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Can Anybody Hear Me?

By Jacquelin Melilli

For primary/secondary students

Written by Jacquelin Melilli. Illustrated by Melinda Brezmen.

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About this Series



This **Lights, Camera, Action!** series is designed as an informative starting point for creating professional dramatic arts performances through either film, stage play, radio show or puppet show. Each book contains an award winning script that is highly entertaining as well as topical. Comprehensive ideas and recommendations have been given throughout the series for making the most of these plays.

There are four titles in this series:

- ◆ **Little Red Meets the Dingo**
- ◆ **Can Anybody Hear Me?**
- ◆ **Foreigners in Oztralia**
- ◆ **Goldisocks and the Three Koalas**

Each book in the series contains a full script that can be performed as either a screen play, stage play, radio or puppet show. Because many of the production roles are similar for each of the performances above, this information has been kept in one section and should be followed for all forms of the play. Presenting the material in this manner, allows you to decide what options to go with for your production (e.g. film, stage, radio or puppet show).

Production Roles

Many of the behind the scenes roles are similar in nature (e.g. sound effects, costume design) and can be applied to any type of performance. Specific roles (e.g. **film editor** for a film, **stage manager** for a stage play) have been given special mention where relevant.

Making a Film

This book contains very useful introductory notes on film production roles, storyboarding, camera shots, shooting sequences, editing a film and much more. You will note that the shooting sequences varies from the actual script so it is recommended that you read the full script (see Page 35) before being able to understand the suggested shooting script (see Page 23).

Stage Play

Extensive guidelines for staging a play are included as well as a section on stage directions for organising the entrance and exits of cast members.

Puppet Show and Radio Show Play

Information is provided specific to producing the plays in this manner, however, the book mainly concentrates on requirements for film and stage play production. Much of this stage and film information can be applied to radio and puppet shows. There is much less work involved in putting on a radio play as there is no need for costumes or set design, lights, film etc. However, a thorough understanding of the script is an important part of preparation. This can be achieved by completing the student activity sheets on Pages 25-31. A radio play relies heavily on a director's interpretation of the script and the actors' interpretation of the characters.

A puppet show is similar to a stage production with the exception that it's the puppets who are seen by the audience rather than the actors, so directions for putting on a stage production should be followed.

Activity Pages

To allow students a better understanding of characterisation, photocopyable activity pages have been included. Ideally, these sheets should be used early on, once an initial read-through of the full script has occurred.



Teachers' Notes



A Successful Production Begins with a Good Script

Half the battle of creating a production is the time-consuming task of writing a good script. An effective script should be clear and easy for the audience to follow and preferably have a solid message that will stay in the mind of the audience. Dialogue should flow and be natural and the characters should be interesting and memorable. Finally, it needs to be entertaining with bursts of energy to keep the pace exciting. This makes *choosing* a good script a much easier task than writing one.

Can Anybody Hear Me? is a play that touches on how children deal with their feelings, working through problems, parental role modeling, different personalities and how each person copes with problems differently.



Why is drama so beneficial?

Drama Drama is a great way to learn about human behaviour and, if delved into, can be quite complex with aspects of psychology being used to understand the characters portrayed. Understanding human behaviour is empowering as it allows students to better understand themselves and their peers, which in itself builds self-confidence. Drama also helps tremendously with communicating self-expression in a non-threatening way by enabling the actors to self examine their own feelings when portraying a character. Most actors are attracted to roles that they can relate to in one way or another.

Not everyone likes to perform in front of an audience, yet most enjoy watching performances and having participated in the production in some way can be very rewarding. Ideally, encourage engaging the talents of the whole class to work behind the scenes in one way or another.



Using **Can Anybody Hear Me?** in the classroom:

Readers Using the stage play as part of a reading program is a fun way to get students to enjoy reading. A read through would involve each student reading a section of the script, whether it is one line of dialogue or the action description. The script can then be read around the class and then continued from the first student down to the last again. In using this method, no set student plays a particular character role. Once students get through the first round, you'll find some interesting voices will emerge! After the read through, work through the accompanying student activities: **Analysing Characters/Character Profiles** sheets and the **Story Comprehension Activity Sheets** provided on Pages 26-31.

Radio Play Students can work in groups to create the most interesting voices for the characters and record them on CD to be presented as a radio play. This is a very good exercise in helping children express themselves via use of their voice. Those students, who do not like acting in any form, will still be needed to create the sound effects and music required for background noise.

