

# inTENSive

10x10

10 playwrights. 10 plays. 10 minutes each.

## REVISION GUIDE December 2018

### Why revise?

Purpose of workshop – to help playwrights build plays with strong structure.

All submissions have wonderful ideas behind them; many have memorable characters, sharp dialogue, exciting things happen. But it's very common for plays to have weak structure. How to strengthen the structure of your play? Revision.

ASK & DISCUSS: What is revision? (What do you do, or think you should do, when revising?) Re-seeing.

- Revision an important part of creating. (Ask why?) Developing *flexibility*.
- Big picture/content evaluation, not proofreading. (Substantive vs copy editing)
- Pleasure of revision: experimenting with something tangible. Doesn't have to be perfect.
- Save all drafts: you can always go back.
- \*Build your process (Do it your way!)—perhaps different for each project.

*"If you can't write your idea on the back of my calling card, you don't have a clear idea." (Broadway producer's maxim)*

Explore different approaches/options/techniques and choose those which work best for you

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### Write your logline.

EXAMPLE: "In 1936, an archaeologist is hired by the US government to find the ancient Ark of the Covenant before the Nazis do, and stop them from becoming the most powerful army the world has ever known."

*Identify the movie! Then identify main character, what he wants, what's stopping him, what's at stake.*

DRAFT EXAMPLE: " A young man, to save his skin, hides in the past thanks to the invention of a crazy scientist. He meets his future parents and accidentally distracts his mother from noticing and falling in love with his father. So he is forced to bring them together or he will cease to exist."

REVISED EXAMPLE: "A young man is transported to the past where he must reunite his distracted parents before he and his future disappear."

Write a logline for your play:

Who is the main character?

What do they want?

What are they up against?

What is at stake?

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## **PLAY READINGS**

(For each play:)

- Describe one thing you liked.
- Write one question on a card.
- Collect cards for each play.

Playwrights reflect: which questions are pertinent or important? The aim of these exercises is not to follow the advice of another and rewrite your play to answer all the questions but to see what is already there in your work. To help develop reflective practice.

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## **DRAMATIC ACTION**

Read *Backwards & Forwards* by David Ball (pages 9 and 16 to 18).

What is an action? According to David Ball: two events, trigger and heap.

How to build a play: connect actions like dominoes. A heap becomes a trigger for the next event. This idea suits any type of play structure.

How to strengthen structure: analyze action starting at the end. This allows a better look at structure and may help you see where there is a weakness.

**Create** a Reverse Outline of your play:

FINAL EVENT:	
Trigger:	

**Analyze** your outline, looking for gaps. Do you need a different opening? Ending? Where to expand or trim?

**Compare** your analysis to your logline. Do they line up? Does the play's current structure do its work? This should give an idea of what's working and what might need tightening.

## REVISION ACTIVITIES



**Choose** an activity:

New Outline – create a new outline based on your script. What might you add, eliminate, or move around? What will strengthen your play's structure—a different opening? A different ending? Add events? Trim events?

Characters – follow each character separately through your play's journey and analyze voice, thought, goal, obstacle(s), choices, strategy, outcome.

Theme – what is the controlling idea or theme of this play? How do you demonstrate it? Brainstorm ways to develop it. How have other playwrights treated this theme? Perhaps choose five "provocative words" from your script or five images and then freewrite about each of them. What does this reveal to you about your theme?

Opening – does your opening grab attention from the very first line? By the middle of page two, do we know whose story this is? Do we know what they want? Do we know where we are? Think about ways to strengthen your "hook", by adding something, removing something, or exaggerating what's already there. Show the "rules" of the story: is this a comedy or drama? A fantasy or naturalistic? High-flown language or everyday banter?

\*Analysis – answer these questions:

- *What does each character want at the beginning of the play?*
- *What stops each character achieving what they want in the play?*
- *Is the location being used effectively by the characters or should they be more aware of their environment?*
- *What happens in the play? (What choices are made which change the situation?)*
- *What has changed for each character by the end of the play?*

**Write** a new logline based on your discoveries.