics), etc…*

The student should keep in mind, however, that it is expected that much of the students’ assessed work will emerge

from the Journal. Therefore, it must take on a format that will assist the student in meeting this goal. As it is not directly

assessed, how it looks is far less important than how well it aids the student’s learning.

***When is the Journal due and how will it be assessed?***

Every week you will be asked to hand in a recent excerpt from your journal so that your progress and understanding

can be reviewed. Also, approximately once a month you will have the opportunity to conference with a small group of

students. This will serve as an opportunity to check-in on our understanding, to fill in any gaps that may

occur, and to provide insight and spark further discussion. Also, feel free to meet with the instructor at any time to discuss the work in your Journal. Please note that sometimes you will be given specific journal questions to consider based on our work in class and our

readings, however, a great deal of the journal writing should be self-initiated. Again, ***the Journal is meant to be the***

***springboard from which your assessed work emerges!*** If you don’t put the time and effort into making this a

worthwhile resource, you may find it very difficult to find success with the major assessment activities.

 ***Evaluating the Quality of Your Work***

On two occasions during the first semester (at the start of November and at the end of January), you will be asked

to hand in a portfolio of journal work that you select to allow for informal evaluation of your progress in the

course. To assist in your learning, you will be informally evaluated using the following criteria:

***What should I consider in producing my Journal?***

It is expected that you will produce at least 2 to 3 journal entries each week, and sometimes you may have something to

write about following every class.

 ***Suggestion #1***

As you write a journal entry on a topic, you should consider addressing the following in an attempt to clarify your

understanding:

 *What is it?*

 *Why is it important?*

 *How will it be realized? (How can you put this into practice?)*

 ***Suggestion #2***

The following has been taken directly from the Teacher Support Material for the IB Theatre course to give you

some idea of the level of reflection that will be expected of you in the journal process as the course progresses.

***How does the process of assessing a performance and recording the critical responses in the journal,***

***support the development of knowledge and skills in the theatre course?***

The culturally ritualistic experience of being part of an audience is, for a student of theatre, a vital

opportunity for observing the elements of production and performance in action; interpreting the holistic

effects of directorial choices and experiencing the responsibility of being a causal element in a dramatic

event. All three of these aspects contribute to a fuller understanding of theatre, its function in society and,

thus, the core elements of the theatre course. Throughout the two years of study, theatre students will

regularly explore theatre as part of an audience and record their observations and reflections in the journal.

These responses will offer essential insights into processes, effects and consequences of their own work in

theatre.

The journal recordings may consider the experience of being part of an audience from three distinct but

interconnected viewpoints. These are as follows:

**Viewpoint 1: Observational / Analytic**

From this perspective the student views the performance as an informed and interested spectator. Based on

the skills and knowledge acquired in “Theatre in the making”, “Theatre in performance” and “Theatre in the

world”, the student will make critical commentary on the workings and technical proficiency of individual

production elements and of the performance as a whole. Recordings of this aspect of performance assessment

contribute directly to the ***Theatre Performance and Production Presentation*** as well as supporting the

***Practical Performance Proposal*** and ***Independent Project Portfolio*** assessment components. These critical

responses may also help guide the student towards their choice of independent project. Some areas for

consideration from this critical perspective of the performance can be found in the following table and

questions.

***Observational / Analytic Considerations***

• Genre / style of production

• Growth of plot

• Use of space (actor / spectator relationships)

• Use of individual design elements

• Depth and style of character representation (acting)

***Sample questions:*** *How did that scene change take place? What caused the lighting effect on stage left?*

*What practical problems were caused by those costume choices? How did so many characters get on*

*stage so quickly? How were levels created and used? What colours in costume and set design worked*