Theatre Production Involves the whole class in the process of putting on a production and the importance of working as a team for successful results. This book contains detailed sections on what will be required.





Puppet Show

Students can work in groups with some being voice actors and others in charge of music, lights and sound effects. Puppets can be made by the students or dolls and stuffed animals can be turned into puppets and dressed accordingly.

Film Production

For the more ambitious, and for those who have access to a digital film camera and editing software, an introduction into filmmaking has been included. Making a film is a lot more involved and time consuming and therefore the project can be done over the year or over three terms. Choosing a short script of around 30 minutes is sufficient. It is strongly recommended that you **shoot** the scenes in a blocked period of two or three days to keep with continuity. If you shoot it over weeks or months you will get all sorts of problems such as the actor's hair growing, a pimple that wasn't previously there and so on – the list is endless. If all the preparation has been done thoroughly prior to shooting, there should not be any problems with shooting the script in two days and allowing a third day for any re-shoots or scenes the director is not completely happy about.

Then again, you may not want to take the film project too seriously, but simply use it as a means of experimenting with the camera, angles, using different directors and comparing how differently each one would shoot a scene. You may want to break students up into groups and allocate them a scene each for filming. Use different actors and allow everyone to take on different roles in the crew – after all, it is only an introduction to filmmaking. We all need to start somewhere. Playing around first allows you to get a good feel for it.

For more information on putting on a stage play, radio play, puppet show or making a film visit: www.jacquelinmelilli.com

Curriculum Links

New South Wales – Creative Arts

Strands: Drama: DRAS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, DRAS 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

South Australia – Arts

Strands:

Arts Practice - 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3; Arts Analysis and Response – 2.4
Arts in Contexts – 2.6

Victoria – The Arts

Strand: Performing Arts

Sub-strand: Arts practice – ideas, skills, techniques and processes: 2.1, 3.1

Sub-strand: Responding to the arts – criticism, aesthetics and contexts – 2.2, 3.2

Queensland – The Arts

Strand: Drama; Level 2 Core: DR 2.1, DR 2.2, DR 2.3; Discretionary: DDR 2.4
Level 3 Core: DR 3.1, DR 3.2, DR 3.3

Western Australia – The Arts

Strand: Communicating arts ideas; CAI 2, CAI 3

Strand: Using arts skills, techniques, technologies and processes; STP 2, STP 3

Strand: Responding, reflecting on and evaluating the arts; RRE 2, RRE 3, RRE 4

NT, ACT and Tas. (National Curriculum) – The Arts

Strand: Drama

Creating, Making and Presenting: Band B; Past and Present Contexts: Band B

Production Roles



Producer

The producer is responsible for raising funds, publicity, overseeing the budget and is overall in charge of the production. All decisions must be reported back to the producer. It is recommended that the teacher take this role with possibly an assistant producer to “learn the ropes”, especially where budgeting is concerned. A producer will need to draw up a budget with all the foreseen expenses listed and then calculate the cost of each ticket to recoup expenses and make a profit that may be set aside for the next production.

Director

Creates the vision of how the play/film is to be performed. Works as head of the production team to approve cast, costumes, set construction, lighting, sound, movement on stage/set, appearance of the stage/set, etc.

Assistant Director

(Film) Carries out tasks set out by the director, such as organising casting calls and rehearsals; making sure the actors are ready to go on set; making sure everything runs smoothly and sorting out problems as they arise.

Stage Manager

(Theatre) Is the first to arrive at the theatre prior to a performance and the last to leave the theatre after a performance. A stage manager oversees all activities on the stage and is responsible for any problems that may arise during a performance. Prior to a performance, the stage manager thoroughly checks all scenery, props, costumes, lighting and sound to make sure everything is ready and in place for the performance. The stage manager arranges for the actors to be at the theatre at least an hour prior to performance and advises actors of “half hour curtain call”, “fifteen minute curtain call”, “five minute curtain call” and finally advises the actors to take their places prior to calling “Curtain!”. The stage manager must also communicate with the lighting and sound directors and the ushers to make sure everything is ready prior to calling “curtain”.

Costume Designer

Chooses team members to help design costumes and make the necessary arrangements to obtain them. This may mean compiling a note to send home to parents with detailed information/drawings of what exactly is needed. Second hand clothing shops are an excellent place to find costumes, wigs and even props! You may also be able to get the co-operation of the Textiles and Design class to make costumes for the production.

