

DEVELOPMENTAL DRAMA

(A 12-part series on the basics of Developmental Drama to help students, teachers, and institutions)

3 – The Strength of Stage Management

Every tree has firm roots that help it grow and survive. In the world of developmental drama, those roots are the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes, especially the stage managers. The stage manager is the oil that keeps the wheels of the production moving, while being invisible to others. In Developmental Drama, the stage manager is both the trouble shooter and the one who does everything possible to ensure there is ‘no trouble’ during the journey of creative growth.

Stage Management

Stage management, in simple terms, is the practice of organizing and coordinating all elements of a play, from its conception with the director to rehearsals, final performance, and closure of all logistics. A stage manager is not just someone who keeps things ticking; they are the silent superheroes who ensure every department, process, and performance goes according to an evolving plan. The strength of the Stage Manager lies in giving a logical dimension to the creative process.

In Developmental Drama, where the focus is on growth, learning, and collaboration rather than just a polished final act, stage management becomes crucial. Here, the stage manager supports both the technical and emotional needs of the team. Adapting to constant changes is the rule of the game for the stage manager. With calm composition and managerial skills, the stage manager ensures that group composition, parent inquiries, institutional needs, script adaptations, directorial goals, improvisation, technical requirements, budgeting, costumes, lighting, properties, and sets – everything is aligned for collective success.



The Class Teacher as Stage Manager understands the nonverbal cues students give when they work together

Class Teacher as the Stage Manager

Stage management is not only about calling out cues during rehearsal and performance, but it's also about understanding the cues students give when they work together. It is art management at its best—a demanding discipline that requires foresight, and, most importantly, a calm mind. Making tough decisions in an emotionally charged environment becomes a natural process for the stage manager. The best stage managers always have a backup plan ready in case the original plan goes awry. In our school, the role of the stage manager often falls to our dedicated class teachers for class productions. From deciding on rehearsal schedules to finalizing venue, costumes, and ensuring every student is in the right place, teachers take on these responsibilities during the student showcase. 28 class teachers take up

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this responsibility every year to provide their students a collective success

When asked about their takeaways, one of our eminent stage managers, Foram Ma'am, said, *"Stage management is not what you see on stage, it is something beyond that. All instructions, from the beginning to the end, have to be planned and executed perfectly."*

Their effort ensures that every department, from the choir to the dance team, from lighting to props, is functioning in sync, with no team left behind.



The Student Stage Manager is guided towards five roles and responsibilities that they must fulfil.

Student Stage Manager – Roles and Responsibilities

The strength of the student stage manager in Developmental Drama is in their ability to handle five key roles and responsibilities.

1. Keep a copy of the updated script with markings of music, light cues, properties, set, and costume - neatly bound with all stage positions as given by the directorial team.
2. Ensuring a viable rehearsal schedule is made, agreed upon, and shared with all concerned for execution.
3. Work with teachers and students to ensure there are no communication gaps.
4. Have technical and backstage meetings to ensure that production needs are understood and fulfilled.
5. Be the point of communication regarding the Developmental Drama program from its conception to its conclusion, with timely updates to enable teamwork.

When the actor takes the limelight and the applause is heard loudly, the stage manager slips away, satisfied with a job well done. On the other hand, if there is any challenge or production crisis, the stage manager steps up to take full responsibility. This role of the stage manager is not for the weak-hearted – it is for those who are ready to take responsibilities and ensure everything is done for the benefit of all!

The future leaders of classrooms, schools, and society can be groomed through the emotional, creative, and intellectual strength of the stage manager in Developmental Drama.

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(St. Paul's School, Rajkot, in collaboration with Vaz Dramatics Academy, Bangalore, as part of Class IX – ICSE – Mass-Media Communication syllabus.)