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"There Are No Small Intelligences": Recognizing Multiple Intelligences in Theatre Education

Gretchen K. Ferris
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEATRE

“THERE ARE NO SMALL INTELLIGENCES”: RECOGNIZING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES IN THEATRE EDUCATION

By
GRETCHEK K. FERRIS

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defended on April 4, 2003.

Dr. Laura Edmonson
Professor Directing Thesis

Dr. Carrie Sandahl
Committee Member

Dr. Emil Joseph Karioth
Committee Member

The Office of Graduate Studies has approved the above named committee
members.
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ABSTRACT

Theatre educators have an obligation to the theatre arts, but more importantly, they have an obligation to educate their students. All too often, school arts programs are deemed less important than the imperative subjects of reading and mathematics. In actuality, these arts programs add alternative dimensions to student education, cultivating the personality behind the brain. Because of the importance of the arts, theatre educators must pride themselves on their ability to educate, keeping up with educational research as well as studies in theatre and creative dramatics. By tapping educational resources, theatre educators can ensure effective and productive classrooms.

One educational theory, Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, is particularly well-suited to the theatre classroom. The theory states that, although student intelligence is typically determined based on verbal and mathematical skills, students may possess various categories of intelligence, which often remain unmeasured. These intelligences include: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal and, most recently, natural. Because of the various elements encompassed in theatre arts, students with any combination of these intelligences could benefit from the study of theatre.

In this paper, I begin by examining theatre education today, based on Gardner’s framework. By looking at specific practitioners and their methodologies, I determine the trend of theatre education and how it can best utilize the multiple intelligences. From this point, I divide theatre education into two age ranges: elementary and secondary. I propose suggestions for incorporating Gardner’s theory in both instances, citing applicable exercises and games. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus specifically on linguistic, musical,
spatial and intrapersonal intelligences. This thesis is constructed to present the benefits of using Gardner’s Theory in the theatre classroom and to guide teachers through its implementation.
As the United States faces economic problems across the board, budget cuts are made in every area, including education. Typically, the first program to be cut in any school system is the arts program. When students are struggling with the basic skills of reading and mathematics, who can afford the time or money to spend on something as unnecessary as theatre arts? Unfortunately, in many cases school systems overlook the numerous benefits that a theatre arts program can provide for students, especially those very students struggling for basic skills. The school board’s reasoning may be justified, however, when observing a theatre arts classroom in which the teacher engages the students in the same activities day after day, reading scripts from their seats and watching videos. The benefits of such a class may be hard to see, and the teacher obviously does not see his or her potential to truly impact the whole education of each child. Educators Linda Campbell, Bruce Campbell, and Dee Dickinson point out that “when we find ourselves doing something automatically, it is useful to interrupt this pattern and begin again what we were doing, carefully and thoughtfully observing our own behavior” (195). For this reason, theatre educators must re-evaluate and closely examine exactly what it is we hope to accomplish in our positions or risk the termination of our programs.

In an article from *American Theatre* entitled “Let them eat plays,” playwright Wendy Wasserstein states, “We need to think as creatively about our survival as we do about our plays” (59). I agree. As a theatre educator, I feel that our job is to not only teach theatre, but to be a part of the educational process and educate the whole child as well. As a part of the educational
community, we can be a greater asset if only we pay attention to the ideas and practices occurring in the community around us. By keeping up with these current ideas, we are able to grow professionally as we become more effective teachers.

One such idea in education, Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, is perfectly suited to theatre education. By incorporating Gardner’s ideas into the theatre arts classroom, teachers can become more effective in their practices while improving the quality of any student’s education. Because it is so well-suited to theatre arts, educators should find the theory easy to implement, especially those theatre educators who enjoy teaching all of the elements of theatre, including actual production. In addition, use of the theory requires teachers to break their teaching patterns, as mentioned above, through the re-evaluation of educational practices.

Howard Gardner’s Theory: A Brief Explanation

Gardner’s theory was first published in the book *Frames of Mind* in 1983. Before his theory, the psychometric approach was the common form of intelligence testing. In her book, *Rainbows of Intelligence*, educator Sue Teele explains that the psychometric approach to intelligence “focuses only on two ways to learn: linguistic and logical-mathematical” (4). The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), taken by most college-bound students, is an example of such an analysis. In an interview with Kathy Checkley in *Educational Leadership*, Gardner expressed his view that this form of testing is problematic, saying that “what the intelligence test does not do is inform us about our other intelligence; it also doesn’t look at other virtues like creativity or civic mindedness, or whether a person is moral or ethical” (qtd. in Checkley 10). As a result, he developed the idea that students could be gifted in many ways besides these standard two. He developed a list of criteria and, after researching various possibilities, came up with seven intelligences and later pointed out an eighth.
Because “intelligence” is a difficult concept to define and because Gardner’s field is actually psychology, he created criteria that force a scientific look at what are typically thought of as gifts or talents. For the most part, Gardner used the criteria to judge whether or not each intelligence correlated to the physiology of the brain itself. He determined this through studies of potential isolation of the brain as a result of brain damage and through the existence of idiots savants, prodigies and other exceptional individuals. His criteria also examined the intelligence itself, observing that students who perform poorly on standardized tests may excel in alternative areas, such as music or visual art (Gardner Frames 63-66). After applying these qualifications, Gardner came to the conclusion that human beings have the potential to be intelligent in the areas of linguistic, mathematical, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic, visual, or natural knowledge.¹

These strengths, however, should be looked at as just that: the stronger side of a whole containing many sides. Every person possesses every intelligence; some intelligences simply have a stronger presence in certain individuals. In order to truly learn and become a well-rounded person, all of the intelligences should be used to some extent, even if we choose to use one or two more frequently than the others. According to Gardner, “Teachers have to help students use their combination of intelligences to be successful in school, to help them learn whatever it is they want to learn, as well as what the teachers and society believe they have to learn” (qtd. in Checkley 10). For this reason, any teacher who can integrate all of the students’ possible strengths in his or her teaching can enhance the educational experience of students, no matter what their strengths.

This is not to say, however, that a teacher does not need to know his or her students. “You cannot be a good MI teacher if you don’t want to know each child and try to gear how you teach and how you evaluate to that particular child” (Gardner qtd. in Checkley 11). Using the theory requires you to find the right

¹ Gardner also recognizes the potential for additional intelligences.
balance between teaching to the students’ strengths and challenging them to go outside of their comfort zones. With a subject such as theatre arts, educators can find plenty of opportunity to appeal to several intelligences at once, allowing students to experience both the familiar and unfamiliar.

Beyond Gardner’s theory, an interdisciplinary approach to theatre education is another viable option for improving the current methods of teaching theatre arts. The word “interdisciplinary” is often used and pushed upon arts teachers. In discussing his idea of quality schools in an article entitled “Strong Arts, Strong Schools,” Charles Fowler says, “The arts are valued for their interdisciplinary potential. The result is a more cohesive curriculum in which students explore relationships across disciplines” (7). This idea that the arts can be used to enforce lessons in other subject areas is a positive and popular idea that I enjoy using in my lessons whenever possible. For example, if students are studying Africa in a social studies or literature class, providing background on African theatre or allowing students to write and perform scenes based on a historic event can enhance the lessons in a unique way. Unfortunately, an interdisciplinary approach to theatre arts has its flaws as well. By focusing on the lessons from other disciplines, a theatre educator may lose focus on doing theatre for theatre’s sake. “There is a case to be made, and important case to be made, for art for art’s sake. There is a case to be made that the quality of life of a culture comes from its artists” (Wasserstein 59). As important as it is to recognize theatre’s place among other cultural studies and subject areas, theatre is also a discipline unto itself and should be treated as such.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus on Howard Gardner’s theory as an important foundation for theatre educators. Although other ideas in education, such as an interdisciplinary approach, both justify a need for theatre education and enhance the learning process, the use of multiple intelligences allows theatre education to be itself while accomplishing these tasks. In addition, the theory of multiple intelligences encourages theatre educators to grow professionally and to focus on the main point of teaching: student learning. In contrast to most subjects, theatre can be taught in a way that allows all students to learn.
Theatre arts teachers can easily incorporate instruction focusing on all of Gardner’s intelligences because they have the privilege of teaching a variety of subjects in one. Typically, drama activities are cited as excellent approaches to enhancing bodily/kinesthetic learning. While I see the merit in this point of view, I argue that these activities far exceed that sole capacity. An actor does use his or her body, but the literary element of theatre is equally important, as is personal interaction with the self and others. The study of theatre also includes the sounds and rhythms of music and poetry, the visual and logical elements of design, and an understanding of the nature surrounding us. Certainly, a skilled theatrical artist would encompass all of these qualities. Therefore, any theatre arts teacher should work to enhance all of the qualities in his or her students.

The Eight Intelligences

Although many of the multiple intelligences may not need explanation, I feel that I would be remiss for not offering a brief description of each. The first two areas of intelligence that commonly come to mind are verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical. Students who are considered academically gifted are typically strong in one or both of these areas. A linguistic student “learns through listening, reading, writing, and discussion” (Campbell 4). Because human language is the code by which linguistic intelligence communicates ideas, students in this area thrive particularly well in an academic setting, and those who struggle in this area have a much harder time in a traditional classroom. The standard language for mathematics is also found in a traditional classroom setting, although mathematical terminology is not used as frequently to communicate from day to day. These students excel with numbers and logic, but also in the area of abstract thinking. In the cases of both linguistic and mathematical intelligence, a student’s success or failure is readily evident.

In most schools, musical and kinesthetic intelligences are adequately stimulated, but success or failure in these areas is not considered as important. Students who are bodily/kinesthetically intelligent tend to be, but are not limited
to, athletes such as dancers or runners. They have extreme control over their bodies and learn best through movement. Musical intelligence covers a wide range of areas, not just the ability to carry a tune. Students who possess musical intelligence may be “sensitive to sounds in their environment, enjoy music, listen to music while studying and/or reading, sing songs” and may tap or hum rhythms (Teele 36).

Visual/spatial intelligence could mean a variety of things as well. As the name implies, students are visually aware of their surroundings and, in some cases, can recreate that space in some way. In an elaboration upon this intelligence, Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson write:

Spatial intelligence instills the capacity to think in three-dimensional ways as do sailors, pilots, sculptors, painters and architects. It enables one to perceive external and internal imagery, to recreate, transform, or modify images, to navigate oneself and objects through space, and to produce or decode graphic information. (Campbell xvi)

Visual arts provide ample opportunity to explore this intelligence in the classroom; unfortunately, this subject is not commonly emphasized past the elementary school level.

Gardner recognizes the idea of relating to other people as an intelligence, and, along with that, he understands the unique quality of relating to one’s self. Interpersonal intelligence centers around a person’s natural ability to have and maintain relationships. People with an abundance of interpersonal intelligence may include a businessperson, who understands how to succeed through personal contacts, or a social worker or teacher, whose occupation epitomizes the ability to show compassion for others. From another perspective, the intrapersonal intelligence focuses on introspection and an understanding of the self. This is not to say that intrapersonal people are self-centered; they simply thrive at metacognition and other forms of self-knowledge. “The core capacity at work here is access to one’s own feeling life—one’s range of affects or emotions: the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings[...]” (Gardner
Frames 239). These personal intelligences are difficult to measure on any kind of standardized test, but their existence is apparent, both through Gardner’s previously mentioned scientific criteria and general observations of human behavior in any setting.

Gardner’s final and most recently recognized intelligence is the naturalist intelligence. Charles Darwin, an innovative thinker who greatly impacted the academic world, did not seem to fit into any of the aforementioned seven categories. After attempting to manipulate the existing intelligences to accommodate Darwin and other great biologists, Gardner realized that another intelligence matched the list of criteria. “The naturalist intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and classify plants, minerals, and animals, including rocks and grass and all variety of flora and fauna. The ability to recognize cultural artifacts like cars or sneakers may also depend on the naturalist intelligence” (Gardner qtd. in Checkley 9). Recognition of this new form of intelligence found a classification for scientists like Darwin, but more importantly, it reminded those who utilize the multiple intelligences that the possibility for other intelligences remains.

Gardner readily admits that his theory is simply a theory and that a no scholar can truly put his or her finger on the idea of intelligence:

And so it becomes necessary to say, once and for all, that there is not, and there never can be, a single irrefutable and universally accepted list of human intelligences[…]. Why, then, proceed along this precarious path at all? Because there is a need for a better classification of human intellectual competencies than we have now…because it seems within our grasp to come up with a list of intellectual strengths which will prove useful for a wide range of researchers and practitioners and will enable them (and us) to communicate more effectively about this curiously seductive entity called the intellect. (Gardner Frames 60)

Gardner explains the importance of going beyond a simple explanation of intelligence when the advanced capabilities of the human brain are becoming
more and more apparent. With his statements in mind, I believe that whether or not the list of multiple intelligences are complete and accurate, they offer theatre educators a solid basis for teaching students with diverse needs.

**Incorporating Multiple Intelligences Into the Theatre Classroom**

By writing this thesis, I encourage theatre educators to explore and experiment with multiple intelligences in their classrooms. Gardner's theory can enhance any learning environment, but I believe it is especially pertinent for teaching theatre arts. By looking at theatre education through the framework of Gardner's theory, I will discuss ways to best utilize the theory to create an effective theatre classroom. In *Frames of Mind*, Gardner says, “Only if we expand and reformulate our view of what counts as human intellect will we be able to devise more appropriate ways of assessing it and more effective ways of educating it” (4). Theatre educators have the opportunity to expand while our program is flexible. Because no one has fully explored the relationship between theatre arts and all eight intelligences, my thesis will cover new ground and encourage others to examine the many possibilities that exist.

In their book, *Teaching and Learning Through Multiple Intelligences*, Linda Campbell, Bruce Campbell and Dee Dickinson discuss three possible categories for the seven original intelligences: object-related, object-free and person-related. Spatial, logical/mathematical and bodily/kinesthetic can be regarded as “object-related” because of their relationship to matter. Verbal/linguistic and musical areas are more abstract and can be considered “object-free.” And finally, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are solely “person-related” (Campbell xvii).

