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TEACHING THEATRE ONLINE

Step-by-step lesson plans for
virtual theatre camps and classes.

Over **250** Distance Learning Activities!



WRITTEN & COMPILED BY
Amanda Broadfoot



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CURRICULUM PREVIEW

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The purchased version includes a full 10-page table of contents with clickable links to over 250 activities.

Introduction

Theatre.

The very word IS the building in which the magic takes place, right? We *perform* “theatre” with our awesome kid casts *in* a THEATER.

As I am writing this, Making Light Productions (our private performing arts school) has just this week finished a 12-month renovation of an on-site small, 75-seat theater. Our final step was installing those 75 seats on raised, stadium risers. I just stared at those beautiful seats and thought, “Will anyone ever sit there?”

Of course they will. But I’m sure every theatre teacher out there has had similar doubts.

For most of us, there has never been any doubt that a theatre program takes place in a theater -- at least, until about March 15, 2020. If you’re like me, you went through all the stages of grief:

- Denial: “This virus thing will pass quickly... right?”
- Anger: “What do you mean I have to cancel my show???”
- Bargaining: “What if I did the show... but with no audience???”
- Depression: “I’m going to sit here sadly, obsessing about the show I didn’t have and the budget that has been wasted on that show for which we now have no ticket sales...”
- Acceptance: “Ok, explain Zoom to me...”

Why Is Virtual Theatre Camp a Good Idea?

Part of our challenge, as theatre directors and teachers, is to communicate to parents why virtual theatre camp is a really good idea for their kids.

1. First, don’t call it “virtual theatre camp.” I’m serious. At this point, parents -- and many of you are among them -- have had so many negative experiences with the words “virtual learning” and “online school” that “virtual camp” sounds to their ears like “nonsense camp.” Virtual learning was thrust upon teachers and students across the country -- many of whom had no preparation or background in technology -- and the results have run the gamut from incredible innovation to ... well, “nonsense school.”

So we don’t want to be connected to that. Consider other names for your camp like “Leland Lake Elementary Theatre Project” or “The Spotlight Connected Camp” or the “The Leon County Applause TV Channel!” Look for something that communicates the positives of online performing arts -- rather than highlighting the fact that it’s not “real” camp:

2. Now that we’ve named it something better, let’s communicate how important it is to have a sense of structure and stability for kids in these uncertain times. Their world has been turned upside down, and having something they can count on, at a specific time each

day, with a specific group of people, is grounding and healthy for most children. Also, theatre helps them connect with joy in their lives through their love of performing arts.

3. The technical skills of learning in this environment are LIFE skills -- virtual learning is not going away! Self-taping, editing, and mastering Zoom, YouTube and other platforms will make sure they can participate in whatever form learning takes in the future. What if your rehearsal space suffers hurricane damage, or was overbooked by the debate team, or undergoes renovation (wouldn't that be nice!)? Your program will be ready for whatever is thrown at it!
4. Being able to "enter" their home space allows teachers to support them in unprecedented ways -- we can help them set up their rehearsal space for success.
5. For parents, let's be honest -- it's super CONVENIENT! Do not discount how easy it is for parents to get kids "to rehearsal" when that rehearsal takes place in their living room. No more conflicts with commutes or multiple drop offs - this is a theatre rehearsal that can be done any time from any location with Internet access.
6. It's safe. There is a lot of conflicting medical advice out there right now, and we will likely be living with uncertainty for a while. But one thing we know is that virtual learning will be available to us, even if another lockdown is ordered, even if schools close again. And in virtual theatre class, there is no chance of infection.
7. Depending on how you do it: Video analysis - recording themselves and rewatching with an instructor - builds great skills in objectively analyzing and improving their own performance. This is optional for our online model but can be very powerful for motivated performers.

How Virtual Camp Works

(Remember, don't call it "virtual camp!")

