Live Interactive Video Education

LIVE

Arts Education Programming

Grade

8

Strand

Drama

Curriculum

www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca

Grade 8: Creating a Character with Anita Smith

Aim: This 1 ½ -hour session will give students the opportunity to participate in a live broadcast with professional theatre artist Anita Smith.

Students will learn how professional actors develop believable and humanized characters for performance.

To help students understand the importance of empathy, compassion, self-awareness and preparation with regards to performance.

Creative/Productive: Students will create characters based on the theme of Building the Saskatchewan Dream.

Critical/Responsive: Students will have the opportunity to ask theatre artist, Anita Smith, questions about her practice as a professional actor, writer, director, and producer.

Cultural/Historical: Students will learn about the differences between performing in more traditional mediums (e.g., theatre) versus more modern mediums (e.g., film, television, new media).

About the Artist

A graduate of the University of Regina's Theatre Performance program, many consider Anita to be one of Saskatchewan's most dynamic performing artists. She has been seen on both stage and screen in plays such as: *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan), and *Waiting for the Parade* (The Lili Marlene Cooperative) and on the television shows *Corner Gas* (CTV), and *Rabbit Fall* (APTN). Anita has also performed in a number of films including most recently the Danish short film *Waiting for Phil* and the David Lynch film, *Surveillance*, which was screened at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. In addition to acting, Anita has directed and written a number of children's theatre plays, and created, wrote, produced and starred in the web series *Rise 'n Shine Og*. Raised in a rural community in southwest Saskatchewan, Anita has always strived to provide access to the arts to secluded areas of the province, and in 2001 she was awarded the YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award for her work in bringing theatre to rural Saskatchewan's young people.

Program Structure (1 hour 30 min.)

PART 1: 45min. LIVE broadcast introductory session with a professional artist:

- Video Short (5 min) - **The Saskatchewan Legislative Building 100th Anniversary: Artist-in-Residence Program Legacy Project**
- Artist Biography (5 min) - Anita will show video, still shots, and mementoes from past performances.
- Demonstration and Exploration (7 min) - Anita will walk the students through centering exercises.
- Activity - Two Truths and One Lie (8 min) - Students will go into small groups of 2-3 and will use the Question Sheets provided to conduct the exercise.
- Presentation and Discussion (10 min) - Objectives: Anita will talk about "objectives" and why it is crucial to creating a character. Anita will show video clips and still shot examples of characters that had clear objectives.
- Demonstration 2 (10 min) - Anita will partner with one of the students to perform the Contentless Scene which will be used in the workshop segment of the broadcast.

PART 2: 45 min. Teacher-guided hands-on workshop activities with online support from artist through Adobe Connect. Teachers and students can ask questions and consult artist via Adobe Connect during this segment at http://connect.edonline.sk.ca/liveartsed/.

Resources are available for use in the classroom at the LIVE Arts Education website www.liveartsaskatchewan.com

Students may need additional classroom time beyond the 45 minutes to complete the approximately 1-hour hands-on project.

Curriculum Outcomes

Creative/Productive

CP8.5 Investigate how theatrical elements (e.g., story, character, design, space) are combined to achieve dramatic purpose.

Critical/Responsive

CR8.1 Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions.

Cultural/Historical

CH8.1 Research and share insights about arts expressions that incorporate social commentary.

Refer to renewed Arts Education curriculum documents for further information on outcomes and assessment.

Materials and Resources

Large space in which to work (i.e. library, gymnasium, or classroom with the desks pushed off to the side), pencils, copies of the materials listed below under "Preparation."

Also, please note that this artist's experience shows it is beneficial for students to work without shoes in this process, therefore, if school policies and conditions allow, it is suggested that students go bare foot.

Teacher Guide for Hands-on Workshop Segment of the Broadcast

Preparation

Prior to the class beginning the Teacher will need to print off copies www.liveartsaskatchewan.com of the following:

- Question Sheet (1 for each student)
- Moving Your Physical Centre Suggestion Sheet (1)
- Moving Your Vocal Centre Suggestion Sheet (1)
- Dialogue Suggestion Sheet (1)
- Walk Description (1)
- Contentless Scene (1 for each student)

Step One (10 min): Reflecting on Your Character

Using the Question Sheets (developed by the artist) that were previously distributed for the "Two Truths and One Lie" segment, each student will work independently to answer as many questions as possible about his or her character.

Step Two (5 min): Moving Your Physical Centre

Moving around the room at various speeds and in various manners as guided by the teacher (suggestions will be provided by the Artist) the students will determine the physical centre for their characters.

Step Three (5 min): Moving Your Vocal Centre

While continuing to move about the space, students will move their vocal centres around their bodies as guided by the Teacher (suggestions will be provided by the Artist) by using lines of dialogue as directed by the Teacher (guide will be provided by the Artist). The goal is for students to determine the vocal centre of their characters.

Teacher Guide for Hands-on Workshop, Continued

Step Four (5 min): Taking Your Character for a Walk

Now that the students have determined their physical and vocal centres for their characters, the Teacher will guide them on a "walk through the park". The students won't actually leave the room, but the Teacher will describe the circumstances of the imaginary walk and different imaginary items and people that the characters encounter along the way (Walk Description will be provided by the Artist). The students should remain in character throughout the walk. Their goal is to become more familiar with their characters and re-act accordingly.

Step Five (10 min): Partnering Up

In groups of 2, the students will give a brief overview of their characters to their partner, before rehearsing the 'Contentless' Scene (template provided by the Artist). The dialogue is quite simple. The goal is not to memorize the content, but to try to behave and re-act in the scene as their characters would. The students should have time to practice the scene 2 - 3 times. Between each rehearsal, students should discuss whether or not they are sticking with their characters, and determine if there is anything they could do differently to deepen their characterization.

Step Six (10 min): Presentation and Reflection

The students will take turns presenting their 'Contentless' Scenes to the class. After each presentation, the teacher should ask the students, who are currently audience members, what they noticed about the two characters that were presented (e.g., how were the characters different than the students in real life? Where was the character's vocal centre? What do you think was driving that character to behave the way that she or he did?). The presenting students can choose to say how close the other students were to being right, however, the content of a character can be kept private if that is what the student would prefer.