Taking this possible division into consideration, I chose four intelligences on which to focus my attention. Because theatre is typically considered an activity for the kinesthetically strong student, I purposely picked less likely areas, Nature would most likely fall into this category as well, but Gardner had not identified this intelligence at the time of the Campbells' findings.
although my ultimate goal is to cover all of the intelligences in a lengthier endeavor. I have chosen to focus on visual-spatial (object-related), intrapersonal (person-related), verbal-linguistic and musical (both object-free). My choice to look at the visual-spatial intelligence stems from the fact that the area of design is typically overlooked in elementary and secondary settings and would be especially educational for spatially intelligent students. Similarly, despite the fact that the first years of theatre education include mostly acting, emphasis on the introspection involved is rarely considered. Students with intrapersonal intelligence can thrive on this aspect, including techniques derived from past experience, which is why I chose to examine games and activities from that perspective. The linguistic and musical intelligences do have fairly obvious correlations to theatre. Dramas are typically based upon language and the actor’s speech, while musical theatre’s popularity resides with its catchy tunes and rhythms. I feel that all options have not been thoroughly explored in either case, however. Theatre’s use of language and music goes beyond their appearance on stage; therefore, I will take a closer look at these intelligences as well.

I will look at current practices in theatre education, including the many theatre games and activities, as they relate to Gardner’s intelligences. My analysis will include a critique of those games and activities which appeal to very few of the intelligences, while pointing out activities that do succeed in reaching a variety of students. I will also add my own ideas to fill any gaps, separating those activities appropriate for elementary students from those for secondary students.

What’s Missing?: Theatre Education With or Without Gardner’s Theory

A recent brochure published by the Association for Theatre in Higher Education briefly mentioned that “theatre education cultivates all of (Gardner’s) intelligences.” This statement, along with a similarly phrased acknowledgement by Laura Gardner Salazar in her publication on Dorothy Heathcote’s teaching
methods, was the most solid correlation between Gardner and theatre education that I could find. Salazar refers to a comment made by Gardner himself:

Thematic drama supports new findings on how the brain works. Howard Gardner’s revolutionary work at Harvard on the multiple intelligences is a case in point […] He] notes that drama parallels life, using all of the intelligences in its practice. Since the drama is reflective of the life experience, the thinking it models is accessible and useful to all. (2)

Both statements are just that brief. Because a study of the two together does not exist, my resources are comprised of two distinct categories: publications by/on Gardner and publications concerning theatre education.

Obviously, Howard Gardner’s writings are extremely important in my research. He originally described multiple intelligences in his book Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, but since then, he has written Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice and Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century. These books, along with articles written by Gardner, serve as a strong foundation for any research done on multiple intelligences. Beyond Gardner’s actual words, I have examined the writings of many teachers regarding the application of the theory in their classrooms. Although none of these teachers are theatre educators, I believe in the importance of looking at the process of creating a classroom environment that allows for the practical usage of Gardner’s ideas. Their experiments lend new ideas to the field of education as a whole, and theatre educators should feel free to steal ideas and shape them into appropriate activities for their classrooms. In the course of this study, I will periodically refer to these various experiments.

For example, a teacher named Karen Rubado wrote an article entitled “Empowering Students Through Multiple Intelligences” for Reclaiming Children and Youth in 2002. She tells of her experiences incorporating the concept of multiple intelligences into her classroom for failing students who were not in special education. “By helping them learn about the qualities of each

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3 I could not find this comment by Gardner in my reading. In any case, my main concern lies in the fact that even if Gardner has seen the potential connection, theatre educators have not.
intelligence, I hoped to help them understand that there are many ways of being smart, and that they are capable of all of them” (Rubado 233). One story describes a girl “who had trouble comprehending lending reading assignments” and “decided drawing pictures in her notebook relating to what she read would capitalize on her visual-spatial strengths, as well as keep her motivated” (435). Unfortunately, most theatre arts teachers may not have time to teach their classes the actual theory behind their teaching as Rubado did, but any teacher should be aware of the rewards that come from giving the students responsibility in their learning as they embark on activities in the classroom.

The other half of the dialogue presented in my paper will come from the scholars and practitioners of theatre education and creative dramatics. Theatre teachers, including the famous Dorothy Heathcote and Viola Spolin, have shared their various ideologies and ideas for teaching theatre to our youth. I will analyze the games provided in their books, looking for those which will aid specific intelligences. In most cases, these educators are appealing to many or all of the intelligences without even realizing it. My research will examine the ideas of teachers such as Heathcote, Spolin, Maureen McCurry Cresci (Creative Dramatics for Children), Lisa Bany-Winters (On Stage) and several others. These books provide examples of possible teaching styles, as well as activities that can be easily adaptable for use in a classroom concerned with multiple intelligences.

While the available literature in the fields of educational practices and theatre education were fairly adequate in helping my research, few actual connections between Howard Gardner and theatre education exist. My thesis will give more of an explanation of how the two can be connected effectively for future practices.

A Glimpse at the Chapters Ahead

This paper is divided into three chapters: one that analyzes and two that synthesize. The first chapter is an analysis of theatre education as it exists
today, with special focus on three of the more popular theatre education methodologies. Although these three are not the only “classic” theatre educators, I have chosen to focus on Viola Spolin, Nellie McCaslin and Dorothy Heathcote because of their notably different approaches. Each of the three will be broken down and studied through a framework of Gardner’s theory. Along with the “old,” newer ideas in theatre education and the current National Standard Course of Study for Theatre Arts curriculum will also be addressed. Once I have taken this critical look at present resources in theatre education that rarely cover a variety of intelligences, I will identify the possibilities that do work through Gardner’s framework.

Both the second and third chapters will include useful activities to aid theatre educators in incorporating the intelligences into their lessons. These activities are meant to fulfill three goals: to facilitate, to include, and to excite. Some of the suggestions are meant to facilitate and encourage learning through intelligences which certain students may not possess, such as utilizing the musical intelligence to give non-musical students the chance to experiment with the possibility. Others are meant to include those intelligences often overlooked in the standard classroom. Visual-spatial intelligence, for example, is typically found in the visual arts but lacks substance in other classrooms. Finally, I offer activities to generate excitement by introducing a concept from an uncomfortable intelligence through use of an intelligence more familiar to the student. A musical student can learn about language through musical activities, and so on.

In Chapter Two, I will look specifically at theatre arts as they are geared toward elementary school students. Theatre arts span all age levels, and certain activities can be just as useful in teaching a first grader or a tenth grader, but the majority of activities work particularly well for either younger or older students. I classify an elementary student as one in kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade, depending on the school district’s approach. At such a young age, most elementary students do not have the self-awareness to realize their strengths and weaknesses yet. Because of their inexperience, students will benefit from a theatre arts program that can expose them to new concepts and ideas. I will look
at possible approaches specifically for elementary students, especially the use of theatre games and tools for cultivating imagination. One of the most exciting aspects of teaching theatre arts to younger students is that their propensity for creativity is still extremely high and does not contain as many of the self-conscious inhibitions that come with adolescence. I will give examples of activities, original and borrowed, that are appropriate for this age group and that appeal to the multiple intelligences. As I mentioned before, the focus will mainly revolve around the linguistic, musical, visual and intrapersonal intelligences, but my intentions are to reach all students.

In my third chapter I will look at the secondary school students, those in middle and high school. This age range is, quite possibly, even more diverse than that between a kindergartener and a fifth grade student because the secondary level provides a maturing and gradual honing of the skills simply touched upon at the elementary level. An elementary school’s theatre arts program relies more on dramatic play, while the older students harness that play into a theatrical atmosphere. At this stage, students develop better awareness of their intelligences and, at the same time, of their niche in the dramatic process. The theatre arts teacher can help them discover and develop these abilities and may eventually assign roles and place more responsibility on students who are aware of their intelligences and wish to pursue challenges. Once again, I will look at possible activities for this age group, focusing on the four previously mentioned intelligences as examples.

My conclusion will include a brief discussion of the most efficient form of teaching theatre arts: production. No other method better teaches to the multiple intelligences. The games and activities are highly effective teaching tools, but an epilogue to these lessons should always include a cumulative evaluation of some kind. When it comes to theatre arts, what better way to sum up the knowledge gained than with a performance? Learning the basic skills should always come first, however, and the first three chapters will discuss how to do just that. Elementary school, in particular, is a time to take the primary steps in imagination and creativity that will eventually lead to production. The first few years of
theatre arts classes generate the excitement that will push students through each and every theatrical experience.
CHAPTER 1

POPULAR PRACTICES IN THEATRE EDUCATION TODAY

Instead of simply playing theatre games and reading plays, as proposed by many specialists of creative dramatics, I decided that I wanted my sixth grade classes to produce their own play, complete with scenery, costumes and props. I wasn’t much of a technical director, but I figured that with my creativity combined with that of my students, we could come up with simple versions of what we needed. My school had four sixth grade classrooms, two of which were considered average and above average and two of which were considered the lower level classes. As the production process began, I witnessed a striking development: the lower level classes were outdoing the “more intelligent” students, especially in the areas of scenery and props. After the two classes completed painting a couple of boxes to look like a rock wall, I took the samples to a fellow teacher. One of the boxes was completely gray with some traces of the space between the rocks, while the other box included shading and highlighting on very distinct rocks. “Which class did which work?” I asked the teacher.

I proved my point to this teacher; no one can convince me that students do not thrive on very different areas of intelligence. These two lower level classes struggled at reading, and they definitely had to work harder to memorize their lines as a result. But when it came to other areas of production, they were no less than brilliant. Students like these illustrate the significance of Howard Gardner’s theory in theatre education. In a school setting, success of any kind can give a student a greater love of learning and increase his or her chances of
future academic success. Students who excel in areas of visual intelligence should be recognized for their talents just as frequently as the best readers.

However, not all theatre educators present their material with this theory in mind. In this chapter, I will critique contemporary practices in theatre education, pointing out how these practices miss the benefits of Gardner’s theory. Because hundreds of books have been published on creative dramatics and theatre games for classroom use, I will focus on the theories of Viola Spolin, Nellie McCaslin and Dorothy Heathcote. I selected these three “gurus” because of their overwhelming dominance in theatre education. For example, they were brought to my attention through several venues: my theatre curriculum classes in college, the mentor with whom I student taught, and several experienced fellow theatre arts teachers since I pursued a teaching career. Beyond these personal recommendations, the impact of these teachers is evident through their effect on other theatre educators as well. Even though their publications are twenty or more years old, current theatre education specialists continue to use these older ideas when proposing their own plans of action, and, particularly in the case of Spolin, they even copy specific activities to include with their own.

An examination of the current state of theatre education reveals that, ultimately, these resources have the potential to provide substantial stimulation to multiple intelligences. As chapters two and three reveal, these resources provide several useful and specialized activities. However, these educators share one problem: they claim to propose theatre games, when in actuality, they present acting games. Such a semantic difference seems slight, but I will discuss the problems related to this line of thinking in regards to Gardner’s theory. I will include an analysis of the games and activities currently proposed, pointing out those few that do appeal to the multiple intelligences.

Another key text for theatre educators is the National Standard Course of Study for theatre arts, which I will interrogate in the final section of this chapter. Dividing the K-12 curriculum into four parts, this document lists eight general

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4 Theatre arts teachers are typically K-12 certified. The SCOS divided the curriculum into the following groupings: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 to adapt the standards to the appropriate age level.
standards for all theatre arts teachers to meet within their curriculum with smaller, detailed objectives listed beneath them. Developing these standards became especially important in the area of theatre arts because many schools do not use any kind of textbook in this subject area. Because many principals and school systems emphasize the importance of hitting these curriculum goals, I will closely analyze these goals to determine whether or not they promote teaching to multiple intelligences.

Viola Spolin

Viola Spolin, actress and educator, is known for many things, primarily her use of theatre games when educating theatre students of all ages. In her book, *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher’s Handbook*, Spolin explains her method as follows: “The serious performer, director, and drama teacher will find that all acting techniques can be taught through games, teaching a variety of performance, storytelling, and character-development skills” (ix). Her collection of games is directed to aid teachers in targeting and correcting specific acting problems through specially suited games. Through this method, students gain performance skills without the awareness that they are actually learning them. The reasoning behind Spolin’s method is solid: “Years ago when challenged to train students (ages five through teens) in theater techniques, this writer [Spolin] turned to a problem-solving approach, based on the structure of games and exercises, which allowed students to absorb theater skills naturally without conscious effort” (Spolin 2). Such games provide solid practice for students in the way of sensory recall, ensemble work, and other experiences new to beginning actors.

Although these games are extremely helpful when used to supplement other activities, they do not provide a complete guide to theatre educators, especially those teaching to multiple intelligences. For example, these skills provide little in the way of theatrical vocabulary and production methods. Spolin considers her book full of “theater games,” when in reality, it contains acting
exercises and little more. Because of this, Spolin’s methodology teaches to a limited few intelligences.

The intrapersonal intelligence, for example, is rarely regarded in the playing of these games. When explaining her book in its introduction, Spolin points out that “most theater-game descriptions call for a specific number of players per team” (Spolin 16). She is so concerned with presenting the idea of ensemble to beginning actors that she overlooks the importance of looking inward when acting. Some of the games allow for individual work, but as previously stated, most tend to rely on group participation. The intrapersonally intelligent student may feel overwhelmed and shy; as a result, a teacher with well-thought lesson plans would need to look elsewhere in order to find the outlet needed for these introspective students.

A few of Spolin’s activities are directed toward musical students. These activities, however, are mostly directed at those excelling in vocal abilities. For instance, one of the warm-ups is entitled “A Walk in the Moonlight” and involves a song and a simple stroll (31). In a later chapter, a song called “Adam’s Song,” which is much like the childhood favorite “Father Abraham,” calls for singing coordinated with various movements (74). Four of five other songs, including the children’s classic “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush,” make up the extent of Spolin’s musical games, which is a good number for a book containing a variety of acting games. My only concern lies in the fact that any theatre educator using this book as his or her main guide may miss out on some of the non-singing musical skills that play an important role in theatre, such as rhythm and pitch in speech. Educator Sue Teele describes musical students as sensitive to sounds in their environment; they may also enjoy music, listen to music while studying and/or reading, sings songs, and tap or hum rhythms (36). These traits, along with several others, point out the fact that even within one intelligence, people still possess a variety of skills. Effective lessons will consider this possible variety.

Similarly, spatial intelligence can include a range of skills beyond the visual arts.
[...]Spatial intelligence entails a number of loosely related capacities: the ability to recognize instances of the same element; the ability to transform or to recognize a transformation of one element into another; the capacity to conjure up mental imagery and then to transform that imagery; the capacity to produce a graphic likeness of spatial information; and the like. (Gardner Frames 176).

