Theatre + Film Digital Lesson Plan

Lesson by Kathryn Wevley

Grade Level: Theatre III
Unit Duration: 5 Class Periods

Standards of Learning:

- **TIII.2** The student will apply the creative process for theatre. a) Use self-evaluation and constructive criticism to develop and refine theatrical works. b) Create and maintain a theatre portfolio of growth and learning.
- **TIII.3** The student will analyze, interpret, and evaluate theatre. a) Critique acting styles of theatrical productions, using theatre arts vocabulary.
- **TIII.5**: Exhibit collaboration skills for theatre productions and processes.
- **TIII.10**: Investigate contemporary media tools and techniques (camera techniques, film terminology, acting for the camera, screenplays, and editing).
- **TIII.12** The student will integrate acting skills and techniques involving voice and movement. a) Initiate artistic choices to enhance performance, characterizations, dialogue, and action. b) Create and sustain multidimensional characters.

Overview
Students will explore the relationship between film and theatre, examining the similarities and differences in storytelling and performance. They will watch, compare, and analyze clips from *West Side Story* in both film and stage versions. Finally, they will adapt and film a short scene in groups, culminating in a "Movie Premiere" event with feedback from peers.

This lesson plan builds on existing scene work done in class. Students should have assigned scenes that they have already performed and rehearsed. This scene will be adapted to film.

Materials Needed:

- *West Side Story* clips (stage and film versions)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Wy5VtjK6Lk (36:35)
  - https://www.disneyplus.com/en-gb/play/3653534b-9ee2-4eb1-b571-77c6ec1d5695
- iMovie or similar video editing software
- Projector/screen for movie premiere event
- Popcorn and refreshments for the premiere

Day 1: Introduction to Film in Theatre

- **Objective**: Introduce students to film as a medium within the context of theatre and storytelling.

  1) Discussion:

  - **Brainstorming**:
    - Make a list of favorite movies and examples of creative camera work.
    - Discuss any experiences with film elements in live theatre (e.g., projections, special effects, or stunt casting).
  - **Class Discussion**:
    - Discuss the distinct aspects of theatre versus film (e.g., live performance, audience interaction in theatre vs. camera techniques, and editing in film).
    - What makes theatre unique? What makes film unique? What storytelling strengths does each medium have?

  2) Analysis of Stage vs. Film productions (TIII.10)

  - Compare and contrast theatre and film through *West Side Story* clips.
  - **Activities**:
    - **Viewing and Discussion**:
      - Watch the balcony scene from a stage production of West Side Story [YouTube link at 36:35].
      - Students take notes on performances, staging, set design, and personal reactions (e.g., what they found effective or disliked).
      - Watch the same scene in the movie version of West Side Story [Disney+ link at 48:28].
      - Students record observations on camera angles, scene transitions, and interpretations.
    - **Compare and Contrast**:
      - Discuss how each version impacted their understanding of the story and the world.
      - How did each adaptation present the story? What worked for either? Do you see influences of either art form in the other (theatre and film)?
      - How does acting for the stage differ from acting for the screen?

Day 2: Project Introduction – Film Adaptation

- **Objective**: Begin planning a film adaptation of a scene in groups.
  - **Project Outline**:
    - For this project, each scene-work group will adapt their assigned scene for a screen format using iMovie. The first step in this process involves storyboarding, where groups will map out each camera shot to reflect the characters' perspectives and convey essential information to the audience. This means considering how each shot will visually communicate the characters' emotions, motivations, and relationships, as well as what the

audience needs to understand about the scene's context. This approach to storyboarding encourages students to think critically about cinematic techniques and how visual storytelling can enhance the impact of their scene. (**TIII.5**)

Step 1: In groups, students draft storyboards outlining each camera shot and angle. Consider perspectives, character focus, and storytelling clarity.

- **Storyboarding Guidance**:
  - Emphasize using various angles and perspectives to enhance character emotion and audience engagement.

Day 3: Filming Day (TIII.5, TIII.10, TIII.12)

- **Objective**: Students will film footage for their scenes. (**TIII.12)**
- **Activities**:
  - **Group Filming**:
    - Students work in their groups to film their scenes, experimenting with different camera angles and shots.
    - Students may find creative places throughout the school building to film.
    - Class time and optional out-of-class time can be used to capture footage.

Day 4: Continued Filming and Editing Day (TIII.5, TIII.10)

- **Objective**: Students will finish filming their scenes and edit them using iMovie.
- **Activities**:
  - **Filming Time**:
    - Students will briefly film any last bits of their scenes.
  - **Editing Time**:
    - Groups will edit their scenes, adjusting camera cuts, adding music, and refining pacing.

Day 5: Movie Premiere Day

- **Objective**: Students will showcase their finished short films and provide feedback for their classmates work. (**TIII.2, TIII.3.a)**
- **Activities**:
  - **Movie Premiere**:
    - Students will dress up in their finest attire to walk the red carpet. The class will have a photoshoot to prepare for their first ever screenings of their newest short films.
    - Students may bring popcorn and other snacks to celebrate their work.

- After each film is shown, the filmmakers will have a talk back. (**TIII.2**)
    - Talk back questions:
        - After having seen the scene as a piece of theatre and as a piece of film, what translated well?
        - What are things about this story that you noticed when watching the film adaptation that you did not notice in the live theatre adaptation?

Reflection:
After completing the lesson, encourage students to reflect on how working with film elements deepened their understanding of storytelling in theatre and what skills they can apply to future theatre projects.