

# ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

BY **KIMBERLEY HOLMES**

Life is really one big curtain call. The sun rises each day, and the gallant red curtain on the stage of life begins to draw and expose the actors. Ladies and gentlemen - it is show time! Who are these award-winning performers you may ask? We are the actors in this day-to-day adventure we call life. Each day we eagerly arise to the serenade of our screaming alarm clocks, and stumble half asleep to the bathroom. We brush our teeth and comb our hair as we prepare for our curtain call, eagerly anticipating our moment in front of the crowd. How can we guarantee that our performance will be worthy of overwhelming applause every time we prepare our communiqué? We can rehearse our communication skills the same way professional actors and actresses do, by implementing a little drama into our daily lives.

Drama is defined as "acting out." This is the unique quality of drama that is readily understood by the general public. It is the preparation, refinement, and evaluation of acting out. The discipline of drama is built on three kinds of activities: acquiring information, experiencing, and skill building. The intermixing of these three activities should be present in the acting out. Experiencing is an activity of investigation and discovery by the actor of himself, or someone else. It focuses on personal resources, relationships to others, immediate surroundings, and the society within which the actor lives. Expanding upon the skill of experiencing, skill-building is an activity of refining the acting out, and enhancing its effectiveness. When focusing on skill-building the individual will study physical, personal, and communication skills. Physical skills consist of a well-produced and effective voice combined with a controlled, flexible, and expressive body. Personal skills focus on five Cs. They are the skills of concentration, cooperation, commitment, confidence, and control of emotions. These are personal skills that any strong communicator should strive to obtain.

If you think carefully you will realize that drama is already a part of your life. If you've ever played "Let's pretend" as a child, or with your child, or read a story to your children in the voices of the characters, then you are implementing dramatic techniques. One of the major areas of dramatic study is characterization. Characterization is simply becoming the character. You are experiencing life in the way that is was meant to be experienced. You read the lines the way the character would say them. By doing this you make the lines

very real. This is accomplished by vocal variety, expressions, pausing, singing, laughing, crying, and any other emotion you may desire to implement. Through this you will develop an awareness for performance skills such as: body control, emotional control, concentration, organization and self-discipline. You will also develop an ability to analyze scripts, utilize non-verbal communication, and become aware of sociological themes. Characterization encompasses all the tools of vocal variety, expressions, gestures, and empathy.

Another area of dramatic study of interest to effective communication is storytelling. Audiences of all ages are hypnotized by a dynamic storyteller. The focus is on characterization, facial expression, and enthusiasm. There is no memorization involved although practice is highly recommended for an effective performance. Reading is one of the most difficult things for speakers to do as we tend to focus on reading and forget all the elements of speaking. The elements of strong dramatic reading focus on vocal variety, expression, gestures, and most importantly, enthusiasm.

Improvisation is also a key communication enhancement trick. This is the remarkable ability to simply make things up on the spot! We all know the value of improvisation in our daily lives. It never fails that we are asked to do something at the very last minute, and we are simply not prepared to do it. To use a tired but true cliché, the show must go on! Professional theater troupes make a game of improvisation called theatre sports – competitive games between teams. It is a phenomenal battle of wits, a great way to improve communication skills, and an incredible amount of fun.

Overall, drama gives you one very important gift. It presents you with the gift of confidence. It can also add a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and enjoyment into your day-to-day life. Whether you are a salesperson, banker, teacher, engineer, or corporate executive, drama can add to and enhance your communication style. Remember as Shakespeare wrote so long ago, "All the world's a stage." Are you ready for your best performance?

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