Despite the fact that Spolin never touches upon design or direction/blocking, a few of her activities fit into the category of visual or spatial. In fact, one chapter contains nothing but “space walks,” in which the actor moves through the room in order to feel the space around him or her, discovering how the surrounding air supports his or her body and creating a sense of awareness (36-41). Such activities are definitely beneficial to spatially intelligent students, but much like Spolin’s use of music, her use of the intelligence is fairly limited in its variety. She simply suggests visual-spatial exercises that apply to actors in their educational journeys.

The appeal to linguistic intelligence is, admittedly, extensive when looking through Spolin’s suggested activities. The gibberish games, in which students must communicate through a series of sounds that do not equal words, present the importance of the emotion and feeling behind words in a conversation (126-130). Storytelling is also an important acquired skill in Spolin’s mind. One game, “Building a Story,” succeeds in allowing students to use their creativity while working together as an ensemble. In this game, one player begins a story and stops after a few words or a sentence. The next player must build onto what has already been said until a complete story emerges (157). These storytelling games, in particular, provide a solid foundation for the linguistic students.

Theater Games for the Classroom is a strong resource for theatre educators, as long as it is supplemented with other forms of teaching. Spolin’s methods are inspiring; unfortunately, they are not entirely practical, especially for a teacher in the public schools. For instance, in introducing her warms ups,

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5 In Frames of Mind, Gardner points out that “spatial” may be a better label than “visual” because blind people may possess this intelligence as well in the form of spatial familiarity (186).
Spolin states, “The warm-ups included in this chapter are traditional games, most of them meant to be played out of doors” (23). When teaching during a typical school day, such things may not always be possible. Along with some of these impractical ideas, my main discomfort toward this book is that it is not aptly named. As a book of acting games, this publication covers a good bit; as a book of theatre games, it is lacking a great deal, especially for students possessing intelligences other than kinesthetic or linguistic.

**Dorothy Heathcote**

Dorothy Heathcote, a British theatre educator, is known for her lessons through role-play. Her method calls for both teacher and student to be placed into a certain story-line, such as the happenings of the First Thanksgiving, in which the teacher guides students through an educational perspective not often captured by textbooks. From the moment students walk into the classroom, they are transformed into characters from a different time and/or place and are asked to use their problem-solving skills to discover as much as they can. The entire class period becomes a performance, in which the students are simultaneously actors and audience members, learning as the improvisational story unfolds.

Unlike Viola Spolin, Dorothy Heathcote does not present her theory alongside appropriate activities. In fact, Dorothy Heathcote hardly presents her theory in any written body of work at all. Because she feels as though her idea of learning thematically is prone to change at any moment, Heathcote typically presents her ideas at conferences. Her students and followers have, however, attempted to explain and evaluate this revolutionary style of teaching, for Heathcote’s theory developed quite a following. This theory involves “teaching in role,” which draws both teachers and students into an improvisational drama developed on a chosen subject that usually transcends time. Such dramatic reenactments give students a first-hand glimpse of topics usually only found in books.
In her book, *Teaching Dramatically Learning Thematically*, Laura Gardner Salazar, an educator and practitioner of Heathcote’s teaching, explains the idea and its uses: “In role, the teacher stops teaching about a subject, and with the class explores and becomes the subject” (Salazar 21). The teacher creates a basic situation and framework before engulfing the students in a different world, one from a specific time and place. For instance, the teacher may announce that the classroom is a rain forest that is in danger of being destroyed; the students are scientists struggling to classify as many different types of organisms as they can while protesting the forest’s demolition. The educational implications of such activities are enormously beneficial. As Linda Campbell, Bruce Campbell, and Dee Dickinson point out in their book *Teaching and Learning Through Multiple Intelligences*, “(Drama) provides students with opportunities to almost become what they are studying and is a powerful way to bring academic content to life” (71). Heathcote’s method breathes life into subjects that possess the potential for dry interpretation.

Teaching in role certainly has its merits. The students have no choice but to get involved, and the idea captures the very essence of theatre: exploring life through performance. The method has possible advantages in teaching to the multiple intelligences because lessons can reflect different subject areas; the class may be a group of biologists one day and settlers in California the next. Not only do lessons in role reflect a variety of possible student interests, they connect those interests to life and its necessary skills, including problem-solving and relationship skills as described by Salazar: “Story in theatre must not just be told. It must be acted out to be seen. Playable action is human interaction and explored relationships” (12). Heathcote’s method immerses the student in the lesson and, therefore, in new life experiences.

The method has its drawbacks as well. Although drama does parallel life, Heathcote’s thematic teaching is actually dramatic play, where production elements are missing. Students have the opportunity to “perform” in a sense, but although acting is the main theatrical focus of such activities, it is not actually
taught. For a theatre educator to rely solely upon teaching in role would mean sacrificing a large portion of the student’s theatre education. The concepts of stage directions and pantomime, for example, should be included in a student’s mental repertoire so that he or she can function in theatre on a basic level. Both concepts would be fairly difficult to explain while in role unless the teacher created a scene in which the students are at an acting workshop; unfortunately, the students already are in the equivalent of an acting workshop, so the scene change would be minimal. Such an example may seem overly disapproving of Heathcote’s method, but my concern is that at some point a teacher may use teaching in role to such an extent that he or she overlooks the rudimentary skills of theatre. Much like Spolin’s ideas, I believe that the method is solid but should be used in moderation.

Despite the assortment of interests provided to different intelligences, Heathcote’s method may not always be suited to all students. When looking at teaching in role through the framework of Gardner’s intelligences, the intelligence that first springs to my mind is the intrapersonal. On one hand, Salazar says, “The goal of the leader is to move the group to deep feelings and thoughts within an artistic framework” (1). The awareness caused by imitating life is immense, but such a setting may be overwhelming for an intrapersonal student at times. One assumed aspect of the role-playing is that the students will work together as an ensemble, playing off of each others’ ideas and imaginations. For an intrapersonal student, this can be an uncomfortable situation. “It is essential to create a nonthreatening, trusting environment in classrooms so that intrapersonal students feel comfortable” (Teele 42). I am not saying that the intrapersonal intelligence could not possibly get anything out of the experience, but a thematic teacher should be especially aware of such potential draw-backs.

Although other intelligences may be inspired by Heathcote’s style of lessons, a teacher developing a framework for a lesson in role must work very hard to incorporate several intelligences into one day’s plans. The theme of Native Americans, for example, may work well for most of the intelligences with
its music, dances, currency, wildlife, language, maps, and tribes. Themes with so many possibilities are not always easy to find, though. For this reason, I feel that Heathcote’s method works well when used occasionally but is impractical for day-to-day theatre classrooms.

Nellie McCaslin

The final theatre educator in my preliminary analysis is Dr. Nellie McCaslin, who has taught at several universities across the United States, including New York University’s Program in Educational Theatre. Her popular book, *Creative Dramatics in the Classroom* serves as a handbook for theatre educators in much the same way as Spolin’s *Theatre Games*. The first and most noticeable difference in McCaslin’s book is that she favors the term “creative dramatics,” which indicates teaching to younger children. Because of this assumption and because the book is useful to beginners who may have no knowledge of such vocabulary, McCaslin defines the term in the first chapter of her book. “The term ‘creative dramatics’ is used to describe the improvised drama of children from age five or six and older, but it belongs to no particular age level and may be used just as appropriately to describe the improvisation of high school students” (7). Throughout the book, she specifies some activities for older or younger students, but for the most part, she feels that creative dramatics are ageless.

I appreciate the fact that McCaslin’s method is obviously teaching theatrical skills through the specific units on which she focuses. In her introduction, she states, “The contents include a rationale for creative dramatics with specific objectives and values, exercises in pantomime, improvisation, play structure and the simple basic procedures involved in preparing a play for an audience” (xiii). As opposed to Spolin’s variety of games that can be utilized for the different situations that may arise from class to class or rehearsal to
rehearsal, McCaslin sets down a defined path as an effective means to teach theatre, from unit to unit. Her intentions can be clearly seen in the introduction to her fourth chapter: “There are many ways of introducing improvisation, but some groundwork in pantomime is the best preparation. Once the players have achieved a sense of security in movement, they are ready to add dialogue” (73). Such a clearly delineated plan for teaching the basic fundamentals lends more structure to the practice, indicating the importance of building on theatrical skills.

McCaslin never discusses the possibility of multiple intelligences because her book predates Gardner’s theory, but her ideas about theatre education provide some useful activities for different intelligences. For example, the third chapter of *Creative Dramatics* deals with pantomime. One section, entitled "Mood and Feelings," could provide opportunities for the intrapersonal student, who tends to be naturally in touch with his or her emotions. “The teacher might even ask the class what kinds of feelings they have experienced, and their responses will often include many more than he has anticipated” (McCaslin 43).

Other activities included in the book do call for individual work or introspection, but some activities may be more difficult for an intrapersonal person, such as the idea of improvisation as a whole. McCaslin does take such a child into account, labeling him or her as “shy,” but the word does not necessarily fit. An intrapersonally intelligent person may not be shy, but improvisation may prove difficult in terms of externalizing feelings and information. A unit on improvisation must be delivered with a good bit of patience for the intrapersonal intelligence.

A few of McCaslin’s pantomime activities are directed toward the musically inclined student. In a section called “Pantomime Suggested by Other Means,” students with rhythmic ability are given an opportunity to shine. McCaslin’s suggestion tells teachers, “Beat a drum and ask the group to move in any way it suggests” (50). This combination of musical and kinesthetic intelligence is echoed at the bottom of the same page with another suggestion: “Have the group listen to orchestral music. Suggest they try to identify the various instruments. Then have the children be the instruments—not the musicians playing them but the instruments themselves” (50-1). These activities work nicely for students
even if their kinesthetic abilities may be lacking as long as the teacher provides an environment free of self-consciousness, perhaps by arranging the students so that they do not see each other. As with Spolin’s suggestions, the number of ideas geared toward musical students is not large, but the few that do exist are useful.

Similarly, McCaslin provides a few activities that are beneficial to visually/spatially intelligent students. Many of these activities would work particularly well in a unit on pantomime, which would appeal to the visual-spatial student because the absence of the matter involved leads to an imaginative look at space. For instance, she includes the infamous mime activity of being trapped inside a box:

Imagine yourself shut up in a box. How large is it? Can you stand up? Move around? Get out? Let us see the box—its sides, floor, top. Suppose the box becomes larger? What do you do? It grows smaller. What happens to you then? (McCaslin 52)

This activity emphasizes the importance of the space that an actor inhabits, much like Spolin’s “space walks.” In addition to the possible visually-spatially stimulating activities, McCaslin addresses the issue of play production in one of her final chapters, which includes the possibility for visual-spatial students to experiment with directing or scenic design.

Unfortunately, although the book and its many ideas can be easily used by theatre educators with years of experience, McCaslin addresses the book to the beginner. Her intent leaves the chapter concerning production in the most basic form, giving general explanations of the many jobs but no activities to enhance their teaching. Any theatre educator aware of Gardner’s intelligences, however, should be able to expand upon McCaslin’s work and assign these various jobs with the students’ intelligences in mind.

As for the linguistic student, many of McCaslin’s activities are applicable, such as those in her chapter on improvisation, but several chapters are especially appropriate for the verbal/linguistic intelligence. One chapter focuses
on dramatic structure, while the next few discuss the dramatization of short stories, long stories, and poetry. These storytelling activities are extremely important for linguistically intelligent students, as other educators can verify: “Storytelling, both an entertaining and powerful form of linguistic communication, teaches students about the rhythm, pitch, and nuances of language” (Campbell 13). The verbal/linguistic students can certainly find fulfillment in many areas through McCaslin’s approach because her chapters are geared toward entire units, many of which deal with language, whether through writing, speech or listening activities.

As a whole, I find McCaslin’s approach to be the most useful, but it also has its flaws when searching to find activities suited to all of the intelligences. Fortunately, McCaslin’s structure does allow room for flexibility and presents a positive attitude in the area of creative dramatics. “The child who is introduced to the theatre, first through playing, is going to look for more than superficial entertainment when he attends a performance” (McCaslin 17). The teacher must experiment with her theories and create a structure in which all participants take away the inspiration and learning that theatre can afford.

All three of these gurus prove invaluable to theatre educators as a source of inspiration. But on a more practical note, public school teachers must adhere to a set of nationally regulated written guidelines first and foremost. For this reason, the National Standard Course of Study deserves attention along with those who have established theatre education practices. For the remainder of this chapter, I interrogate this “suggested” plan for teaching as viewed through Gardner’s framework.

The National Standard Course of Study

Perhaps the written work most dictating theatre education today is the list of objectives making up the National Standard Course of Study. In the field of education, one of the greatest challenges lies in the necessity to follow the curriculum. For the subject of theatre arts, the ideal goals are listed in eight
objectives in the National Standard Course of Study. Despite the fact that the NSCOS is divided into three distinct age groups, the main points remain very similar for all ages and are quite expansive across the many areas of theatre arts. An examination of the eight objectives reveals just how easily theatre educators can apply Gardner’s theory while adhering to the curriculum.

The first content standard is concerned with script writing. All three levels stress using improvisation based on “personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature and history” to create scripts. Obviously, due to the use of language involved in writing a script, this particular standard works well for linguistic students. By emphasizing writing based on “personal experience,” however, the intrapersonal intelligence combined with the linguistic seems to leap to the forefront. Of course, the most flexible aspect of playwriting is the fact that a writer can determine his or her subject matter and include personal strengths as well, whether natural intelligence or musical, to allow the work to be most effective.

The second standard discusses acting for all age ranges, gradually heightening the level of skill expected from the students. Acting involves kinesthetic intelligence through controlled bodily movement, and it incorporates linguistic skills of vocal delivery and comprehension. Interpersonal intelligence comes with the ability to act in an ensemble, but this objective also calls for concentration and justification of artistic choices that may stem from intrapersonal skill. Another unlikely intelligence appears with the perfection of the voice: musical intelligence. Although the actor may not need to sing, this national objective states that the actor should be able to decide “vocal pitch, tempo, and tone for different characters.” Within two standards on the list, over half of the intelligences have been implied.

