

Ensemble Warm-ups

by Maria McConville

Great to use in connection
with the play #VIRAL



Warm-Up #1: TELEPHONE

Ah, yes. The game of telephone.

- The students sit in a circle. One student whispers a statement into the ear of the student to their right. It can be anything! For the fun of this play, it should be a statement describing themselves. They only get to whisper it once.
- The student who receives the secret whispers exactly what they hear to the next student.
- The news travels around the circle in this way and when it arrives at the last student in the circle, they get to say what they heard out loud.

Discussion questions: Has the statement changed?

What does it feel like to pass around a secret?

Warm-Up #2: GROUP STORY TELLING

- Students are sitting/standing in a circle or a line. One student begins with a statement to start a story. You can even give them the lead, "Once upon a time..." This student only says one sentence.
- The students that follow after only get one sentence to continue the story. They must listen to what comes before them and connect/base their statement on the previous information.

- As the teacher or director, I try to remember the whole story to repeat OR I write it down on chart paper and have the students read it aloud when it's all done.

Discussion questions: How difficult or how easy was it to develop this story?

Did the story always go in the way you personally wanted it to go?

Warm-Up #3: GROUP STORY TELLING - Advanced!

- Students are sitting/standing in a circle or a line. The first student just says one word to begin a thought.
- The students that follow must continue the thought but only add one word. I encourage that they are grammatically correct!
- The director or teacher could write down each word as they happen.
- Allow this to build into a small story that has a beginning, middle, and end.

Discussion questions: Was this harder than having only a sentence to share at a time?

What must we do as a group to build a solid story?

Warm-Up #4: ACTOR JOURNAL

I always like to keep a journal while I am working on a character as an actor. I find it very helpful to write about the ways I relate to my character or to describe the facets of the character that I do not initially understand.

For example, if you're working on the play *#VIRAL*, ask the cast members and students to journal about where they see themselves in five years. They can share it with each other at the start of a rehearsal.

Fun bonus! Each student can add one sentence about where they see themselves in five years in their bio in your program.

Warm-Up #5: MAKING #VIRAL YOUR OWN

This Warm-up is specifically for the members of your Troll Chorus/Ensemble.

As the director, here are some things to think about:

- In creating the environment/world that the Troll Chorus inhabits, would it be helpful for the members to develop specific characters? Or would it be better to embody a

mob-like ensemble represented by the same characters? What does your ensemble feel is necessary to create the environment of the scene?

- If you are lucky to have lots of rehearsal time, it might be empowering to allow the students to create characters for themselves that they believe would be there for the particular moments of the play, even if they don't end up in the final version.
- Do you want to divide the lines amongst your cast members yourself, or maybe let the students have a say? Perhaps you can experiment with different versions to see what works best.
 - Which character would say each of these lines?
 - When do the trolls speak together? Why?
- How does the ensemble create the message or questions you want the audience to walk away with?

Maria McConville is a native New Yorker who has lived in every borough...yes, even Staten Island. She started out at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts and received her BA in Performance from Fordham University at Lincoln Center. Maria has performed all over New York City from Shakespeare in the Park-ing Lot to Theatre Row and across the country with Theatreworks USA. She is the playwright of Stage Partners' play *#VIRAL*. She also a member of AEA, Army wife, proud mother, and an inspired teaching artist.



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