No one wants to sit in front of a Zoom screen for hours on end. A virtual camp platform will need to take into account the fact that kids are kids. They need to move. They need to talk. Their attention wanders. They need to stay engaged. Some of them like to perform for their friends -- but not all of them. They get TIRED.

We think a 2.5 hour virtual musical theatre camp can be successfully accomplished with the following schedule:

15 minutes initial meeting
45 minutes ACTING
45 minutes DANCE
45 minutes MUSIC
30 minutes share / closing meeting

*Optional: 45 minutes of art/stagecraft -- if you have an instructor who could coordinate with your theatre curriculum to teach costume design, set/scene design, prop making, etc., this can add a wonderful component to your camp that also doesn't require kids to "stare at a screen" the entire time. (See below for curriculum ideas.)

Setting Up Your Classes

Before you do anything else, make sure you have a Zoom account without a time limit. You can sign up for a paid account or you may be eligible for free time-limit removal. Learn more about that here: <https://zoom.us/docs/ent/school-verification.html>

Zoom Breakout Sessions (multiple instructors available)

No one wants to be in one giant Zoom class for any length of time -- neither teachers nor students. Ideally, if you start with a large group (15+ students), you can then use Zoom's "breakout sessions" feature to send students to small group instruction. Imagine your main Zoom meeting as the "assembly hall" where everyone meets, and the breakout rooms as individual classrooms for music, dance, acting, etc.

You can find a link to a tutorial about creating and managing breakout sessions here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476313-Managing-breakout-rooms>

So, for instance, one group of 6-10 kids might be scheduled for the acting block (see below) with one instructor, while another group of 6-10 is scheduled for dance/movement and another 6-10 is scheduled for music. At the end of each block, they rotate to their next subject. At the end of a camp day, they will have rotated between all three areas of the "triple threat" instruction and come together again as a large group where they can share their favorite part of the day and those who wish can perform for everyone.

This model requires an instructor for each "classroom" and the "assembly hall" which you can also use as a classroom. If someone loses their connection to the Zoom meeting, they will rejoin the "assembly hall" and then the Meeting Host can send the student to the appropriate breakout session. If you don't have the budget to hire additional teachers, consider recruiting some volunteers: Motivated and skilled parents would likely be willing to help, especially if this is a fundraiser for the program. Also, many older teens -- some of whom had their musicals canceled this past year -- are eager for theatre of any kind right now!

One Zoom Meeting (one instructor available)

If you are a single-teacher studio or class and no additional instructors can be recruited, you'll be limited to hosting one group at a time. Please consider having multiple small groups at various times of the day, rather than trying to instruct more than 10 students at a time in a Zoom session. For instance, you could have one camp from 10 AM-12:30PM and a different group from 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM each day.

Helping Kids Feel Connected in Zoom

Chances are you have a few kids that might feel lost in the crowd in a Zoom Meeting. Don't ignore this! A major contributor to that student being present is the relationships with you and the other students. In person they could raise their hands or otherwise get your attention, but this is harder in Zoom when everyone's movement is confined to the same little rectangle. Fortunately Zoom has ways to help!

- Open the Zoom meeting a few minutes early so the students can chat with each other, just like they would in an on-site class.
- In-Meeting Chat – We recommend leaving this option enabled, especially for the kids who are unlikely to speak out during class. Kids are used to chatting and gaming at the same time and you will be pleasantly surprised at their multitasking abilities. Some of our most valuable insights into how students are faring were gleaned from their chats. However, we recommend monitoring the chat stream just in case the language becomes inappropriate. Learn more about Zoom In-Meeting Chat here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/203650445-In-Meeting-Chat>.
- Raise Hand – We mentioned raising hands a moment ago and thanks to the “nonverbal feedback” in Zoom, we can still raise hands! Set expectations for students to “raise their hand” just like they would in in-person class and then call on students as you normally would. Learn more about Zoom Reactions here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115001286183-Nonverbal-Feedback-During-Meetings>.