The third standard, requiring lessons regarding design and creation of environment, can be used to address at least two more intelligences: mathematical and visual/spatial. Visual/spatial students can use this opportunity 

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6 The NCSOS is broken down for students in grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12, which closely resembles the typical breakdown for elementary, middle and high school students.
to conceptualize and design, while logical/mathematical intelligence possesses the practical knowledge to put the ideas into a concrete structure. Creation of an environment also necessitates sound (musical intelligence) and possibly a knowledge of nature. This particular standard, because it includes most aspects of technical theatre, grows increasingly more advanced in its detail as the students grow older. Directing, addressed in the fourth standard, does the same. Students begin learn basic skills, such as collaboration, at the youngest level and move to a full director role by their final year. This standard calls for the interpersonal intelligence to work with a complete cast and crew and a spatial intelligence to visualize the entire production, from conception to performance. A strong linguistic intelligence also aids a director in his or her interpretation of the play.

The final four standards are slightly more abstract and not as obviously aligned with specific intelligences. Content Standard #5 reflects dramaturgical work and for the middle grades calls for “[r]esearching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes.” Research, much like playwriting, may be primarily linguistic because of the intense reading that goes into it, but the subject matter may generate interest from other intelligences. Certainly, a natural and logical/mathematical intelligence may be intrigued by the searching itself, with the classification and sorting that comes with finding sources.

Standards 6 and 7 both bring up different art forms, including the electronic media of film and television. The sixth standard compares and draws connections between theatre and other art forms, while the seventh standard requires that the students have the ability to look critically at the products of these art forms. When incorporating multiple intelligences, teachers can always use the various art forms to their advantage; certain intelligences are typically drawn to at least one form of art that captures the essence of their particular skill. For instance, spatially intelligent students may focus on visual art or the aesthetic nature of a particular sculpture or film. Poetry can appeal to intrapersonal intelligence and dialogue to interpersonal, while both may appeal to a linguistic
student. Most commonly, dance connects with kinesthetic intelligence, and music obviously speaks to the musical. Once again, with a medium such as television, one could find subject matter to interest any of the intelligences. Television is accused of wearing on the intelligence of our youth, but it does possess some sort of magical way of capturing peoples’ attention and can be used for educational purposes as well. For example, in theatre classrooms, television can be used to teach students how to critique acting performances or to show a documentary of Shakespeare’s life.

The eighth standard varies from age range to age range more than the previous seven. It states that in their youngest years, students should recognize “the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in daily life.” By the time they reach their middle years, these students should be able to recognize the importance of these things, not only in their own communities but in other cultures as well. Finally, high school students view the importance of these media in the past and present. Although the wording sounds similar, these standards provoke very different lessons, from a discussion with kindergartners about their favorite television shows, to explanations of kabuki theatre to a classroom of seventh graders, to a lesson on theatre history to a junior in high school. This objective certainly covers a good bit of ground over the course of a student’s education. The intelligences involved cover just as broad of an expanse, and teachers can use their creativity to present the ideas of cultural differences and theatre history in ways that reach all types of students. Lectures may not always be the most effective approach.

After carefully reading through the document, some elements of the National Standard Course of Study are unnerving, such as the extreme attention paid to film and television in a classroom that is supposed to center around theatre arts. In an article entitled “The Shaping of American Theatre Education,” William I. Oliver discusses the issue: “The saddest aspect of this didactic slough is the fact that our legitimate theatre is following the lead of the TV and film industry” (98). I understand the importance of pointing out the similarities and differences between the media, but to have several standards revolve around
these subjects seems a bit excessive. Nevertheless, the standards are in place and the objectives are quite inclusive of the elements of theatre overall, which means that all of the intelligences are represented through specialties pertaining to their strengths. The challenge comes with teaching students basic skills in areas that may not be their strengths.

**Keeping the Ideas Flowing**

Since innovative thinkers such as Spolin, Heathcote, and McCaslin presented their ideas to the theatre education community, methods have continued to pour from other practitioners, whose views are just as diverse. Both Maureen McCurry Cresci’s *Creative Dramatics for Children* and *101 Drama Games for Children* by Paul Rooyackers are filled with individual games/activities, which potentially appeal to different intelligences. Both of these publications share common formats and methodologies with that of Viola Spolin, in which games are thought the most powerful approach to teaching theatre arts. *Curtains Up!: Theatre Games and Storytelling* by Robert Rubinstein and *On Stage: Theater Games and Activities for Kids* by Lisa Bany-Winters also simply list activities and games to enhance learning, but their activities offer possibilities to a wider range of students through activities in the areas of sound effects, costumes, makeup, scenery and props. As far as production is concerned, *Kids Take the Stage* by Lenka Peterson and Dan O’Connor offer a thorough resource. The book describes “how to use [the authors’] approach to choose, create, direct, and produce shows—an annual production with a cast of a hundred children, or just a few skits every month [...]” (x). Because all of the production elements are involved, eight intelligences can easily get involved in the process.

The visible trend in theatre education, as demonstrated by Spolin, McCaslin and their newer contemporaries, is toward a collection of individual theatre activities. Although none of these theatre educators specifically labeled activities for the multiple intelligences, the books are still conducive to teachers
who are willing to sift through these activities in order to create intelligencefulfilling lesson plans. If a teacher decides to do a lesson on characterization, for example, he or she could spend an entire class period simply analyzing scripts, which would appeal to linguistic and possibly intrapersonal intelligences, or the teacher could find three or four shorter activities that may be beneficial to several intelligences. Educator Sue Teele discusses another positive aspect of such a lesson plan: “Teachers who acknowledge all of the intelligences as legitimate ways to learn can encourage students to engage and use their strengths as springboards for translating from one intelligence to another” (48-9). Because theatre provides ample opportunity for each intelligence, it also gives students the chance to use, and possibly connect, intelligences that they may not commonly acknowledge.

Theatre educators must decide which resources are most effective with their teaching styles. When using the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, however, I have found that the most helpful books are those that include activities beyond acting skills. For this reason, I prefer McCaslin’s approach through specific units ending in production and, especially, Lisa Bany-Winter’s On Stage: Theater Games and Activities for Kids for its activities dealing with technical elements. She suggests ideas such as set dioramas and mask-making to take students beyond the typical acting lessons. By providing teachers with examples such as these, Bany-Winters and McCaslin ease the apprehension involved with expanding beyond acting games and into an intelligent-friendly mode of production.

In the following chapters, I will assemble a compilation of activities relating to specific intelligences. These activities will come from the resources mentioned in this chapter, both old and new, as well as from my own personal files, containing both activities that I have created and those that have been shared by fellow teachers. This mixing and matching of methodologies and ideas works quite well and can help attain the goal of reaching students through the use of Gardner’s theory while adhering to the National Standard Course of Study.
CHAPTER 2
YOUNGER YEARS: ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Although a few of the theatre education publications mentioned in Chapter One specify an age range, many direct their games to a general population of students. As discussed in the previous chapter, for instance, Nellie McCaslin specifically addresses the universality of creative dramatics in regard to age. This practice is based on the belief that creative drama mirrors the childlike act of play, and because artists are encouraged to maintain the open-minded and creative persona of a child even as they grow old, theatre games should be universal in regard to age. Viola Spolin’s collection of theatre games, for example, does not differentiate between older and younger students. For teachers who decide ultimately to adhere to Spolin’s method, these games could potentially be used with first graders or even college students.

When teachers go beyond the games to teach skills, however, age becomes an issue. Teachers who utilize the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, in particular, must be aware of each student’s ability. In turn, the student’s ability relies on his or her age. Because of this fundamental difference cultivated by maturity and experience, I have chosen to separate elementary students from secondary. For elementary school teachers, Gardner’s theory can offer a strong foundation for teaching basic theatre lessons and allowing young students to explore the many possibilities of theatre. Although theatre reaches students both young and old, the pedagogy associated with theatre education must be age-specific.
Acting is an easy way to begin teaching theatre to the youngest students because early childhood is full of imitating and pretending as children learn. Children find it natural to transform themselves into various roles: parents, doctors and even animals. Acting is not, however, the only dramatic activity of which young children are capable, especially if the child has an aptitude for spatial or mathematical intelligence. Music, too, should be used with young children and “is the earliest form of human giftedness to emerge” (Campbell xvii). Acting does appeal to quite a few of the intelligences, particularly kinesthetic and linguistic, but other activities can be included in an elementary school curriculum. In this chapter, I will familiarize theatre educators with an array of theatre activities that will reach students through their many intelligences.

Each section’s exercises emphasize the effectiveness of teaching to multiple intelligences by accomplishing one of three goals: to facilitate the continuation of an already strong student intelligence, to include an intelligence often overlooked, or to excite a student’s learning in a new subject area. For instance, through facilitation a linguistic student may discover new verbal challenges to enhance his or her already-linguistic learning. In comparison, a visual-spatial student is often overlooked in subjects other than visual arts and geometry, and he or she needs an introduction into the theatre curriculum. Finally, that same visual-spatial student may become interested in the linguistically strong subject of English though visual-spatial activities. These ideas, which I have pulled from a number of sources, will reach out to all different types of students and develop a deeper understanding of the theatre arts.

The ownership and use of activities in theatre education requires further explanation. Some ideas can be pinpointed to an exact origin, but this is not usually the case. One of the most popular games used in theatrical training, for example, is Mirroring. In this activity, one student acts as the leader, while the other faces him or her as a reflection in a mirror. Whatever movement the leader presents, the reflection must try to follow as closely as possible so that eventually an onlooker would have difficulty distinguishing the leader. This exercise’s potential for aiding an actor in body movement, focus, and eye contact has made
it a popular choice for educators teaching students of all ages. It is so popular, in
fact, that it can be found in almost every collection of theatre activities on the
market. Among others, this particular activity can be found in books by Spolin
(75), Bany-Winters (16), McCaslin (52), Rubenstein (5), Cresci (23), and
Peterson (13). In stating this example, I intend to show that my collection of
ideas does not necessarily spring from definite sources. I have used ideas from
books, but whether or not the idea was an original work of the author, I cannot
say. I have also used activities that I believe to be my own, and some that I have
borrowed from peers in the field of education. Whenever possible, however, I will
credit the exercises in this compilation to the appropriate individual.

With these multiple origins in mind, I present a compilation of suggestions
and ideas to reach students of various abilities in the theatre arts classroom.
Although activities are divided into those appealing to specific intelligences,
teachers should keep in mind that in order to educate the whole child, they need
to be willing to provide a wide spectrum of intelligence-appropriate materials.
“Teachers have to help students use their combination of intelligences to be
successful in school, to help them learn whatever it is they want to learn, as well
as what the teachers and society believe they have to learn” (Gardner qtd. in
Checkley). Through examples provided for verbal-linguistic, musical, visual-
spatial, and intrapersonal students, theatre educators can use Gardner’s ideas to
achieve the goals of students, teachers, and curricula.

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

According to educator Sue Teele, linguistic students have highly
developed auditory skills, enjoy reading and writing, have a good memory, spell
words easily and accurately and use language fluently (28). Obviously, students
with strong linguistic intelligence possess a definite advantage in a classroom
setting because teachers rely heavily upon verbal communication and written
material. Theatre education typically depends on linguistic intelligence just as
strongly, through the standard use of scripts and the actor’s vocal abilities. In
this section, however, I consider theatre’s unique appropriation of both linguistic and non-linguistic intelligences.

Linguistic intelligence is more difficult to identify than other intelligences because the majority of students are able to use language fairly fluently in some form or another, but in elementary school in particular, language may not be fully mastered. Sometimes even the linguistic students have not grasped the ability to fully express themselves through speech or writing, and many of them do not read fluently for the first couple of years of schooling. When attempting to determine which students have especially strong linguistic intelligence, teachers must also remember that mini-classifications exist within the larger categories. A student may be an effective writer but lack the ability to express his or her thoughts clearly in the form of verbal speech. Because of education’s ideas concerning proper linguistic approaches, many less linguistic students may feel out of place in the conventional classroom unless a teacher is willing to recognize and nurture alternative abilities.

Theatre plays a unique role in this complex situation. Theatre’s numerous uses of language create enrichment for the advanced verbal-linguistic student; at the same time, however, theatrical activities can benefit less linguistic students because the medium of theatre provides a variety of “languages of the stage.” For example, in an article entitled “Doing literature: Using drama to build literacy,” educator Jennifer Castney McMaster points out, “New vocabulary presented in the drama context has the benefit of being acted out, thus providing students with a strong mental image of the word, one that has been experienced visually, aurally, and kinesthetically” (McMaster 578). Theatre promotes reading because linguistic skills are mixed with other intelligences involved in acting: kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, spatial, etc. This combination of intelligences makes reading more desirable to a broader range of students. “When dramatizing books is a regular activity in the classroom, children naturally desire to act out more stories, which encourages them to seek out more reading experiences” (McMaster 576). In such instances, reading gains appeal because of its potential toward atypical classroom activities. This appeal serves as a strong educational
tool, allowing students to use their own personal strengths to make connections between the words on the page and physical experiences.

Theatre educators certainly deal with issues concerning students’ desire and ability to read. Several of my students are extremely extroverted and enjoy performing before the class. When the performance requires reading, however, their drive is greatly diminished. Depending on the grade level, many elementary school students do not yet have a firm grasp on reading. The youngest ones are still focusing on letter recognition, and the older ones may still struggle with comfort levels when reading aloud. For these reasons, theatre arts teachers may want to approach linguistic intelligence through forms other than reading. Reading should definitely be integrated into the activities whenever possible, whether through reading an entire script or simply seeing vocabulary words, but a theatre arts classroom should maintain a certain level of comfort while the students explore the subject matter. Fortunately, the theatre arts encompass such a wide range of possibilities that teachers can approach linguistics through activities involving movement, speech and listening. By giving students opportunities for linguistic success, teachers guide them toward effective reading practices.

For these reasons, my aim in this section is to develop exercises that reach out to non-linguistic students. At the same time, linguistic students should also find these exercises challenging, as they encompass the many variations within linguistic intelligence. The remainder of this section focuses on two possibilities to stimulate linguistic intelligence in non-readers: gibberish, which emphasizes language as communication, and pantomime/improvisation, which lets students explore language through movement and non-written communication. Both aspects encourage linguistic growth in all types of students.