Make-Up, Hair Artists

Chooses team to help with putting on make-up, styling hair and wigs. A basic make-up kit should consist of: foundation (to suit character), powder, make-up pencils for brow and lips, brushes and sponges, make-up remover and hair spray. Most actors will already have these items and may prefer to bring their own make-up bag to rehearsals.

Set Designer

Chooses team to design the set as per the director’s instructions. This may be as simple as choosing class members who are talented artists to paint backdrops, on either butcher’s paper or suitable fabric to be hung as a background. Props can also be made from cardboard boxes, papier mâché, etc.





Prop Assistant/s

Need to organise props and familiarise themselves with the script to make sure props are in place when required during the performance. Must have replacement props organised in case any prop gets damaged or lost. Must be at every rehearsal.

Prompter/s

Must be very familiar with the script and actions of actors. Responsible for prompting actors quietly from backstage if they forget their lines. Must be at every rehearsal.

Lighting Director

Works with the director to create appropriate lighting and mood during the performance. The lighting director must be familiar with the script and be present at every rehearsal.

Sound Director

Works with the director to create appropriate sound effects or music to accompany production. Special care must be taken to come in exactly on cue with music or sound effects. Must be very familiar with scripts and be at every rehearsal.

Fundraiser/s

Funds may need to be raised depending on the scale of the production. A budget will need to be worked out and discussed between the director and producer. Playing Theatre Sports is a fun way to raise funds. For more information visit: www.jacquelinmelilli.com





Filming: Suggestion Notes

If you have decided to film the production of **Can Anybody Hear Me?** the following notes can be used as a guide to filming techniques and suggestions for how best to approach the project. Keeping in mind that filming will usually take place in the school grounds, improvising will be needed to suit each situation. The indoor scenes can be set up on stage as they would in a theatre production. Outdoor scenes can be filmed in a suitable part of the school grounds.

Filming is done out of sequence to the story, with all the indoor scenes filmed separately to the outdoor scenes. A **Suggested Shooting Script** has been provided on Page 23.

Choice of Shots

An important part of telling your story depends on the careful choice of shots. Because of the limits of the camera's frame, an action shot would require enough distance for the viewers to see what is happening as a whole. For an emotional scene, a closer shot is preferred so the viewers can see the actor's facial expressions. Camera shots and their abbreviations are described as follows:

Wide Shot (WS): Most opening scenes start with a wide shot such as a view of a particular landscape, building or crowd of people.

Very Long Shot (VLS): Where the actor and his surroundings can be seen from a distance.

Long Shot (LS): A full body shot of the actor from head to feet, fitting into the frame.

Medium Long Shot (MLS): A shot of the actor's head to thighs, fitting into the frame.

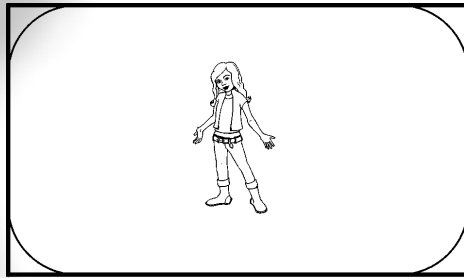
Mid Shot (MS): A shot of the actor's head to waist, fitting into the frame.

Medium Close-Up (MCU): A shot of the actor's head to chest, fitting into the frame.

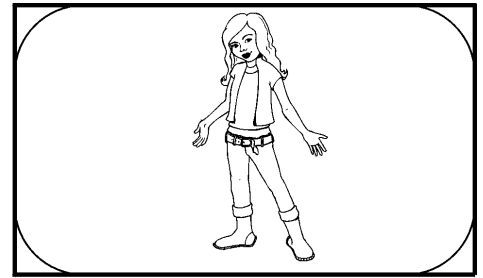
Close-Up (CU): A portrait shot of the actor, fitting into the frame.

Big Close-Up (BCU): A close-up of the actor's face fitting into the frame.

Extreme Close-Up (ECU): A shot of an object or particular part of an actor such as his/her mouth or eye, filling up the frame.



Very Long Shot (VLS)



Long Shot (LS)



Medium Long Shot (MLS)



Mid Shot (MS)



Medium Close-up (MCU)



Close-up (CU)



Big Close-up (BCU)



Extreme Close-up (ECU)



ILLUSTRATION TAKEN FROM "PRODUCING VIDEOS: A COMPLETE GUIDE BY MARTHA MOLLISON ILLUSTRATOR: ANTHEA STEAD

Using the Camera



For beginners, hand holding a camera is not recommended due to the difficulty of keeping the shot steady and preventing jerky movements when the operator attempts to walk to keep the action in shot. When setting up the camera it is very important to take into consideration whether the angle is one where the camera is looking down at the actors – making them seem smaller and inferior – or whether the camera is looking up at the actors – which may give the audience a sense of being inferior. Care should be taken by the camera operator who may have set the camera up to accommodate for his/her height rather than the effect required for the scene.