Nothing takes the place of being mindful of who is participating and who is quiet, so you may want to keep a scratchpad nearby to note who has had a chance to speak and who hasn't.

Virtual Instruction Blocks

A suggested cycle for each class block of the following - not necessarily in this order but utilizing some of these for each session:

1. Warm up/Listen/Watch (15 minutes)

This is a great place to share your screen, show a video and/or a script. This is also a good time for some tidbits of theatre history, music theory, or dance terminology. (See the appendix for some pre-screened history/technique/theory links appropriate and engaging for kids.) If you have a script of a scene to read through, you can share your screen through Zoom and kids can take turns reading parts, without having to have a printed copy of the text.

In addition, I ask that my students keep a notebook, and for each cycle of our classes, there is ONE FACT that they will record in their notebooks. Just one. Anybody can write down one thing. That means that at the end of each day, they will have *at least* three facts about music, dance and theatre that they have committed to memory -- and at the end of a week, that amounts to 15 important facts. Parents tend to see facts as “take away value” -- and more importantly, it has been scientifically proven that facts build confidence. The more a child KNOWS, the more confident they feel. While they can't all

hit a “high C” in vocal class, they can all memorize the note names on the treble clef, review the titles of Shakespeare’s comedies or understand french terms used in ballet.

2. Discuss (5 minutes)

After everyone has experienced the media, have a list of prepared questions about the subject -- and VERY IMPORTANT, a list of kids’ names so that you can call on those kiddos who don’t necessarily push themselves forward. I had one kiddo who said “I feel like I’m not there” in Zoom meetings, because everyone else is clamoring forward and making a noise and he tends to be more quiet. It’s easy for the quiet kiddo to get lost in the Zoom crowd. This discussion should be preparation for the next phase...

3. Practice (away from the screen) (10 minutes)

Make time AWAY from the screen a part of each class block. However, the teacher is always “on call” to assist if the child is struggling. Having pre-recorded materials that they can work through is helpful for this time -- for instance, you can share a link to a private YouTube playlist where you have recorded some choreography and assign them specific steps to rehearse. You can email a PDF of a monologue or share a poetry worksheet that prompts them to write their own song lyrics.

4. Perform for friends (15 minutes)

This is a great place to teach kids to provide FEEDBACK. You could be as formal as providing a pre-printed rubric for scoring various aspects of the performance -- or as informal as asking kids to take it in turn to comment with two positive bits of feedback and one bit of constructive criticism.

Performances

Live Performance vs. Pre-Recorded

As you are planning your curriculum, it’s important to think about how you want to present the final performance because that will impact your rehearsal plans. There are a couple of ways to approach the performance for the online theatre camp/class:

1. All live Zoom instruction with live performance at the end of the week
2. Live Zoom instruction but kids submit videos that will be edited together into a final performance

We have provided a checklist in Appendix D that will help you plan and provide the right information to parents about the performance.

All Live Zoom Instruction and Performance

The upside to this approach is that truly all you need is a Zoom connection and a group of kids. Even if you’ve never Zoomed, their website has easy-to-follow tutorials on getting started, scheduling Zoom sessions, using breakout sessions, managing chats, etc.

In this model, you will spend most of the camp week prepping your kiddos to perform live on Zoom at a designated time at the end of the week. You could either schedule that to happen during the last hour of your regularly scheduled camp -- or plan a special time for the performance after camp (leaving you with all your rehearsal time) and allowing you to combine groups. For instance, if you had a morning camp group and an afternoon camp group, they could join together for a 6 PM Zoom performance.

For our purposes, we are going to present this curriculum as though you are performing your show during the last hour of camp on Friday. (If you would like information on how to use Zoom to stream your performance live on Facebook, you can find a tutorial here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkX640vqozE>.)

I have seen powerful live Zoom performances of dance solos, musical theatre solos and acting monologues and scenes.

YOUR. STUDENTS. CAN. NOT. SING. TOGETHER. OVER. ZOOM.