**Gibberish**

Because students are just beginning to understand the importance of language, exercises in gibberish are particularly effective. In these activities, students are forced to rely on everything *but* the actual verbalizing itself: body
language, emphasis, emotion and their own creativity. Linguistic students are challenged in a new way, while non-linguistic students may discover a new understanding of language. This activity can either be introduced through written or verbal orientation. In the case of the former, students simply write a stream of made-up words, or even possibly letters, and are asked to translate what they have written (Campbell 24). For acting purposes, the more likely choice would be a verbal round of gibberish, in which students simply carry on discussion using imaginary words (Spolin 125). In this case, body language and vocal expression are particularly important.

These gibberish activities, especially Spolin’s, lead quite appropriately to an examination of the many possible ways to speak a sentence. Maureen McCurry Cresci suggests giving each student a simple sentence, such as “I went for a walk the other day and fell down,” and presenting several ideas on situations and emotions that may influence how it is said (28-9). For instance, in the case of the example sentence, how would a grouchy person say it? How would a four-year-old say it? How would someone say it if he or she thought it was really funny? After gibberish points out that communication concerns more than just spoken words, this simple sentence activity applies this lesson to actual, true language by combining the inflection and expression of language with actual words.

**Pantomime and Improvisation**

Although pantomime is typically associated with movement, pantomime activities effectively connect kinesthetic and linguistic activities and therefore promote linguistic intelligence in non-linguistic students. Although many theatre educators define pantomime as a form of acting without words, I disagree with this definition. The art of mime does not use words, but the art of pantomime is simply acting without props. An actor can pantomime business while still reciting his or her lines. Plays such as *Our Town* effectively exhibit this combination of pantomime and spoken language. With this in mind, I have chosen a few activities that allow students to explore the kinesthetic and linguistic potential of pantomime, opening doors between the intelligences to increase learning.
In Paul Rooyacker’s game, “Translating Words,” students investigate uses of English language without necessarily using their voices. After finding a partner, each group decides on a compound word to enact; one partner pantomimes the first part of the word, while the other acts out the second (126). For example, if the pair chose the word “hotdog,” one student would show that he or she was feeling hot, and the partner could begin to bark. This form of charades uses theatrical techniques to teach students about the nature of compound words in a way that appeals to more than just the linguistic students.

Similarly, another activity aids students in perfecting their spelling words. For each spelling word, the teacher selects one student per letter. (Whether or not the class is aware of the spelling word ahead of time is optional.) The students will pantomime something starting with their letter in order to create the entire word. For younger students, animals are fun to pantomime, but older students may want to try various verbs in order to work on parts of speech at the same time. If, for instance, the group wanted to spell the word “cat,” the first student could climb, the second could argue, and the third could tiptoe. As the class pieces the word together, some of these kinesthetic or visual images may jump out at students who typically struggle with spelling words.

Acting out stories and other forms of literature is also an important linguistic activity for elementary students to promote reading. For the youngest students, nursery rhymes are easy to remember. Unfortunately, nursery rhymes are often left out of classrooms in lieu of the basic skills that must be taught before the end of any school year, so theatre arts teachers can pick up this almost-lost literature, presenting it to kindergartners and first graders in the form of play. For older students, the acting out of poetry can be just as engaging. Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky in particular have written an assortment of humorous poems that lend themselves very well to pantomime. Teachers can put students in groups, guide them in finding a narrator or two, and let them rehearse acting out the story through pantomime.

Linguistically intelligent students tend to embrace the challenge of improvisation. Less linguistic students, however, tend to find acting without a
script difficult, particularly the need to keep the dialogue moving along. Viola Spolin suggests a game that I often use to draw students into the chatty nature of improvisation. Linguistic students are challenged in a new way, while non-linguistic students explore the spoken elements of language. In this game, Three-Way Conversation, three students are seated in a row. The middle student is the designated listener, while the two seated on the outside are conversationalists, or “talkers.” Both talkers must talk to the listener for one full minute about whatever he or she chooses, and the talker who keeps the listeners attention for the majority of the time is considered the winner (Spolin 133). An important rule for this game is that the talkers are in no way allowed to touch the listener. Because of this restriction, the element of keeping listeners genuinely entertained gains importance.

For all students, non-readers in particular, these activities encourage the pursuit of reading comfortably some day. However, they also teach an appreciation for the various forms of language, proving that reading is only one of many communication techniques. Students who can begin to express themselves through body language and vocal expression before opening a book will more easily translate these skills over to written forms of literature once they do become comfortable with reading

**Musical Intelligence**

Music is an integral part of any elementary school student’s education, but for some students, music is a defining characteristic of their academic success. Even at an early age, students with musical intelligence stand out: “Musical intelligence is the earliest form of human giftedness to emerge; it is a mystery as to why this is so” (Campbell xvii). Because of the variety of possible abilities that musical students possess, teachers have several different types of activities from which to choose when planning their lessons. According to Sue Teele, musical intelligence could include conducting, singing, composing, improvisation, poetry,
and moving rhythmically (37). Although not all musical students have perfect pitch or a precise sense of rhythm, they do tend to achieve greater success when approached through musical means.

The obviously profound effect of music upon young children can be seen in examples of rhymes and songs still remembered into the adult years. “Thirty days hath September[...]” and the Alphabet Song still ring in our ears from time to time. At some point, however, these songs suddenly seem “babyish” and unnecessary in the classroom, and musical intelligence can be left unfulfilled. Classroom teachers can utilize music in various ways on a day-to-day basis by playing soft music in the background at certain times or by teaching a concept to a tune. To this day, I can remember the helping verbs to the tune of “Yankee Doodle” as taught by my eighth grade English teacher. Effective musical methods do exist in regular classrooms, but musical students often get overlooked as “I'm a Little Teapot” fades from the classroom agenda.

Theatre educators in the elementary school classroom face the responsibility of transitioning students from childish sing-alongs to a deeper appreciation of music as it relates to the arts. For instance, the songs that they may possibly know already, such as “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider” or “I'm a Little Teapot,” can serve as warm-ups for kindergarten and first grade students. These songs are helpful because they are familiar for musical and non-musical students alike, and they break down the walls of a traditional classroom setting, providing space for the creativity to come.

Once this preliminary musical relationship is established, however, teachers can introduce more advanced musical activities, such as more complicated songs and personifying the music, in order to challenge their musically intelligent students. The following activities endeavor to fulfill both of these goals.
Songs

A straightforward transition would simply involve choosing a more difficult song, possibly an unfamiliar one. Several songs combine kinesthetic and musical intelligences in such a way that young actors can use them as either warm-ups or classroom activities. These songs, just as many of the linguistic activities, introduce musical intelligence to other intelligences in fun ways.

Perhaps the most famous of these songs is “Father Abraham,” in which the lyrics direct students to move a progressively larger number of body parts as the song moves forward, until the students are even moving their tongues, in some cases. Spolin suggests a similar song to the same tune named “Adam’s Sons” (74).

Another song that, although popular, is not quite as well known is titled, “Hi! My name is Joe!” Different teachers have their own versions of the song, but in every version, students must coordinate their singing to some contrary movements. The exact origins of the song are unknown because it is typically a song sung at summer camp programs across the United States:

Hi! (beat) My name is Joe!
And I work (beat) in (beat) a button factory.
I have a wife and a dog and a family.
One day (beat) my boss came up to me.
He said, “Hey, Joe? Are you busy?” I said, “No.”
He said, “Turn this button with your right hand…”

Future verses require feet, the head and even the tongue to turn buttons in the factory, until Joe finally tells his boss that yes, he is busy.

As students get older, they tend to develop an attitude designating themselves as “too cool” to participate in certain activities. Songs such as these, however, somehow tend to break down these barriers. Perhaps they are so silly that students feel they must try it, but more likely, the attitude of the teacher determines that of the students. Teachers who open themselves up to looking ridiculous have a greater chance of encouraging students to join them. I was unsure about singing “Hi! My Name is Joe” with a group of fifth graders and was
surprised when they enjoyed the experience so much that they requested it again the following class. Somehow, music removed walls of inhibition and prompted a productive and excited class, at the same time challenging my musically intelligent students.

**Becoming the Music**

Because music is such a vivid form of expression, young students may enjoy getting as close as possible to the phenomenon. In the process, the students also view the possibilities of music beyond singing. One way to explore the lyrical aspect of the song is to act it out, much like acting out a poem or a story (Rubenstein 29). Instead of merely lip-synching to the words, students must discover what the lyrics mean and attempt to bring the song to life, almost as though creating a music video with or without the music. One student, or more, reads the lyrics as the others pantomime the action of the song. Some of the familiar nursery rhymes and finger plays may prove a successful beginning to the activity, but older elementary students may want to explore popular songs that have personal meaning. In this situation, however, teachers should stress that some popular songs may not be appropriate for class and are therefore off limits. Other choices may include ballads or folk songs that can connect to a specific time in history. This activity will engage musical students in acting, while showing non-musical students the possible connections between various intelligences.

If students want to go a bit further and actually become the music, Lisa Bany-Winters offers some suggestions. One activity, “Human Orchestra,” asks each student to become a musician playing whatever instrument they would like to play. The teacher can designate one student as the conductor and ask each musician to pantomime playing the instrument while creating a sound. The conductor can allow them to tune up in order to practice their sound and movement before starting the orchestra’s first number (104). Another way for students to become music or, more accurately, sound is to provide an activity involving sound effects. Bany-Winters gives an example of a Sound Effects
Story revolving around one person’s long day (126). The story provides several opportunities for students to chime in as the sound effects for things such as alarm clocks, rainstorms, and ghosts. Teachers can also create their own opportunity to use sound effects, whether through improvisation or the use of stories. These sounds can be created by instruments or the students’ voices and bodies. Either way, sound effects are an easy way to introduce a connection between theatre and music to younger students.

An easier activity, “Thunderstorm,” introduces students to percussive sounds yet does not require full body movement. In this activity, the students are seated, and they repeat exactly what the teacher does when he or she walks by them. Once they imitate the teacher’s movements, they do not change movements until he or she walks by with a new movement. Meanwhile, the teacher is going from rubbing the palms of his or her hands, to snapping, clapping hands to thighs, stomping, and going in reverse order. If the students stay quiet and focused, the effect is a thunderstorm created entirely by the students’ bodies. This activity introduces sound in a non-threatening manner.

Each of these activities succeeds in advancing students beyond the simple nursery rhymes while remaining accessible to even small children. They introduce several theatrical ideas, such as the connection between voice and movement and the pertinence of sound effects. Musically intelligent students will be introduced to theatre through the medium of music—a form often neglected in the conventional classroom. At the same time, these exercises provide the opportunity for non-musical students to participate and explore music through theatre.

**Visual-Spatial Intelligence**

When Howard Gardner decided to give examples of his intelligences by joining recognizable figures to each intelligence, artists such as Pablo Picasso stood out as examples of spatial intelligence. In an article entitled, “Multiple Intelligences and the Artistic Imagination: A Case Study of Einstein and Picasso,”
Claire Newbold examines the abilities of both Einstein and Picasso. Although Picasso is more closely associated with the spatial intelligence and Einstein with the logical-mathematical, the two men struggled with their genius. Newbold writes: “Both men disliked school as children. Einstein found it boring, dull, and too regimented; Picasso couldn’t understand much of it, having difficulty in learning to read and an even harder time mastering numbers” (154). By viewing Picasso, who is typically considered a genius, in this light, evidence of multiple intelligences is apparent. Some students have an innate sense of space. “Picasso didn’t speak his first word, he ‘drew’ it. Indeed, according to one childhood friend of Picasso’s, drawing was his way of talking” (Newbold 154). Instead of forcing these students to struggle, theatre arts teachers can easily find activities to allow visual-spatial students to succeed.

Visually spatially intelligent students may enjoy art activities; read maps, charts and diagrams; and think with images and pictures (Teele 34). Although the label claims “visual-spatial intelligence,” the visual aspect is not necessarily clear-cut. Gardner states, “[…]here is not necessarily a privileged relationship between visual input and spatial intelligence” (Frames 186). Much as the deaf student is capable of linguistic intelligence through alternate forms of communication, blind students can still possess spatial intelligence. In fact, blind people survive off of their acute sense of space, remembering the layout of a room more aptly than a seeing person. Although spatial activities may need modification for blind students, teachers still must realize that this is possibly a very strong intelligence in these students.

In an elementary school classroom, educators can expose students to a great deal of visual-spatial stimuli. In his book, Eight Ways of Teaching: The Artistry of Teaching with Multiple Intelligences, David Lazear presents examples of potential visual material. “Visual/spatial intelligence is awakened by presenting the mind with unusual, delightful, and colorful designs, patterns, shapes, and pictures, and engaging in active imagination through such things as imagination and pretending exercises” (Lazear 51). Teachers can also teach to visual-spatial students through slides, diagrams, movies, mind maps and colors
to represent words or letters (Teele 35). These ideas are easily implemented in any classroom.

Many of these examples, particularly the “imagination and pretending exercises” mentioned by Lazear, are especially ideal for use in a theatre arts class. For instance, in my classroom I have set up a theatre word wall, a collection of theatre vocabulary words that appear as we discuss them in class. The word wall itself appeals to the linguistic intelligence, but each word is in a different color. Words taught on the same day appear in the same color so students can make connections between concepts. “Monologue” and “Dialogue,” for example, were discussed on the same day and are, therefore, both yellow. Even the location of the word wall is purposely set at the front of the classroom to give the visual-spatial student visual implications of what I am discussing.

Because the visual-spatial intelligence is often overlooked, I present examples of activities aimed directly at introducing these students to theatre. For instance, in regards to theatre, the visual-spatial student often has a clear perception of space, but he or she may need to be prodded into adding the element of imagination. Abstract thinking does not come naturally to young students, but playing pretend does. Teachers can encourage visual-spatial thinking by prompting students to pretend that areas of space are transformed into tangible places and objects. One simple example of such an exercise is Robert Rubenstein’s “Water Walk.” To begin, students simply wander around the room. As they wander, the teacher explains that the room is going to slowly fill up with water. The emphasis should be placed on how difficult it becomes to move in water, not that this is a crisis situation. Once the water comes to their knees, students should begin to slow down and continue to do so as the water rises. As a non-threatening ending, Rubenstein suggests allowing to students to turn into an ocean animal once the water rises above their heads (7). This use of space uses visual-spatial intelligence while combined with the kinesthetic movement and intrapersonal focus on a solo endeavor. By applying imagination to visual-spatial activities through activities such as pantomime and design, students are able to find a creative outlet for that particular intelligence.
Pantomime

Pantomime is extremely well-suited for the spatially intelligent student. Because of their ability to look beyond the space, these students will excel at the use of imaginary objects once the idea is explained. Three important points to keep in mind when using imaginary objects are the size, weight, and placement of the object. By placement, I refer to the space inhabited by the object. A performer must remember where the object is, whether it is a permanent fixture or has been set down. Students who are able to “see” these objects despite their invisibility will be able to perform pantomime realistically. In order to give students a chance to begin handling the space, teachers may want to use the ideas of Paul Rooyackers or Maureen Mcurry Cresci.

