

WTP Dramaturgy

Intensive:

Session 11

THE ZEN MASTER

“(The) play is a riddle. A riddle that's in the head of the author ...Something that intrigues the author but doesn't have a shape yet. He doesn't even have a question ... (I)n the beginning all the author has is that there is something to be discovered ... the writing of the play is the discovery. By the time the author gets halfway through, she knows what the question is. Then, answering the question begins to shape the play.”

Maria Irene Fornes
Theater Magazine

The Playwright/Dramaturg Relationship

Discovery, birth, risk



WHAT is the recipe for a successful and positive experience?

Connection

Curiosity

Flexibility

Radical collaboration

Investigation

Trust: listening, sharing, honesty, conscious language, acknowledgement, accountability

Connection: built through trust and listening, through sharing souls and hearts, through vulnerability and struggle

Radical Collaboration: empathy, flexibility, willingness to learn, willingness to share, explore leadership circles, explore power sharing

Curiosity: Dramaturgs are inherently curious. Use it all the time to think in a circular way, rather than a black and white, me vs them kind of way.

Investigation: openness, curiosity, out-of-box thinking

My Dramaturgical Process - love, excitement and curiosity

Initial considerations:

- Do you like the play - if you don't, don't take the job if you don't have to
- Do you know the playwright - how do you know them, how do they know you
- What is your initial relationship like - what level is the trust

If you like the play:

- Make the connection - how to meet playwrights-
Go out, show up, submit and apply - and share your voice
- Make the schedule - how many meetings to schedule-
What are the needs, are there deadlines, how does the writer work
- Meet with the playwright - where, when, for how long -
stay organized, avoid cancelling and rescheduling, maintain deadlines, prioritize the work

Read the play:

- Read it once - immediately write all your innate responses
- Read again - look for journey, conflict, places to expand
- Get more detailed - what notes should you begin with?
- Dive deeper - focus in on places the playwright wants to really dig in

Meet with the playwright

Listen, be curious, be in love with the play

tell the playwright how much you love the play and how honored you are to work with them and support them and their work.

Questions to have at the ready:

- Why did you write this play?
- What does it mean to you?
- What are you struggling with right now in the play?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your process?
- How can I support your process?
- How do you best receive feedback? written, verbal, direct, filtered, etc.
- What are your goals for revision?
- What other readings, dramaturgs and oppprtunities have you had with this play?

First meeting:

Focus on general feedback, overall feedback, avoid specific notes unless they are based in the major issues the playwright is concerned about.

If you think something is an issue the playwright doesn't, hold your note till you have a better sense of what they think of that moment.

Meet with the playwright to hang out - I usually go to a play, get dinner, take a walk, meet for coffee, etc. - this is about trust building and personal learning

Determine when it is best to give feedback:

phase of process- are we at the beginning, middle or end of the process. How is your relationship with the playwright taking shape?

emotional state of playwright - are they handling the revision process well? are they responding to your notes? Are they overwhelmed? do they need a break?

technical experience - How experienced is the playwright? Do they have a theatre or playwriting background? I believe experience is a great teacher so degrees aren't required for a background. What will you be offering them as resources if they need further technical/background support?

journey for the play - how finished is the play? how complete is it? Has it been fully birthed, fully formed or is it still in gestation? Is there only Act I and no Act II?

deadlines - does there need to be an expedited process - is there a premiere or a public reading coming up? Is there a commission deadline coming up? If so, make a schedule and stick to it.

Build the room

Build a planet

what does it consist of

- A generous leader who leads by following and power shares
- A team of supportive, active listening artists dedicated to the mission of supporting the work and the playwright
- The team should represent important, relevant and valuable perspectives that the playwright needs to fully birth their characters and play - race, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, home of origin, cultural views and much more.
 - every artist brings their life experience to the table and that is of a great value

The Personal Work

"I love theatre, I hate drama".

This work is both inner and outer work.

Art is personal.

All artists, especially those who collaborate with other humans, like theatre artists - need some extra support to manage their emotions in the creative space with other artists.

I highly encourage artists to take care of themselves through many different (ancient) healing tools.

I do a lot of this work myself and I find it very helpful to me in the collaborative space.

Take JEDI courses: (get orgs you work with to pay)

-Anti-Racist Theatre with Nicole Brewer; Anti-bias training with Maya Lawrence

Get body work: (trade with friends who do this work)

-zero balancing, reiki, chiropractic, acupuncture, massage etc

Do talk therapy: (if you can afford it)

-Equity workshops are an extension of this work

Move your body:

-Exercise, yoga, hiking, walking, dancing

Meditation: 5-20 minutes every day

-find a space in your home and sit comfortably

Insight Timer is a free app with many of these meditation resources

And Finally:

Rest, rejuvenate, restore

Give yourself space and time to get your creative juices flowing and balance/ground yourself.

Set boundaries and make sure to honor them.

Resources:

- Anti Racist Resources
- Conscious Language
- Written Note examples
- Visit to A Tiny Planet - Fuchs
- WTP Prompt Reference