I cannot reiterate this strongly enough. The technology doesn't exist. The delay makes every attempt to make music together a complete train wreck.

All those videos you've seen of bands seemingly playing together over Zoom, choirs seeming to sing together? It's all edited together after the fact. That kid that got the cast of Hamilton to sing to her? Totally edited together after the fact. I promise you.

That being said, a live Zoom performance -- a play reading, a dance solo, a musical theater number -- can work very successfully. There is something to be said for the nervous energy that accompanies that live performance - it's closer to the reality of a live, in-person theatre performance... with a few additional anxieties. Could the Internet fail? Yes. Could a student's iPad go dead during a performance. Yep. I've totally had that happen. Could someone's mom bring them a plate of spaghetti for dinner right before they are supposed to start singing??? YES. YES, THAT HAPPENED.

So even if you choose to go this route, I would suggest having a backup plan. What happens if a student's internet fails? What happens if the teacher's Zoom connection conks out?

Communicate ahead of time with your parents that "in the unlikely event of technical problems, we will allow all students to submit pre-recorded performances which we will post on our website/FB page/Instagram TV/etc."

To get parents excited about the show on Friday, tell them where they can find a social media post about the Zoom program that they can share on their own social media pages! Make sure they do NOT publicly share any Zoom links or passwords, as those should only be shared privately with family and friends.

Live Zoom Instruction with Pre-Recorded Performance

In this model, we complete instruction live on Zoom, just as above, but have students record videos at home and submit those to the teacher to be edited together for a final performance. For teachers with experience in even basic video editing, this can be a fun option.

(If you don't have experience, there are tutorials for everything on YouTube, and this is a fun thing to learn in your extra quarantine time, but don't expect to pick it up overnight. If you consider yourself somewhat technically proficient and have about a week, you could pick up all the skills you need to edit together a professional-looking showcase using a program as easy as iMovie for iPad.)

Nothing would change during your camp rehearsal/instruction time, using this model. However, you would need to communicate certain things to your students and their parents:

- Deadline for submitting videos (give yourself plenty of time)
- How to submit videos ... Most big video files can't be sent via email or text. Options:
 - You could have them upload the videos to Google Drive and share the link with you. Then you could move their video to the folder you've designated for the showcase.
 - You could create a Google folder and give all the students "editing" privileges to submit directly here. HEADS UP: If they have "editing" privileges, they can accidentally delete other files from the folder, so just be aware.
 - We like WeTransfer.com because it allows the student to "email" the video without using their email program. They don't even need a WeTransfer account -- just go to the WeTransfer.com website, enter the email address to which they would like to send and select the file from their hard drive.
 - There is no "magic bullet" for slow internet. If their connection is slow, no matter what system you use for submitting the videos, it's going to take a long time. If they complain about how long it is taking, suggest that they go into their camera's settings and change the "record video" rate to "720p," which will make the files smaller.
- The date of the performance and where it will be published: Facebook, website, YouTube, etc. Make sure that if you plan to share a performance online, you have received signed permission from the parents to do so. (We make a blanket publicity / photo permission a part of registration process for camps, classes and lessons. If a parent has an issue with image use / distribution, we are happy to figure out a way to accommodate their wishes.)

Sample Curriculum

Before your camp week starts, be sure to communicate frequently with parents, telling them how to log on (Zoom ID and password), as well as how the schedule will work, what materials - if any - kids will need, what kind of space they need in their home, etc. Will you be using music tracks during the week that they will need to access from a Google Drive or YouTube playlist? Or a pdf of a script(s)? If so, share that with parents and ask that they show their kids how to access it from their device.

One helpful pre-camp step for us is to send out a questionnaire, asking parents about things such as experience (in dance, theatre, music), special areas of interest, challenges (learning challenges, for instance, or diagnosed attention issues), or mobility restrictions.