Rooyackers depicts a game in which the teacher has the students pass an invisible object around a circle (54). He does not clarify whether the teacher announces the identity of the object or not, but he presses to maintain the original size and shape of the object. Cresci, on the other hand, gives specific examples of the objects to be passed and directly states that the students should know what they are handling. She adds, however, that the teacher should not provide an example of how the object should be handled, allowing the students to feel the objects on their own. Cresci’s examples include a basketball, an ice cube, and a giant bubble (5-6). These passing activities serve as effective precursors to further study of pantomime, providing a less intimidating activity for the entire class without forcing students to begin experimenting individually with an audience’s watching eye.

Design

Although theatre educators do not typically approach the concept of design until students are older and more skilled, elementary students can utilize their imaginations and begin to touch on the idea. Design is, in fact, very similar to the visual arts that elementary students are used to. It may lack the technical knowledge developed through in-depth training, but the creativity of design is appropriate for young children. For example, one element of design is its ability to create mood, which is an abstract idea. Elementary school students
understand the concept of emotion, however, and can explain how certain things make them feel, both verbally and visually. Students can begin to explore this concept by discussing an abstract picture (McCaslin 46) or drawing a picture depicting music playing in the classroom (Cassady 47). Both activities look at different art media and how they project a mood, which can translate into the moods created by theatre.

Design can also be addressed in the elementary school theatre arts by simply allowing students to work on their visual arts skills. An easy and popular form of creating visual characters is to let each student have his/her own paper bag to create a puppet. This allows the students to create visual art and learn about the art of puppetry simultaneously, thus fitting visual-spatial intelligence directly into the curriculum. These various uses of visual-spatial intelligence may appeal to the visual-spatial student and assist in finding one of the many possible niches in the theatre arts.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence**

Older students are not the only ones who feel peer pressure. From the first days of the socialization process, children long to fit in and often assume that in order to be a part of the whole, individuals must all agree with one another. When I asked kindergartners to name some cartoon characters, I discovered that most of them raised their hand only to name a character that had been previously mentioned. My appraisal of the student who originated the comment triggered a response from the rest of the class that this, indeed, was the one answer I was looking for. This frustrating lack of creativity is commonly seen with younger children. Individuality is not as important; for example, if one little girl decides to be Snow White, all of the little girls want to be Snow White.

Intrapersonal students, if they choose to avoid the peer pressure, are those who do possess the inner-strength to be an individual. He or she focuses on the self and enjoys working alone. Just because a person has especially strong intrapersonal intelligence, however, does not mean that he or she is shy.
“Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the ability to construct an accurate perception of oneself and to use such knowledge in planning and directing one’s life” (Campbell xvi). This definition points toward a positive self-awareness, which may instead provide the confidence needed to speak against the crowd.

Educators can curb the class’s general desire to remain consistent with peers by promoting the value of the self from the very beginning. One easy way to begin is to place students in situations where they must work alone. Students can be easily influenced by other students’ ideas, so engaging students in imaginative activities that do not require sharing thoughts aloud can set young students on the right path. Most importantly, teachers should constantly praise students for their creativity and originality, pointing out the fact that there are many wonderful possible answers.

In a subject area where performance in front of a crowd is the natural tendency, intrapersonally intelligent students may initially feel out of place. As a whole, theatre arts provide opportunities for not only self-awareness, but insofar as the self fits into humanity. “By experiencing human situations and their consequences, students better understand themselves and others” (Fowler 89). Young students can use theatre arts to transport them into situations that they may not typically encounter and, therefore, encounter themselves from a new perspective as well. At the same time, intrapersonal students realize the importance of their own experience and strengths and are able to transform this information into a self-confidence that allows them to share with peers or even an audience.

Unfortunately, at such a young age, the majority of students struggle with identity issues. Who are they? Do their peers like them? Are they considered “normal”? At the same time, students cannot entirely define themselves because they are still forming themselves: intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Theatre arts can aid non-intrapersonal students in this capacity as well. As Rooyackers notes, “Drama games develop your personality—You learn to work with your imagination and process your experiences consciously in your way of relating to others. You gain more control over what you say and do and how you move.
Your self-esteem grows through playing” (4). By experiencing imaginative theatre arts activities, both intrapersonally strong and weak students can develop a better sense of themselves and their many roles in the world around them. In the following sections, I will put forth the examples of working alone and puppetry as two strong concepts to cultivate a sense of individuality in elementary school students.

**Working Solo**

Theatre can provide plenty of opportunity for individual work, especially in the areas of emotional and sensory recall. Because self-awareness includes awareness of one’s feelings, any exercise in emotions can be considered intrapersonal. Many of the activities are also for solo work, however. For instance, students standing in their own personal space can represent an emotion with their entire body when prompted by the teacher. The teacher can emphasize that facial expressions alone do not carry across emotion; the entire body can be involved. Through activities such as this one, students can begin to experience emotional recall.

Sensory recall is also easily accessed through intrapersonal exercises. In this case, the teacher must first discuss the five senses. Marsh Cassady relates an activity that engages students in using one sense in particular: hearing. On his or her own, each student makes a list of every sound that he or she hears over the course of a few minutes. Afterwards, students can share what they have experienced individually (Cassady 34). Once the students are familiar with all of the five senses, the theatre arts teacher can draw the connection between acting, or playing pretend, and the senses, namely sensory recall. Simply asking students to close their eyes and recall a common experience, such as eating at McDonald’s, can introduce them to the idea. Another simple activity asks students to pretend that they are eating different foods (Cresci 9). What do the foods taste/smell/feel/look/sound like? Using the imagination in this respect is a highly personal and introspective activity suited for the intrapersonal intelligence.
Puppets

Puppetry, as well, introduces intrapersonal students to theatre in a non-intimidating fashion. Although the puppets do interact with other puppets, the characterization developed between the performer and the puppet is personalized. Students experiment with group interaction while maintaining their individuality behind the puppets they have created. For this reason, teachers should stress each student’s individuality as the class creates the puppets, deterring students from imitating artwork seen on the puppets around them. Puppets also work well in the case of intrapersonal (or other) students who are shy. “Many teachers discover that children can often respond through puppets when they are unable to perform themselves. The puppet, an extension of the self, serves as a mask, enabling the player to gain a freedom he cannot achieve when acting a part” (McCaslin 70). Classifying the puppet as “an extension of the self” seems especially apt in the case of intrapersonally intelligent students, allowing them to project themselves onto the puppet for theatrical performance.

One Complete Lesson Plan

Once an elementary school theatre arts teacher accumulates activities for students of all eight intelligences, the next step is creating a lesson plan. Combining activities appropriate for eight different types of students is not as difficult as it may sound; many of the activities that I have mentioned were useful for more than one type of student. However, I will continue to emphasize the four intelligences discussed here. As an example, I present a sample lesson plan on the art of pantomime that could be used for any age level from kindergarten through fifth grade.

I begin by asking them to find their own personal space to warm up. Then we sing “Hi! My Name is Joe” to warm up the body and voice at the same time. As previously mentioned, this activity coordinates musical with kinesthetic ability, appealing to more than just the musical intelligence. To warm up the imagination, I have students remain standing to go on an imaginary journey
through the woods: crossing a brook, climbing a tree, jumping over a log, etc.
The students are allowed to wander around the room on their own with little to no
sound as they listen to my directions. I direct students to take this journey alone
and avoid any clumping into groups of friends, serving as an intrapersonal
exploration. Students will unknowingly apply sensory recall to their view of what
things might be like as they individually move throughout the space.

I show the class the word “Pantomime.” What do they think it means?
Some of the students have taken theatre before and may be able to help teach
the concept. I explain that pantomime is acting without props, keeping in mind
the size, weight, and placement of imaginary objects. This explanation of the
word and its properties takes a linguistic approach to teaching. In order to
reach a broader span of students, however, I also demonstrate the unrealistic
changing of size, weight or placement that could occur. I ask the students to
hold an imaginary box. From this point, we experiment with sizes and weights
before I ask students to set the box down and take a couple of steps in either
direction. They must try to remember exactly where the box rests, which proves
how difficult space and imaginary objects can be. This demonstration will clarify
the concept for other students who may need the visual stimulation, such as the
visual-spatial intelligence.

I have the students stand in a circle and pass imaginary objects. I change
the space into an object, such as a balloon, and pass it to the person next to me.
As the item goes around the circle, I encourage creativity. For instance, if the
students are passing a piece of tape, one may decide to stick it on the back of
their neighbor’s shirt instead of placing it directly in their hands. Students who
actually allow themselves to “see” the object tend to be the most creative. By
transforming the space into objects such as a basketball or a piece of sticky
bubble gum, all students will have the chance to attempt a visual-spatial activity
themselves.

Once the entire group has experimented with pantomime, they are ready
to try the concept out on their own. To accomplish this, I enjoy engaging my
students in a game called “The Gift.” Each performer draws out a slip of paper
on which is written an object. This object is the “gift” that the player will receive. Once the player opens an imaginary box and pulls out the gift, he or she must use the object in some way so that the audience can guess the gift’s contents. This activity serves both kinesthetic and **visual-spatial** intelligences with its movement and use of space, but because the student must discover how to create the object on his or her own, this activity also promotes **intrapersonal** intelligence. Activities that combine several intelligences, such as this one, are truly effective.

At the end of class, I review the definition of pantomime and ask the students to remind me of the three things to keep in mind with imaginary objects. This gives the student ownership of the information by proving that they can relate it to others. Finally, I praise the students for their good work in class that day.

This sample plan is for one lesson. To attempt to reach every intelligence in each and every day’s lesson is idealistic, but utilization of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences can strongly improve unit planning in theatre education. Teachers should look at whole units and determine specific activities that fit each intelligence, working them into the course of the entire unit. An ample amount of theatre activities provide teachers with plenty of choices, and a teacher’s creativity can modify and improve pre-existing activities at any point. The examples presented in this chapter should merely serve as the groundwork for future explorations to enrich the theatre classroom.
CHAPTER 3
REFINING THEIR SKILLS: ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

As students get older, they are in danger of losing their excitement for learning. This thought is especially worrisome considering the fact that students also gain the option to drop out of school as they get older. As a result, teachers must find a way to balance the education expected from the curriculum with the enjoyable activities that will keep the students interested. One way to capture students’ attention is to seek out their intelligences and to utilize that information to lead them into areas of learning that may enhance their school experience. By studying the theatre arts as a whole, a student has a greater chance of finding a particular area of interest. Even one interest can be enough to trigger a desire to learn; therefore, it is especially vital that secondary students have exposure to all eight intelligences as they relate to theatre.

Whereas in Chapter One, I encouraged teachers to introduce dramatic play through several intelligences, in this chapter I will focus on utilizing the intelligences to stimulate a desire for knowledge at a more advanced level. In a project on Langston Hughes, educator Sharon Fennessey demonstrates the potential of theatre in secondary education: “In assessing the students’ learning, the most explicit evidence came from the students’ written responses after a literature or drama experience” (18). Her findings promote the ease in which the intelligences translate into theatre. She writes: “Drama helps students reach below the surface of words to the underlying meaning, to internalize and thus truly understand past as well as present experiences” (Fennessey 16). Considering that theatre is often reduced to the plays themselves, these words
encourage educators to view theatre arts beyond the script, to draw in students of all intelligences on the secondary level.

For this reason, I present possible games and activities geared for the older students. Obviously these ideas will be slightly more advanced and will give a sharper focus to specific areas as these students determine which areas of theatre they may wish to pursue. Some will be directed at strengthening already existing intelligences, providing opportunities to learn about another area through that strength, while others will prompt growth in a particular intelligence. Once again, I will touch upon all of the intelligences while focusing more directly upon the linguistic, musical, spatial and intrapersonal. Although the activities will be more advanced, teachers should not shy away from areas that lie beyond their usual range of expertise. Just because a teacher is geared toward acting does not mean that he or she cannot present simple instruction/activities and encourage those students with different intelligences to pursue certain things on their own. Once the basics are taught, teachers can help by simply providing opportunity through various venues, such as production opportunity or college searches. A secondary teacher helps his or her students find their niche.

**Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence**

Middle and high school students, who generally have a basic understanding of language at this point, suddenly find themselves facing the diversity of linguistics. Students with verbal-linguistic intelligence in particular discover their specific preferences. Gardner divides linguistic knowledge into four aspects: rhetorical, mnemonic potential, explanation, and metalinguistic analysis. The rhetorical aspect is “the ability to use language to convince other individuals of a course of action” (*Frames 78*). The second aspect, mnemonic potential, refers to a student’s ability to utilize language in order to remember information. Language is also the primary transport of teaching and learning, explaining information. Finally, Gardner classifies metalinguistics as “the ability
to use language to reflect upon language” (*Frames* 78). All of these areas focus on extremely diverse strengths that a linguistically intelligent student may or may not possess.

Teachers can provide access to verbal-linguistic activities in many ways. One important linguistic activity in any classroom is discussion. Class discussion gives students the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions, and the entire class can be involved in one way or another. Besides discussion, several other teaching styles relate well to linguistic students. These techniques include lectures, word games, storytelling, debates, speeches, reading aloud, writing and listening exercises (Teele 28). By using a variety of these techniques, teachers will more likely reach those students possessing different forms of the intelligence.