*and what colours were lost?*

**Viewpoint 2: Interpretational / Holistic**

The standpoint assumed by the student for these critical responses is that of artistic director. In this instance,

the journal may contain not only observations of productions the student has seen, but also comments on the

artistic effect of choices made. Attention should also be paid to the effect of the interrelationships between

the elements of production and performance and whether this achieved a holistic impression. These reflections should be informed by the students’ experiences and work on the course. Critiques of performance from this standpoint could play a part in the drafting of the ***Practical Performance Proposal*** and could be included in the ***Theatre Performance and Production*** and ***Independent Project Portfolio*** tools of assessment. This aspect of critical response both feeds and draws on an understanding of the “director’s

concept” and the complex process of artistic creativity as suggested in the following diagram:

***The Way to the Director’s Concept***

The director draws inspiration from the “chemical reaction” between the stimulus for performance and their

personal creativity and imagination. This inspiration is then transformed into a plan of action and realized

through directorial performance choices.

Some areas for consideration from this critical viewpoint of the performance can be found in the following

table and sample questions.

***Interpretational / Holistic Considerations***

• Interaction and interdependence of production elements

• Displays of harmony / discord

• Visual / verbal / aural use of symbols and metaphors

• “Time”, its interpretation and depiction through performance

• Creation / use of dramatic tension through pacing, timing, rhythm

• Use of line / shape / form / texture / colour - as practical / aesthetic / symbolic choices

• Acting and blocking choices from a practical / aesthetic / symbolic perspective

***Sample questions:*** *Could I perceive the themes of the piece in the design elements? Could I identify the*

*director’s interpretation and their practical / aesthetic / symbolic choices in the performance /*

*production elements? Did I find them effective? How? Why? How did the director “mark the moment”*

*when necessary? How did the different performance / production elements fuse to create effect? What*

*directorial choices did I not understand? What could have been the reasons for those choices? How did*

*the different layers of directorial choice produce a coherent, significant whole?*

**Viewpoint 3: Reflective / Philosophic**

The third standpoint from which the student should record critical commentary of the performance in the

journal is concerned with the impacts and resonances of the performance upon the individual and the

audience in general.

In the former situation, the student will record perceptions of the relationship between “self in theatre” and

“theatre in self” and consider how aspects of this performance relate and link to areas of personal theatre

growth in the course.

Journal reflections in the latter case will focus on how the performance provoked the intellectual, emotional

and subconscious faculties of the audience. These deliberations would be based upon observation of audience

responses to the performance, reflection and in-class group discussion.

Further research into the production, play, period, style, personnel and past productions recorded in the

journal can also nurture the skills necessary to develop a research investigation and contribute to the theatre

performance and production and independent project portfolio assessment components. The process of

observation, research, reflection and recording developed during this viewpoint of performance assessment

also resonates strongly with the theory of knowledge approach to learning.

Some aspects for consideration from this standpoint of performance critique can be found in the following

table and sample questions.

***Reflective / Philosophical Considerations***

• Individual versus universal themes and ideas

• Audience interaction and response

• Striking / engaging and uninteresting / disengaging moments

• Construction of “altered” state of reality

• Comparisons to other theatre traditions / cultures / practices experienced by the student

• Performance / production provocations

***Sample questions:*** *How, in this performance, did the drama of everyday life become theatre? What did I*

*feel / think / experience while being part of this performance? Is there an attempted pedagogy in this*

*piece of theatre? A lesson? A moral? How were my / our perspectives challenged by this performance?*

*How was meaning conveyed to the audience? What links were there in this performance to other theatre*

*practices / cultures / traditions I have experienced? What other aspects of work I have covered in class*

*did I recognize in this performance?*

 ***Suggestion #3***

It is also advisable that students keep an Actor's Handbook as part of their Journal, in which they record

valuable experiences throughout the course. This may include particular exercises and workshops, and

especially those which are associated with the development of a production. It may also be used to record

notes for seminar orals, include illustrations of historical theatre traditions, staging conventions and relevant

information, provide notes from which critical reviews are developed and technical drawings, plots,

illustrations and cue sheets. Research on character development, playwrights, world theatre traditions and

theorists for example would also be included in the handbook, with appropriate annotation to indicate how

that has inspired and/or influenced the student's development as an actor and theatre artisan.