To get them excited about camp, you might announce specific “dress up days” for each day -- a theme around which they can build a costume and pick a Zoom background. We have suggested themes for each day :) I also like to choose my own Zoom background from a famous musical for each day and have the kids guess the musical -- and then we talk briefly about that show.

Week 1: Broadway Variety Show

MONDAY

Welcome Meeting (15 Minutes)

The first day's morning meeting is going to be a little bit longer, because it is going to be a little bit about Zoom training -- which sounds awful, so let's call it... a "virtual scavenger hunt!" Believe me, spending a few minutes training the kids on where to find important controls on Zoom will endear you to parents forever.

It's probably going to take a few minutes for everyone to get logged on, call roll, and ensure your entire variety show cast is online. When everyone has arrived, tell them how the camp is going to work, how the schedule will run each day, and what kind of performance you are working towards at the end of the week. Then let each student introduce themselves and answer a fun question (favorite musical or movie or TV show, for instance). It might also be fun to play an applause sound effect after each introduction and let your "cast" each take a bow.

This way, they can practice unmuting themselves and re-muting and everyone gets a chance to talk. Let them practice turning their video on and off, selecting "Speaker View" (so that the person talking is biggest on their screen) and how to "pin speaker" if, for instance, they want the dance teacher to remain largest on screen the whole session. You, as the Meeting Host, can also choose on whom the students should focus by choosing to "Spotlight" them in Zoom. This meet and greet time will also give you a chance to see who has challenges with technology, who might be dealing with a slow internet connection, who is shy, who is a talker, etc.

If you're going to use Zoom breakout sessions, this would be a great time to practice with the kids: You create the rooms and assign a teacher and students to each room. The students can practice "accepting" the breakout session, going into that room, and then coming back to the main room. You could even make a "scavenger hunt" out of it: When they go into a room you have assigned them, they will see that teacher and guess what musical his/her Zoom background is from. When they've visited all three rooms, they will have finished the scavenger hunt!

This is also a good session to discuss the “Zoom rules” for your class. You can decide what boundaries you are going to set, but here are a few suggested topics to discuss:

- Are you going to enable the chat feature? If so, what is OK/Not OK to say in chats?
- We stay muted until we have to ask a question -- not because we don't want everyone to talk but even a little bit of background noise can be distracting.
- How to ask a question: physically raise your hand or use the “virtual hand-raising” feature on Zoom.
- Your video stays ON during class, unless you're asked to turn it off - but iPads do not go to the bathroom with you (yep, it has happened).

At the end of the session, assign students to breakout sessions OR start your first curriculum block, depending on the structure of your camp. If students are going into breakout sessions, make sure teachers and students know what time to return to the main session to be reassigned.

Acting (45 Minutes)

Acting is one of the branches of the performing arts that is most easily adapted to the online format. Sound delays -- which create major challenge in group music --- have minimal effect on scene work, and the time we can't spend on blocking (because there's only so far you can travel on the Zoom screen), we can devote to characterization, facial expressions, pacing of a scene, diction, etc.

ACTIVITY: Name Game

Purpose: To learn names and something about each player. To understand how to pantomime and communicate ideas.

1. Everyone's video is on and the teacher has a list of names.
2. As each player's name is called, that player unmutes themselves and will say their first name and pantomime a gesture for each syllable in their name. The action should be simple and can demonstrate a hobby, interest, or something that they do everyday. Example: I say “Pam-e-la” and gesture a paddle stroke on each side of my body (one stroke per syllable, on my left-right-left side) to show I like to canoe.
3. Each player individually says their name while demonstrating the gesture then all together the group repeats the name and gesture.
4. Repeat the process so everyone shares their name and gesture.
5. Let any player up for the challenge demonstrate the name and gesture of every person in the group. This can be done in the same session if time allows or at a later session.

ACTIVITY: Share your screen - History

This is a fun and really well-done YouTube video with a short history of the theatre, created by a student actor, using Lego and stop-motion animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpgAJNNypSg>

DISCUSSION: What Is Acting?

