

# Philosophy of Directing

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Everything you are can be woven into the work you do as a theatre director. Directing is inextricably tied to who you are as a person and your own idiosyncratic view of the world. I believe that directing should call upon the sum total of everything you have to offer: Your understanding of plays and the craft of theatre; your empathy and insight into other human beings; your kindness; your integrity; your sense of wonder; your love.

When someone trusts you to direct a play, they are asking you to help build an entire world. It is an extraordinary challenge and an act of faith. You are being placed in a position that matters to a great many people. A position of responsibility.

I view the role of a director as some unique combination of the following professions:

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## *Craftsperson*

Like a cabinetmaker, shoemaker or shipwright. There can be great artistry, innovation and skill in this painstaking work, but it essentially effectively building something practical. The thing you are making has already been designed (written, usually), and the craftsperson must make it work—and make it beautiful as well.

## *Coach*

As in baseball, basketball, or any other sport. The coach provides the guiding strategy both in practice/rehearsal and performance. Coaches use a wide range of behaviors, both good and bad, to try to get the best possible performance from their team. A good coach offers strategy, clarity, information, inspiration, and passion, and helps each team member play to the best of her or his capacity.

## *Conductor*

As in the leader of an orchestra or band. She or he is the coordinating artist, the artistic leader, the final authority and arbiter. She or he is, every day, setting the tone, rhythm, energy, tempo and timbre of a piece. The conductor is the leader, the clearly defined person in front, and the chief interpreter among a team of interpreters. While this may be an old-fashioned idea, it can work very well. There are other ways, of course, but none I know that tend to be as effective and efficient of time and resources.

## *Counselor*

As in a guidance counselor, career counselor or therapist. They are there to fully engage with a client in a sympathetic and understanding manner. They bring a broad range of knowledge and understanding to both specific and immediate issues, as well as the larger issues the client may be confronting. They tend to offer a broader perspective, specialized knowledge, and a sympathetic ear. Sometimes they even diagnose and solve real problems.

## *Contractor*

The invaluable people who actually build buildings, bridges, etc. They make everything happen. They work with subcontractors (plumbers, electricians, masons, carpenters), and they coordinate all the efforts in terms of priority, budget, schedule, etc. They need to be able to read and fully understand and interpret the plans, drawings and blueprints of the architects—as well as question and improve those plans. Then they need to build the best possible building from the designs.

*Exactly what combination, and exactly how much of each, is dependent on the person and the nature of the project. There is definitely artistry involved in directing, but mostly I think of it as more of a craft. Directing is the practice of using a set of skills to make something work—in this case, a play. It just so happens the product is an artistic one.*

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# The Five C's of a Directors Qualities

I view the following to be the essential qualities necessary for a director:

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## *Creativity*

Everything must be questioned and reinvented constantly, based on who you are and what you uniquely have to bring to the process. One cannot count solely on old solutions and other people's formulas. Creativity is the key that will allow each moment, each character, and each scene to find its own appropriate energy, style and balance, unique to this production with this unique group of collaborators.

## *Courage*

It all will not get you very far by itself. But without it, even if you have all the other qualities, you will also not get very far. One must find the courage not only to begin, but preserve to the end, against all sorts of unknowns and adversity. You must have the courage to fail in front of others, and create an environment where others feel safe enough to fail (and succeed) as well.

## *Collaboration*

So that each and every participant is able to bring his or her best work to the creation of the whole. Theatre is a fully collaborative art form, and every single collaborative process is different. Learning to collaborate well is essential for the practice of theatre as it is taught at University and practiced in today's regional theatre.

## *Confidence*

To allow your ego to find the appropriate place in the pantheon of the production. You must become sure enough of yourself that you can fully benefit from the talents and perspective of all of those around you. You must do your homework and have the solid foundation of knowledge that allows your confidence to be real and to be grounded upon a reality that others can see and trust. You must, in the final assessment, have both the courage and confidence to trust yourself.

## *Communication*

So that collaboration, creativity and every other aspect of the process can be effectively articulated and shared among all participants. Clear, efficient and effective communication for a director includes a huge variety of skills, including the ability to work equally effectively with actors, audiences, designers (and sound, set, lighting and costume designers all speak very different artistic and technical languages), dramaturgs, technicians, stage managers, producers, and more.