

Direction Notes: Movement and Images

From "Directing in Musical Theatre: An Essential Guide" by Joe Deer

Blocking is a sequence of images and movement that carries emotional impact and implies emotional relationships between characters in special moments of the story. We almost never simply arrange bodies in space without a clear connection and storytelling.

Movement: The traffic of all the characters throughout the playing space. It is designed through pattern of activity, qualities of physical behavior, and degree of organization.

Images: The stage pictures you create using composition of bodies with the scenic architecture, the shapes of the costumes, and the arrangement of light and color within the playing space.

Facets of movement and images-

- *Functional*- Effective blocking serves to safely, logically (within the world of your story) and effectively get character from point A to point B, well telling the story clearly.
- *Thematic*- Compositions and movement that reveal ideas, essential relationships, conflicts and human truths at the center of your conception of the story.
- *Aesthetic*- Effective blocking is intentionally crafted to beautifully reveal a nuanced understanding and expression of the evolving human relationships.

Principles of effective blocking-

The director's primary obligation is to know what story she is telling and to be sure everything she does helps tell it according to her aesthetic vision.

- Tell your audience where to look at all times.
- Share the experience with your audience.
- Define characters clearly and efficiently.
- Express essential relationships.
- Define "beauty" in terms of this production.
- Vary the scope of your staging.
- Vary locations from one event to another.
- Scale your staging.
- Be intentional as you repeat movement and images.
- Tell your audience when to change focus.
 - Passagio- taking focus with a movement or gesture before you speak and passing focus when their moment is done.

Compositional Qualities-

Though often separated by the proscenium arch, orchestra pit or elevated stage, staging occurs in the same three dimensional space that the audience occupies.

- **Emphasis-** where the eye is drawn in a stage image or movement pattern. We often consider primary and secondary focus.
- **Weight-** groupings of bodies collectively carry visual weight and help emphasize or balance other groups or individuals.
- **Depth-** Composition in living space is not a two dimensional pictorial expression. It involves bodies at all degrees of closeness to or distance from the audience.
- **Levels-** Actors can stand on the stage floor, tables or chairs, platforms, be suspended, ect.
- **Physical Relationships and gestures-** we attach emotional meaning to physical proximity and gesture.
- **Balance-** Dynamic staging composition involves modulating all the previous elements in ways that build and sustain tensions in relationships and each other.