The Tripod

The tripod is a very useful piece of equipment. It allows for height adjustment of the camera and avoids the jerky movements of hand holding the camera. It also allows for panning and tilting (see below). It is particularly important to become very familiar with how to set up the tripod so that the legs are secure and tightened before placing the camera onto it.

Moves Using Tripod

Panning

Panning describes moving the camera horizontally from right to left or left to right, to either show the distance between a person and object, or to follow an action. It is important to check that the tripod legs have been set up evenly or the panning may turn out slightly slanted.

Tilting

Tilting occurs when moving the camera vertically, both up and down, to emphasise height or depth. For example, starting at a person's feet then slowly tilting the camera upwards towards the head; emphasising the height of a building by tilting the camera from bottom to top; or filming an action such as jumping from a parachute.

Zooming

Cameras have a zoom function that allows you to change the shot size from a long shot to a mid shot without having to physically move the camera and tripod. This action makes it easy to prepare for your next shot or you can zoom into an object or person whilst the camera is rolling. Zooming, however, can create problems later when editing, so be aware of the effect zooming might have during the filming process.

Using a Dolly

The director may want the camera moved closer to the object or actor as opposed to zooming closer or further. If this is the case, a dolly is used which is a wheeled cart to which a tripod can be attached so that the camera can be moved smoothly backwards or forwards, or from left to right to change the angle of the shot. Improvise by using a trolley such as one that is used to carry an overhead projector. Make sure the wheels are well-oiled! Another idea is the use of a wheelchair. This however would mean that the camera operator would have to hand hold the camera which may work well for any walking shots where a bit of shakiness is not as noticeable.

Microphones

The camera's microphone (or "mike" as it is usually referred to) picks up all sounds from all directions. This is ok if you're filming indoors and you have some control over sound, but if you are filming outdoors the microphone will pick up **all** the ambient sounds such as birds, traffic in the distance, a dog barking and even the slightest bit of wind. Although it's good to have these ambient sounds to give your film more realism, it can be a problem if the sounds ruin the mood and the actor's voices cannot be heard.

Shotgun/gun mikes

These are called "gun" mikes because they are long and thin. They pick up sound from the front and can be used from a considerable distance. Gun mikes can be mounted on booms and then held high above the source of the sound so as not to be seen in the frame when filming.



Can Anybody Hear Me?

An Australian Fairytale

Cast

Sarah around ten years old
Sarah's Father a busy working Dad
Sarah's Mother a.very organised Super Mum
Teddy Bear sensitive and affectionate
Rag Doll homely, kindhearted and caring
Barbie vain, superficial, a party girl
Ballerina disciplined, dedicated, determined
Mechanical Man logical and unemotional
Clown a joker, very artistic

Setting the Scene

Amidst her mother and father arguing, Sarah wants to be heard. Instead she gets sent to her room. One magical night, Sarah's toys come to life to help her sort out some of life's difficult problems. Teddy fixes everything with cuddles. Barbie thinks looking beautiful is best. Rag Doll bakes delicious treats in times of stress. Ballerina focuses on a strict regime of very little food and plenty of dancing to fulfill her dreams. Clown laughs his way through everything and Mechanical Man tries to solve everyone's problems – or is he the cause of them?

Script

Scene One



Setting: Front stage curtain is closed. Sarah's mother and father are arguing. They stand far enough down stage centre to allow Sarah room to move behind them. The argument is becoming quite heated. Both are completely unaware of how loud they are shouting.

Sarah is standing downstage right with her hands covering her ears.

Mother: I can't believe you took money out of our bank account without talking to me about it first.

Father: Well believe it. It's my account too.

Mother: You know what the agreement was. How could you not tell me?

Father: The reason I didn't tell you was because I knew you'd kick up a stink and I was right!

Mother: How dare you! You don't think buying YOURSELF a \$2000 car stereo gives me the right to kick up a stink?

As her mother and father become louder, Sarah approaches her father and tugs at his sleeve. Both mother and father, completely engrossed in their argument, ignore Sarah.

Father: Not now, Sarah. (*Turning back to Mother*) Look, I work hard and I don't see why I should have to ask you for permission every time I want to buy something.