Words are often a prime component of the theatre classroom. When teachers consider linguistic intelligence, they tend to focus on the actor’s use of the script. An actor must possess some level of reading comprehension, especially in the secondary school. Because of this typical actor-centered environment, some of the less obvious linguistic elements of theatre may be overlooked. For instance, Gardner’s classifications of rhetorical, mnemonic, explanatory, and metalinguistic areas of linguistic intelligence can all be addressed through various aspects of theatre. Students with rhetorical abilities may enjoy public relations or playwriting with a specific agenda in mind. Actors use mnemonic devices in order to memorize lines and blocking. Students who excel in explanatory language could serve several roles in the theatre: director, dramaturg, actor, publicist or critic. Finally, metalinguistics is often used in playwriting as writers experiment with dialogue and different forms of language. Linguistic students could be strong actors, but they could be equally, or in some cases more, comfortable in the position of playwright or critic. For linguistic students who excel at speaking and/or listening, improvisation is another venue that may lead to new possibilities. Both improvisation and writing for theatre provide students with linguistic activities that challenge middle and high school students to enhance skills that they may or may not already possess.
As discussed in the previous chapter, however, teachers should remain aware of their non-linguistic students during these activities. For example, possible methods for holding discussion could include assigning a discussion monitor to call on students and keep track of who has participated or to use a talking stick (Campbell 15). The talking stick, or any such object, is used to ensure that only one student speaks at a time; only the person holding the stick may have the floor. Mainly, these activities address linguistic students, but they may also spark an interest for other students, especially in the case of improvisation, where reading is not an essential component. Through such activities, less linguistic students may realize that some of the linguistic alternatives to reading, such as speech and listening skills, are present in their daily lives. This understanding can lessen the threat of language, making linguistic intelligence accessible to a greater number of students. At the same time, theatre activities such as improvisation allow for the freedom of creativity, which appeals to all of the intelligences.

**Writers**

Instead of constantly providing students with scripts to learn and rehearse, teachers should also give students the opportunity to write their own scripts, especially secondary students, who should have a stronger grasp on writing by this point. Such writing activities prove beneficial for several reasons. They require some level of creativity, and because the students make the choices, their ownership of the script results in a stronger interest in what they’re doing.

Because the task may seem overwhelming initially, the best approach to playwriting is to start small with short monologues or dialogues. Monologues work well because the structure is basically the familiar paragraph form. Once students learn basic dramatic structure, they can practice by pairing up to write short scenes to be presented to the class. In an age when movies and television are so important to youth, dialogues and scenes are easy concepts to grasp. These media alone, however, do not foster students’ imaginations in the same way that creative writing can. Though a simple activity, writing dialogue is
engaging and proves to be a small building block that will aid students in the larger projects to come.

Another form of playwriting comes from the adaptation of stories. Because of copyright laws, the easiest way to use the adaptation method is to choose folktales, fairy tales, or legends that do not carry the weight of such restrictions. These stories contain excellent cultural lessons as well and may provoke further research. For my first production while teaching in the public schools, I decided that with my small funding and four separate sixth grade classes, the best approach would be to let them transform cultural stories into plays. I focused on stories from the four most prevalent cultures found in our county: Mexican, Hmong, African and the American tall tale. Within each class, I separated the students into smaller groups, and each group was assigned a small part of the story to change into dialogue form. When all of the pieces of the production came together, the students had the distinction of producing their own play from start to finish. They also discovered that they actually taught the rest of the community about the diversity found in their county, introducing them to cultures that some people had chosen to ignore in the past. Their ability to communicate ideas that were so significant to them as a culturally diverse community emphasized the critical importance of language to linguistic and less linguistic students.

Students who enjoy writing may also choose to focus on the critical aspects of theatre. In order for critics to hold much weight, however, they must realize the importance of understanding the basic elements of theatre, which may prove incentive for the linguistic students to learn about technical theatre as well as the performance aspects. Only when the student realizes the various components needed to create the production in its entirety can he or she give a true analysis of the show. Critiquing is truly an art of its own; linguistic students may relish the opportunity to express their opinions while playing with the wording to find the most effective descriptions. While the teacher should, at the very least, touch upon how to write a critique with the entire class, s/he can offer
other chances for the budding critics to perfect their skills. For example, many teachers offer extra credit to students who attend plays and review them.

For the linguistic students who delight in writing, theatre provides many possibilities, but these possibilities can foster learning in non-writers as well. Much of today’s academic curriculum focuses on writing skills and pushes for the graduation of quality writers. Any college professor will admit that few students possess adequate writing abilities upon entering college. Activities that can make writing enjoyable by, for example, allowing for creativity, will encourage students to practice writing and thus hone their skills.

**Improvisation**

Some linguistic students prefer speaking to writing or reading. These students, in particular, will most likely enjoy improvisation. Likewise, nonlinguistic students may be scared of language arts activities in school because such activities tend to involve intimidating practices, such as reading aloud, so improvisation may familiarize them with language in new ways. In order to get students talking and engaged in improvisational activities, teachers should carefully select games to initiate improvisational conversation. Robert Rubenstein describes a game entitled “Let’s Argue,” in which students are assigned characters and must argue their point on an issue. Rubenstein states examples such as “the president of the U.S. and his daughter” and emphasizes that these arguments should remain effective and not turn into a battle of “no” and “yes” (Rubenstein 37-8). This game is a useful way to start improvisation because it forces students to think quickly while staying in character. Plus, students are provided with a solid background about which to speak.

More advanced improvisational activities can challenge secondary school students. Improvisations often turn into humorous situations, and the laughter serves as a bonding tool between classmates. For instance, Lisa Bany-Winters introduces “The Dubbing Game,” which calls for actors onstage and off. The onstage actors enact the decided-upon who, what and where of the scene without words, while the offstage actors provide the speech (94). The two sets of actors must try to connect the words to the movements and vice-versa.
Resulting scenes tend to be extremely entertaining without putting the entirety of the pressure on one or two performers. I play a similar game with my oldest students, where two or more actors present a scene onstage complete with speech. At the same time, additional performers supply lines to explain what the onstage actors are really thinking, acting as the actors’ consciences. In addition to teaching improvisational skills, this activity also introduces the concept of inner-monologue and spoken lines versus intention.

For the students who prefer speaking and for those who have quick imaginations, improvisational games and activities are typically successful. When teaching improvisation to students who are reserved and inhibited, however, these activities may turn into a struggle, and students may wonder at their purpose. Although improvisation is an entity unto itself, its relationship to theatre is important and should be explained to the students. Students should be aware that improvisation serves as a quick fix for actors onstage in case of forgotten lines, as well as an active resource in generating new ideas. In this way, both linguistic and non-linguistic students can appreciate the power of language as it is applied to theatre.

Musical Intelligence

Much like the linguistic students, musical students develop strengths in different areas. Music, itself, is composed of many different parts: “Most central are pitch (or melody) and rhythm: sounds emitted at certain auditory frequencies and grouped according to a prescribed system […] Next in importance only to pitch and rhythm is timbre—the characteristic qualities of a tone” (Gardner Frames 104). This scientific break-down of music merely touches on the possibilities for student strengths within musical intelligence. Students could excel at rhythm or have perfect pitch, but they may also have a predisposition for composition, expression, or simply appreciation of the sounds.

All too often, secondary teachers avoid music in the classroom because of the negative connotations surrounding much of popular music today. The
subject matter may not be appropriate or an unappealing lifestyle may seem linked to a certain genre. Students hold this music in high regard, however, and have a genuine interest in the songs and their artists. Instead of ignoring certain types of music, teachers should attempt to incorporate them into their classrooms whenever possible. Not all songs will be suitable for school, of course, but teachers can at least discuss musical choices as they relate to other areas of the curriculum.

When theatre arts educators incorporate music into their classroom, not only do they appeal to musical students, they also provide an example the integration of the performing arts. Musical theatre is not the only instance of the connection between music and theatre; most performances, whether through theatre or other media, have some sort of background music. Teachers may model this concept by playing music in the classroom as an underscoring to the lessons or activities. The music can be used to relax, focus, invigorate, transition or simply to evoke some sort of emotional state (Campbell 138-9). I have also allowed students to provide their own background music while giving mime performances. Because they are allowed to choose the music themselves, students are pushed to make the musical connection on their own.

By the time students reach middle and high school, they may begin to realize the commonalities between music and spoken word. Just because an actor does not "sing" to a predetermined melody as in a showtune does not mean that he or she does not present the lines in a musical way. As Gardner stated, the elements of pitch, rhythm and timbre constitute music; melody is not a primary criterion. Under this definition, the human voice, in and of itself, produces music when speaking just as it does when singing. All language, not just poetry, possesses musicality, which means that all speakers have musical potential. If teachers present the material in this way, both language and music become more accessible to students of different intelligence. Helping students

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7 The incorporation of various art forms into the theatre curriculum falls under the National Standard Course of Study's sixth objective.
make the connection between music and language can be achieved through a variety of activities that emphasize rhythm and pitch/tone.

**Rhythm**

Pointing out the natural rhythms of language is easiest when first introduced through poetry and song. In “Pass the Clap,” Lisa Bany-Winters suggests putting the students in a circle, where they clap alternately to the words of a well-known song. Only one person claps at a time, whether the clap travels around the circle or individuals jump in to clap from wherever they are standing (42). This activity gives students the sense of linguistic rhythm that they will need, and it also creates an atmosphere of give and take. When students are clapping in no particular order, especially, they must be conscious of when to take initiative and when to allow others to take control. This rhythm, though contrived through poetic meter, introduces the idea of rhythmic patterns in language.

Using Shakespeare’s iambic pentameter can also reveal patterns in language, while opening the linguistic styles of Shakespeare to musical students. Every actor should experience Shakespeare’s verse at some point in his or her training, so the rhythm of iambic pentameter can prove to be an exercise in the possibilities of language’s rhythm. Teachers can show the patterns of iambic pentameter by giving a visual depiction through the demarcation of texts, but the concept can be taught through kinesthetic means as well. Students are able to accomplish the rhythm by marching in place, lifting their feet during the unstressed syllables and stepping for emphasis on the stressed syllables. The same idea could also shift into actual walking movement or, for the more coordinated, galloping. This activity applies to the linguistic, musical, and kinesthetic intelligences by translating the three ideas from one to the next. By introducing rhythmical language in this way, teachers make learning accessible to many students at once; whether or not they are coordinated enough to speak and move at the same time, students get a tangible grasp on the concept.

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8 Logical-mathematical intelligence may find the patterns of the meter interesting as well.
Melodies of Language

Every time I announce that it is time to warm up our voices at the start of each class, one student inevitably breaks out into song. The correlation between voice and song is engrained in society’s perception, when actually, we use our voices far more to speak than to sing. If students understand that language has natural rhythm, they should realize that it has natural melody as well. Through vocal inflections and the expressionistic nature of any human speech, language is song-like, even for those who cannot carry a tune. In this way, all people are capable of some amount of music. One way to discover the various pitches and musical qualities of speech is to closely examine a sentence or small portion of a play. After carefully reading the piece aloud a couple of times, students can describe places of emphasis or words and phrases that cause the voice to travel up and down the vocal range. For instance, at the end of a question, the reader’s voice may trail upward to query or remain somewhat flat.

Viola Spolin proposes a theatre game to play with the musicality of specific words. In “Singing Syllables,” one student is sent out of the room while the remainder of the class picks a word. A certain grouping of the class is responsible for each syllable of the word. When the other student returns, the groups sing their one syllable simultaneously, either to a designated tune or to their own idea of what the syllable should sound like until the student can guess the word (Spolin 113). This activity, which places students in groups and allows them to share musical intelligence amongst themselves, proves that even the individual syllables within words deserve careful consideration. Musical activities such as these can introduce students to new concepts and connections to both musical and non-musical students alike through interaction with the other intelligences.

Visual-Spatial Intelligence

For visual-spatial students, secondary school brings a realization: mathematical and artistic concepts learned in elementary school are actually
interwoven in advanced spatial learning. “The adolescent, being able to appreciate all possible spatial arrangements, is in a favorable position to join together logical-mathematical and spatial forms of intelligence into a single geometric or scientific system” (Gardner *Frames* 180). Unless a student is extremely gifted in one of the visual-spatial areas, he or she will need to gain the ability to synthesize prior knowledge in order to create. Without this ability, students will not be able to advance to higher levels of visual-spatial thought.

Secondary school teachers can enhance the students’ synthesis skills by constantly reviewing as they teach. By reviewing past skills, students not only refresh their memories; they also make connections between concepts, indicating their ability to develop problem-solving strategies through synthesis in the future. Teachers guide students through the process at first, only to familiarize them with the possibilities before putting students in the position to draw their own conclusions.

Visual-spatial students must make these strides as they proceed to middle and high school theatre arts classes as well. For instance, elementary students can begin to sketch ideas and imagine how a scene should look, but in most cases they do not truly begin to acquire the skills to carry these visions through until they reach the secondary school level. In the case of direction, visual-spatial students must learn to incorporate interpersonal skills, as well as theatrical terminology. Design, too, requires further study, especially in the area of mathematics.

The elements of theatre that most likely attract visual-spatial students, namely design and direction, are often passed over in lieu of acting, acting and more acting. While acting does require a strong spatial awareness in many ways, other possibilities are just as plausible. More importantly, teachers who take the time to focus on alternative elements not only broaden student experience, they present many problem-solving opportunities as well. Students are forced to solve problems dealing with blocking, scenic feasibility, and numerous other difficulties that arise when staging a production. By learning how to fix theatrical problems through visual-spatial means, students will learn
problem-solving techniques that can transfer into the other areas of their lives. The following activities draw visual-spatial students into theatre, while exposing all students to often-overlooked elements of theatre: design and directing.

Design

Architecture is an area of design that particularly connects theatre with visual-spatial points of study. As Campbell writes, “Linkages to architecture can be discovered when teachers consider how the built environment is involved in various instructional units” (118). In the case of theatre, the “built environment” consists of some unique and varying buildings. Theatre architecture has continuously changed throughout history, and the visually intelligent student may come to appreciate theatre history through this aspect of the changing nature of theatre architecture. Given the uncertainty of Elizabethan theatre spaces, students can experience this historic problem-solving. After showing them the Norden, Hollar, and DeWitt drawings, from which the scholars derived their information, teachers can ask the students to draw their own estimations of what these theatres looked like. Suddenly, students are making decisions and suggestions based off of historical sources, and because it involves architecture and sketching, visual-spatial students in particular will use their skills.