What different kinds of acting did the students see in the video? What kinds of acting have they done? What is different about acting on a Zoom screen and acting on a stage? How is acting for Zoom like other forms of acting -- like TV or movies? (Try to make sure everyone gets a chance to participate in the conversation.)

Define the following words (consider placing these definitions in a document that you share on screen):

- Monologue: a long speech by one actor in a play or movie
- Scene: part an act in a play during which the action takes place in a single place without a break in time
- Play: a piece of writing which can be seen at a theatre or on TV, or heard on the radio. Plays often show conversations between people. A play is usually watched, rather than read.
- Musical: a type of theatre, which usually includes singing, dancing and acting.

ACTIVITY: Slow Motion Emotion

- Ask three students to “take the stage” (they leave their video on and everyone else turns their video off).
- Use your chat to send a PRIVATE MESSAGE to each student with their assigned emotion. Ask them to give you a thumbs up when they have it.
- As you slowly count down from 10 to 1, they are to gradually put that emotion in their faces.
- Have the class guess which emotion they chose and reflect on what gave away that emotion.
- Repeat this activity until everyone who wishes gets a chance to play.

Discussion: What did we learn? How do our faces change as we reflect emotion? Which emotions are harder? Which are easiest to show?

ACTIVITY: Scenes and Monologues

Explain that in the show on Friday, each student will have the option of performing in a scene or performing a monologue. Let them know that you will select and share monologues and scenes from which they can choose and they will be available online (Google Drive folder, uploaded to private Facebook group, emailed out, etc.) Let them know you will have “auditions” in class the next day.

- Share the monologue “Spell” and ask for a volunteer to read and perform. (Beat by Beat Press has provided this monologue for free at the back of this book in **Appendix C: Sample Scenes & Monologues**. It is from *Fantasy Monologues for Young Actors* by Douglas M. Parker which can be purchased in its [entirety here](#).)
- Share the scene “Clubhouse” and take volunteers to read for Devon, Dale and Dylan. (Beat by Beat Press has provided this scene for free at the back of this book in **Appendix C: Sample Scenes & Monologues**. It is from *Contemporary Scenes for Young Actors* by Douglas M. Parker which can be purchased in its [entirety here](#).)

Discuss the character in the monologue: Is he/she happy about their magic skills? How old do you imagine that they are? How would the monologue be different if she were very young vs.

very old? How would the monologue be different if she were angry? Sleepy? Nervous? A robot? Speaking in slow motion? If time allows, let various actors try a few lines of the monologue or scene, directed to reflect a specific emotion in the characters.

Dance/Movement (45 Minutes)

While dance online doesn't look exactly like dance in the studio or on the stage, there are some powerful technology tools that can really help young dancers learn and improve. A lot of kids -- *I'm looking at you, you adorable self-conscious teenagers* -- feel shy about dancing, especially if they don't have a background in the discipline and they're learning alongside more experienced students. Pre-recorded choreography videos, accessible to all campers offline, allow them to practice and develop skills in the privacy of their own homes.

ACTIVITY: Dance Stretch and Warmup

If you don't have a "go to" stretch that you use in your classes, this quick uptempo warmup is good for all ages and experience levels:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM4b-w66wpk>

EXPLORE: Dance & Movement in Musicals

- Have the class take a seat.
- Remind the students that musical theatre is a "heightened" form of telling stories, and one tool that adds to this heightened form is dance.
- Share your screen and select "Share whiteboard." Draw the three steps of emotion in musical theatre. (alternatively, you can use a pre-drawn image and just share that with students, but it's kind of fun for them to watch you draw in real time :)
- Explain that all movement in musical theatre has a purpose. It can: 1. Express emotion 2. Advance the plot 3. Give deeper understanding of character/conflict
- Ask for students to give examples of how each purpose might be used.
- Consider showing a video of the opening dance sequence of West Side Story
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxoC5Oyf_ss
- Have the class describe the action and how they knew what was happening. This is an example of using dance to further the plot.
- Explain that standing motionless may be appropriate in dramatic plays and film/TV, but in musicals having some sort of purposeful action/movement is almost always a stronger choice. It helps punctuate emotions, and can bring new perspectives to character relationships.

