

Dramatic Interpretation- Cutting

After you have found a story worth telling begins the process of making it live. Tempting as it is to plunge directly into creating pops and blocking, there is little you can do beyond basic analysis without a working script. Rarely is source material immediately ready to be memorized, interpreted, and practiced to perfection. Therefore, a cutting must be made. A Dramatic Interpretation cannot be crafted from one singular formula, but there are aspects of the script that can be broken down to help in the cutting process.

Length. There are time restraints that need to be adhered to. With any cutting you do for your Dramatic Interpretation, always remind yourself that you still have to make time. Most leagues tend to fall in the 8-10 minutes time frame. However, every league is different on time limits, so you will surely want to check with your area's rules.

Lovingly cut, never butcher. In order to make time you most likely will have to trim or omit parts of the material you adore if they are not necessary for the story. It is horrible, but it happens. With a first draft cut, it is important to retain everything crucial for the plot and character development; all the amazing superfluous zingers or tangents should be the first to be trimmed. Now, you do not want to remove too much of all the extra fluff that helps add pizzazz and memorable moments. That would leave your script exposed and sickly thin. Just do not over-indulge in the perks if it damages the story's overall flow. Also, as your Dramatic Interpretation gets better so will your time. Most performers find they can add lines they loved as the season progresses. Be patient.

Remember basic plot design. The general outline of how a plot is typically organized is as follows: Exposition (introduction of characters, setting, etc.) --> CONFLICT and Rising Action (the issue is discovered and problems arise due to the conflict) --> Climax (the height of conflict and highest tension; everything is unleashed!) --> Falling Action (things begin to settle down and a solution is sought) --> Dénouement (the resolution/conclusion; things come to an end happily or not). There are instances when non-traditional storytelling occurs and these elements might be slightly out of order, such as with flashbacks. Think *Memento* or any Quentin Tarantino film. Anyway, while you are cutting your piece be sure to follow some semblance of basic plot. If you are crafting a Dramatic Interpretation and you remove too much of the climax for it to qualify for one anymore you are in trouble. If your story is told in a non-traditional method cutting may be tougher. Then you must remember to retain enough

to have a coherent story. Trust your author and simply cut out anything your audience need not know.

Do not be over-dramatic. This might be Dramatic Interpretation but that does give you a license to fill every minute with tear-filled dialogue. In fact, you would be hurting your DI. Creating a cutting with nothing but the juiciest, intense moments will most likely result in a poorly constructed, boring, limited range plot. Follow the basic plot design detailed above. Choose a few snappy parts for the Rising Action all culminating in a coup de grâce of a climax.

Character conscious. Regardless of how many characters you actually choose to use for your Dramatic Interpretation, all those you retain must serve a purpose. Characters should be as developed as possible, and through careful cutting of dialogue you can make your task easier. Use the dialogue to help build character and show growth. It is frustrating to invest time in characters and feel like they have not changed from point A to point B (unless that is the point of course).

Basic rules. Do not cut anything the audience needs to understand the story. Do not make jumps from one plot point to another--unless you want to lose your audience. Use transitions. Do not trim so much dialogue it sounds choppy or stiff. Do not be afraid to play around with a cutting you have made; nothing is permanent. Alterations help keep your performance fresh. Find the one thing that this tale is about and form your cutting around telling that story.

Dramatic Interpretation is like eating a flourless, chocolate cake instead of your basic, fluffy, flour-using one. Both can be delicious or fail if not baked properly. However, this is a more condensed, intense cake, and if you forget any ingredient you are left with a hefty flop. Do not be intimidated by your Dramatic Interpretation, but do not take on a cutting lightly. Approach it with respect and your final script will be wonderful.