Scene design introduces new challenges—transferring a story’s setting into reality. In order to let students practice design, teachers can simply let them sketch out their ideas, but a diorama has students come as close to creating the actual scenery as they can without building a full-scale set. Although shoe boxes can still serve as an efficient stage space, secondary students should be expected to create fairly in-depth projects. After all, these three-dimensional representations can indicate whether or not this scenery could be practically built and used in production. Several challenges face the students on a scene design project, no matter how simple or detailed the designs should be. They must carefully analyze the script to determine the basic layout and even the necessary details, and they must make decisions about the mood. This project also combines visual-spatial intelligence with other subjects, such as the linguistic
nature of reading comprehension and the mathematical concept of scale representation. Students use available materials to physicalize their vision of the play’s scenery, and part of the challenge lies in discovering their creative abilities. Although directed at the visual-spatial student, scene design projects experiment with creativity for all students.

**Stage Directions**

One beginning concept that all theatre students should learn is the lesson of stage directions. Directors, actors, and designers alike should be aware of the correct theatrical vocabulary in regard to the different areas of the stage, and visual-spatial students may enjoy any or all of these jobs. For those wary about acting, learning the stage directions in relation to blocking may help develop an interest in acting outside of the typical linguistic or kinesthetic views. A quick glance at the nine basic stage areas reveals its similarity to a tic-tac-toe board, so why not incorporate this game into the students’ understanding of the concept? Once the students hear and see the difference between stage right and left, upstage and down, they can review with a game of tic-tac-toe. Teachers can also use this opportunity to review any other concepts they wish. First, the teacher puts nine students into each of the spaces and divides the rest of the class into two teams: the Xs and the Os. Each team gets to select a square and answer a question of the teacher’s choice, but the team must request their square by using the correct stage direction. A correct answer merits the X or O until a winner is declared. Other activities on stage directions can be used instead of or in conjunction with tic-tac-toe. I recommend this game because it allows students to review through both linguistic and visual-spatial intelligence.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence**

By the time an intrapersonally intelligent student reaches secondary school, he or she has a fairly strong sense of self. At the same time, students

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9 I consider the basic areas to be upstage right, upstage center, upstage left, center stage right, center stage, center stage left, downstage right, downstage center and downstage left.
are experiencing adolescence and the confusion and insecurities that come along with it. Teachers may have a difficult time determining which students possess strong intrapersonal skills because of the social context of school. According to Howard Gardner and Joseph Walters in a chapter from *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* entitled “A Rounded Version,” “A person with good intrapersonal intelligence has a viable and effective model of himself or herself. Since this intelligence is the most private, it requires evidence from language, music, or some other more expressive form of intelligence if the observer is to detect it at work” (*Rounded* 25). Because of this, arts teachers have a much better opportunity to detect and work with the intrapersonal student, and the theatre arts necessitate intrapersonal skills in several ways.

Because intrapersonal students in particular may be more inclined to close themselves off during this troubling time, they seek outlets of expression through media such as the arts. Theatre arts teachers who realize this will provide self-exploratory exercises to guide all students, not solely intrapersonal, through middle and high school. “Artistic learning does not merely entail the mastery of a set of skills or concepts. The arts are also deeply personal areas, where students encounter their own feelings as well as those of other individuals” (Gardner *Multiple* 143). Both intra- and interpersonal intelligences aid students in understanding themselves, but intrapersonal activities seem to come less naturally in the social atmosphere of school. Before students build relationships with other people, however, they must first develop a strong relationship with the self.

In many cases actors interact quite a bit onstage and must be able to build working relationships, allowing for onstage give-and-take, but theatre is much deeper than these relationships. It is an imitation of life and, therefore, an examination of the individuals who make up these particular scenes. The process is cathartic for the playwright, actor, director, and audience, who are all investing pieces of the self into each production. Acting, in particular, requires an actual swapping of identities. In order for an actor to successfully accomplish this feat, he or she must have a firm grasp on his or her own life before
combining it with the life of another. Middle and high school students must realize that acting is not giving yourself up entirely to a role, but instead it is putting your own life experience into the role. In order to teach this point, teachers should use a variety of activities geared toward the intrapersonal student. They will both introduce theatre to the intrapersonal student in a non-threatening way and introduce all students to the importance of the self within the theatrical framework. Several intrapersonal actions are important in theatre, such as reflection and individual work on pieces, but recall is especially pertinent to older students, deepening their performance skills as it validates their own experiences.

**Recalling**

Acting becomes more realistic when actual emotion and experience stand firm in the background. In a distinctly intrapersonal activity, students should reflect on past occurrences, focusing specifically on emotion and the five senses. These are two subjects that students learn about when they are in kindergarten or first grade, but their use in acting becomes more complex with age. The concept of emotional recall is somewhat easier to understand than sensory recall, and Marsh Cassady provides an activity idea that introduces the idea in a non-threatening manner. He proposes: “Use emotional memory of facial expression to make yourself feel…” (36) Students can explore their reactions to emotions such as fear, sadness, resentment and joy. I suggest this as a simplistic activity to start with because students do not necessarily need to delve into their pasts to simply create a facial expression. At the same time, the activity can easily and quickly head in that direction, clarifying the idea of recall in the process.

From this starting point, students can gain a better understanding of sensory recall as well. All too often, memories seem to stem from visual or auditory clues, but all five of the senses are able to “remember.” With older students, a review of exactly what the five senses are may be necessary. My personal way to introduce sensory recall is to have students close their eyes and picture themselves seated in the restaurant of their choice. Then I ask them to
remember what the place looks like, sounds like, and smells like. They can pick one item off the menu and remember what it tastes like, and they can think of the various objects that they touch while in a restaurant. This easy imagery activity explains to students that the senses of smell and taste can be remembered just as easily as hearing and sight. It also acts as an opportunity for intrapersonal growth; students are obligated to focus on their own sensory awareness, an activity that each one of them can do without any interaction with others, whether or not they have strong intrapersonal intelligence.

Beyond the basic forms of recall, secondary students have the ability to truly meld these memories to their character portrayal. Teachers can ease students into this process by guiding them through character studies and even interviews in character. One suggestion is to give students a series of questions pertaining to their characters, including queries about their past, how they see themselves, their emotional state, etc. Intrapersonal students will be especially glad to answer these thoughtful questions, but all creative students will enjoy the chance to create portions of a character that they may or may not know much about. By having students sit down and carefully analyze and synthesize their characters prior to much rehearsing, educators can start young actors and directors on the path of deep, thought-provoking journeys within the realm of theatre. This very intrapersonal aspect of theatre shows that the emphasis on the individual is equally as important as the ensemble.

The Lesson Plan: Shakespeare and Elizabethan Theatre

Theatre history, though part of the required curriculum, is rarely taught in the secondary school except as punishment or a brief lesson here or there. I presume that teachers shy away from an unfamiliar subject that would require hours of research. On the contrary, long-winded lectures merely turn the

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10 Many of these activities were shared with me through a workshop with Shakespeare Lives!, a pairing of theatre arts educators in North Carolina with the Globe Theatre in London. I chose those that I felt best applied to the specific intelligences.

11 I am aware of teachers who threaten theatre history lectures as punishment for bad behavior.
students off from ever studying the subject again. Instead, teachers should give
the students the few facts they want them to remember and create a couple of
activities to reinforce the lesson. My example lesson plan is based on activities
dealing with Shakespeare, which is often thought of as difficult subject matter,
even for high school students. In actuality, many of these activities could be
utilized in the elementary school classroom just as easily.

I begin by having students find their own personal space to warm up the
body. I instruct the students to move about the room as I call out various styles
of movement as they progress. For instance, if I call out “exhausted,” the
students follow my lead and move as though half asleep. Then we warm up the
imagination. Students are given the Norden and Hollar pictures of the outside of
the Globe and DeWitt’s sketch of the Swan’s interior. Each student has a piece
of paper and pencil and draws what s/he thinks the Globe must have looked like.
I ask them to justify their reasoning with no judgment of their answers. This
activity especially engages visual-spatial intelligence.

I explain that the Globe and the Swan were Elizabethan stages, and
proceed to give what few details we do know or guess, selecting which bits about
the period the students should know and would find most interesting. For
instance, the fact that men played all the roles because women were not allowed
on stage is extremely interesting to some students. Also, some of the staging
conventions or costuming may hold particular interest. Finally, I will discuss the
playwrights of the time, particularly Shakespeare, and their writing conventions.
This lecture is an extremely linguistic method of teaching, so I include a visual
demarcation of a line in iambic pentameter on the board to demonstrate the
technique.

Some of the musical students may gain a strong understanding of the
verse through the visual depiction, but I also lead students in a physical walk
using the rhythm of iambic pentameter. The first part of this activity is performed
alone and is an intrapersonal endeavor. After we walk it using a “ba DUM, ba
DUM” vocalization, the students are given short (very short) excerpts from
popular scenes in Shakespeare, such as Romeo’s balcony monologue: “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks…” Students pair up with another student carrying the same scene cutting. The students take their short piece and add some kind of movement to each line that complements the iambic pentameter. I have them perform this piece before the class, exaggerating the rhythm to emphasize its meter as vividly as possible.

At the end of the class time, I praise the students for their hard work, emphasizing the difficulty of reading Shakespeare as opposed to natural language. Finally, I ask them whether they would prefer acting today or in Elizabethan times and have them justify their responses.

Through lesson plans such as this, students encounter unfamiliar material in familiar ways. Teachers must actually teach the students instead of merely the lesson, and in the process, students may develop an interest in topics often stereotyped as dry. All aspects of theatre, including theatre history, have the potential to intrigue students through several intelligence-directed activities.
CONCLUSION

Assessment is an important aspect of my teaching. As I complete each lesson, I stop and think about possibilities for future improvements. I consider whether or not most of the students were engaged in the exercises, and if not, I attempt to determine why this may be. For instance, I led a third grade class through the basics of playwriting. I showed them the structure of one line of dialogue, resulting in several confused faces. After evaluating my methodology, I realized that I was solely appealing to the linguistic students, so I decided to physicalize the structure. I handed three students signs that read “Character,” “Line,” and “Stage Directions.” Two other students were directed to create a colon and parentheses with their hands to complete the line. Suddenly, a greater number of students caught on to the lesson, and almost all of them remembered the information after physicalizing the line themselves. When I teach playwriting next year, I will be better prepared. This reflective process is present in my daily life and often helps me to further enrich the theatre education experience for my students.

For teachers, much of the educational process involves constant assessment by evaluating lesson plans and determining effective teaching practices. This evaluation provides teachers with knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, which often includes consideration of students with diverse needs. Once the teacher has this knowledge, he or she can decide which theories and methodologies will best improve that particular classroom. In this thesis, I have examined the state of theatre education as a whole and suggested a method of improvement: Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. This theory directly presents a solid proposal for addressing diverse learners while remaining true to the artistic nature of theatre education.
Each classroom of students is a unique combination of personal needs and wants, and teachers encounter the overwhelming pressure to accommodate each individual. Some students may struggle with learning disabilities while their academically gifted peers grow bored with identical activities. Instead of labeling students as “smart,” “average,” and “below average,” however, Gardner’s Theory requires teachers to view each of their students as intelligent in some way. Through this framework, teachers simply add variety to their lesson plans and, in turn, students find a way to relate to the material and its challenges.

For theatre educators, teaching to diverse learners means introducing theatre to a diverse audience, which can be done quite efficiently. The state of theatre education may vary from school system to school system, but certain fundamental ideas should not. I expect students to leave my classroom with a basic knowledge and appreciation for the theatre arts; my hope is that my lessons inspire some students on a deeper level, motivating them to find success in all of their endeavors. By implementing Gardner’s theory, I am able to reach a greater number of students by attending to their individual needs.

Classroom instruction provides educators with ample opportunities to appeal to multiple intelligences, whether through instructional practices or activities designed specifically for diverse learners. Theatre educators have an additional unique venue, however: production. Once students gain a basic understanding of theatre and its various components, they can hone their strengths even more through practical application. Unfortunately, in many schools, the theatrical process becomes a fruitless burden in regards to pedagogy, as described by Don Corathers in his article, “Theatre Education: Seeking Balance Between Stage and Classroom”:

Typically, once or twice a year a teacher with little training or experience works long hours after school to direct a show, usually without pay and almost always without a budget except what might come in through the box office. If students learn something from the experience, it is incidental to the process. (1)
Many schools do not offer theatre education, creating pictures similar to the one depicted here. Despite an absence of theatre education, however, any educator embarking on the difficult task of creating a theatrical production should utilize Gardner’s Theory just as strongly as the classroom teacher.

Production is the only true combination of theatre arts in their entirety, and as this paper has demonstrated, each intelligence has several options in theatre geared toward its strengths. Students apply their skills as they take on the tasks of designers, directors, actors, carpenters, technicians, dramaturges, critics, playwrights, or stage managers. And in the process, they learn from their experiences. Theatre educators continue to debate whether classroom instruction or production should be emphasized, as “[…] not all teachers are persuaded that the academic, pencil-and-paper approach to teaching theatre is a good idea” (Corathers 6). I believe that each is as valuable as the other, and upon examination, both benefit from use of Gardner’s theory.

For those who do make the most of classroom methodologies, this thesis presented the interrogation of the current trends in theatre education and, finally, the best way to couple these trends with the benefits of the Multiple Intelligence Theory. The popular use of games in theatre education is well-suited to the theory, allowing teachers to piece together combinations of games appropriate for a variety of intelligences. Two or three exercises, each aimed at a specific intelligence, can easily fit together in a lesson plan, and even more diversity can form an effective and cohesive unit.

I encourage theatre educators to examine their own teaching practices in search of the inevitable gaps. Revisiting units and lessons, perhaps even teaching styles, can provoke much-needed change. As national and state curricula changes, so should its practitioners. Because an educator’s aim is to teach these students, these changes should consider how to ensure learning, and although no educational model can guarantee absolute success, Gardner’s theory allows for the flexibility of experimentation to draw closer to mastery. Instead of providing an instruction manual on how to teach, this theory merely
presents an idea to remind teachers of who they teach: students capable of learning.

When all is said and done, teachers exist for the sake of the learners. If students are not learning, teachers need to discover the reason why. They seek these answers to provide hope for success, and every child deserves the chance to succeed. My aim in writing this thesis is to open the field of theatre education to new possibilities in order to ensure student success.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gretchen K. Ferris was born December 5, 1978 in Columbus, Ohio. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre-English Education from Lenoir-Rhyne College in 2001 before attending Florida State University’s School of Theatre. She received her Theatre Arts K-12 teaching license from the state of North Carolina in 2001 and currently teaches in the Catawba County School system in North Carolina.