ACTIVITY: Practice Creating Choreography

Today we're going to learn how to build movement that accompanies a certain number of counts of music. We're going to start with 8 counts.

- Without music, teacher claps and counts for 8 beats.
- While muted, have students clap 8 beats.
- Next, they will clap for 4 beats and march for 4 beats.
(We keep everyone muted because the sound delay will make it sound like a train wreck when in fact, everyone is probably keeping time with the instructor just fine. Don't stress if it looks to you like they're out of sync - it's just the technology lag in action.)

Week 1: Broadway Variety Show | Teaching Theatre Online

- Next practice marching for four beats and then step-touch L, step touch R for the remaining four beats.
- OPTIONAL: If you feel comfortable teaching basic dance steps, discuss that there are certain building blocks of musical theatre dance that you can master and start to incorporate into your choreography. One of the most basic is the jazz square. You can find a video tutorial here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KXXlnW3RbU>
- Finally, ask the students to walk away from the screen and practice 8 counts and then return to the screen at a designated time to share what they've learned. Stay "on call" in case they need some help!

Music (45 Minutes)

Talk to your students about how vocal warmups, exercises and rehearsals are different in the virtual world. We can't sing in unison together, but we can still sing and learn a lot about music and musical theatre.

ACTIVITY: Exploring Stage 1 - Breathing on the Floor

Everyone is muted, but they can hear you and you can see them.

- We're going to begin by focusing on Stage 1, creating the air, or breathing. Great vocal sound begins with great breath control.
- Ask the students to find a place on the floor where they can lie down on their backs comfortably.
- Tell them to relax their shoulders and head, and to take deep breaths.
- What part of your body moves when you take a deep breath? The belly! That muscle directly below your rib cage that is expanding in and out is called the "diaphragm." When singing correctly air should always be coming from your diaphragm. It should constantly be expanding and compressing.
- Have them take a deep breath and let out an "Oooooooh" from high to low. They should feel their diaphragm getting smaller as they let out the sound.
- Now have them try the same thing without moving their bellies. Notice the change in sound quality? Notice the strain in your throat? This is the incorrect way to sing. This is how you end up losing your voice!

VOCAL WARMUP: Ready to Sing!

- Tell the class to take a seat. We're now going to further warm up our voices.
 - Explain proper singing position: Sitting at the edge of the seat, with their back up straight. Have everyone give it a try. Tell them from now on whenever you call out "Ready to Sing!" this is the position they should take.
- Make a quick game out of this: Tell the class to sit like they are lazy on the couch at home watching TV. Then say "Ready to Sing!" and watch as they pop up into position. Repeat a few times between "lazy on the couch" "or couch potato" and then "Ready to Sing!"
- Compliment them on how professional they look!
- Instruct the class: When I say "go", using the sound "Ahh", I want you to sing from your highest note all the way down to your lowest note in 10 seconds. Ready...go! Do it with

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them, counting down with your fingers 10 to 1. For the first round, everyone is muted except the teacher, but they are practicing along with you. Then call on certain students, unmute them and have them demonstrate the practice -- everyone else is still practicing too, but muted. (Only one person's sound should be live at a time!)

