Rorys Directing steps – Preparing to Direct a Play

1. **Read the play at least 4 times not as a director, just as someone who is enjoying randomly reading a play or film. Read it for the general story, try not to read it as the director from the get go, i.e what can I do it this scene, or what music will play at the start of this scene, read it objectively.**
2. **Then read it as a Director. Break the play down into beats, name the beats, break the play into sub beats, find all the potential gear changes in the play. The more gear changes and or beat changes you can find the more dynamic the production, the more you can give your actors to play with. They too as actors should also break it down into beats and sub beats, they can even go a step further and break each line down into actions. If they miss a potential gear change in rehersals or action you can alert them to it.**
3. **Send out a tight reahersal schedule, give your actors a date when all lines must be down. Set the parameters of what is expected of your actors i.e come on time and focus during all rehersals. Learn about their schedules try and create a schedule that everyone is comfortable with and can execute. Ask Actors to create a history for their characters, this can be kick started by completing the character questions sheet, whilst in character.**
4. **Have a large A4 scrap book put script in on one side and keep blank the other side for notes and potential stage blocking or character movements around the set. Make sure the script is broken down into beats and sub beats, understand the objective of each character for each beat, what are the trying to get from the other characters in this beat. Start to visulise the set and blocking prior to rehersals. The actors will want to know what they have to play with on set in terms of furniture, potential props and where do you invisage them entering and exiting the stage when rehersals start.**
5. **Try and come up with a strong vision for the show prior to rehersals, discuss the idea, the sets, the music, potential costumes etc with the producer, set designers, costume designers, lighting and the technical crew, see what is actually possible for the budget you have to play with, can your vision be realised? Get creative and think outside the box, collaborate and hear the ideas of the other people/ creatives involved, they are experts in their field and can help your show really sing.**
6. **Once rehersals start be perseptive and understand each actor as an individual, no two actors are the same. Start to understand what is the best way to communicate with them individually. What direction you gave them was most effective, why? How did you communicate that particular direction? What approach had the most impact or worked for them the best. Some actors are more sensitive, some need more reassurance than others, some want to hear it plain and simple. Some you would have worked with before and you almost have a shorthand with them, you can say very little and they immediately understand what you are after. Maybe you need to discuss an idea after rehersals with certain Actors. Maybe they are being too hard on themselves and need reassurance after rehersals away from the other Actors? Maybe they can’t get their lines down and something is happening in their personal life, chat with them in private and attempt to work it out. You need to be a bit of a curious and sensitive psychologist as a director. Being a perceptive and caring person is a great asset to have as a director. You need to earn the trust of your actors, and if they feel you believe in them, understand them and care, this will help no end.**
7. **Once rehersals are up and running, hold vocal warm ups prior to rehersals. Learn about the power of voice and projection. As Director occasionally sit in the back row in rehersals and make sure all actors can be heard clearly from the very back row. If you are rehersing and other actor are there waiting for their turn on stage get them to pair off and practice their scenes together in another part of the theatre, when rehersing everyone should be practicing and running lines whether you’re with the director or not. Encourage the other crew, lighting designers etc to watch the rehersals if they are free, it will give the actors a small audience and allow the crew to fully understand the feeling, rhythems and style of the show.**