- You can joke they sort of sound like a robot powering down. =)
- Tell them we're going to do it again, but this time in only 5 seconds. Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate.
- Then in 3 seconds. Ask for volunteers to demonstrate.
- Have the students place their hands on their stomachs and shout "Ha!" Explain that this is where the "good air" for singing comes from. They should feel their bellies bounce.
- Introduce Vocal Warmup #1 (from Teaching Musical Theatre, page 12) an arpeggio on the word "Ha!" [INSERT Music Cue #8]

DISCUSSION: Friday Performance

Let the students know that during the Friday performance, everyone who wishes will be allowed to sing a vocal solo. You can either provide them with a list of songs/links from which they can choose (YouTube has a plethora of musical theatre karaoke tracks that are appropriate for kids and kid voices) or you can have them choose one and give a deadline for this song to be screened/approved.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Any accompaniment track **must** be played on the student's end of the connection. Each soloist will have to have access to their solo track and should practice playing the track and singing with it (this may require them to have more than one device, so that they can keep the Zoom connection/camera open and play the music).

Even if a student prefers not to sing a solo in the performance on Friday, let them know that you would still like them to choose a song to work with this week!

LEARN A SONG: "My Treehouse" from THE MOST EPIC BIRTHDAY PARTY

Throughout the week, students will learn to read a musical score by learning a solo song as a group. Again, we are NOT going to attempt to sing this song together live, but by using this sheet music, we can teach students important things about acting the song, music theory, and most importantly, being able to take a piece of sheet music and know how to follow it.

- Share the "My Treehouse" sheet music (**Appendix F: Sample Songs**. This song is from Beat by Beat's [The Most Epic Birthday Party Ever](#) by Betina Hershey and Denver Casado.)
- Demonstrate where the VOCAL line is located and where the instrumental music is located. I like to teach my students to locate the treble clef and then "count treble clefs" -- which is important when they start to decipher songs with parts. In this case, the first treble clef line is always theirs and the one beneath is the one for the piano/instruments.
- Play the vocal track (**Music Cue 02**, share your screen) and use your cursor to follow along on the vocal line.
- For the amount of time left, take the song in phrases and utilize "call and response" technique to teach the melody: "First, you listen as I sing. My turn: 'Just me up here in my tree house. Not much to fear in my treehouse.' Now your turn... Billy, can you sing that back to me?" And you unmute Billy and he sings that phrase -- but SO DOES

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EVERYONE ELSE, just muted. And everyone gets a chance to sing unmuted at some point in the song as you repeat this process: “my turn” and now “your turn” to sing.

- **OPTIONAL:** Tell them that the instructors will hold “auditions” for someone to sing this particular song in the showcase. You could even let kids and teachers vote on the best performance.

Closing Meeting (15 Minutes)

On the first day, this final meeting should really be a celebration: Have a little freeze dance party... let everyone describe their favorite part of the day...

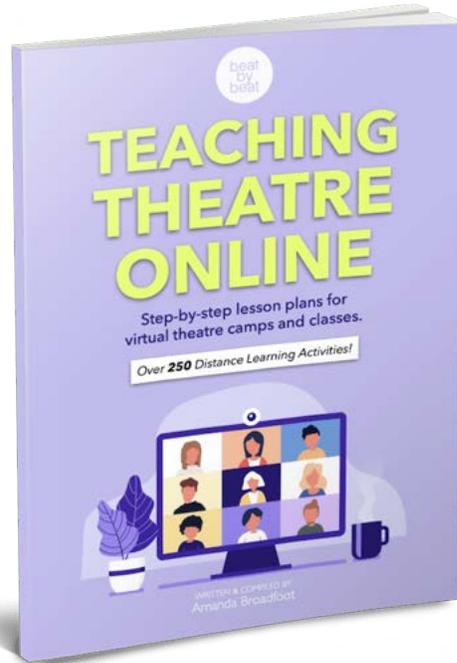
One of my students’ favorite things is getting to choose the dress-up theme for the next day, so you can make that part of the final meeting.

Every final meeting should include some kind of performance. There won’t be time for everyone to perform a solo, but keeping a list so that you know who has had a chance to solo, and then letting everyone else perform their jazz square, or a scene they rehearsed, will make the final meeting something everyone looks forward to.

Discuss any issues that cropped up during the day, any instructions on at-home practice and encourage everyone to be back for virtual rehearsal on Tuesday!!

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