

## **APPENDIX 20 - ACTING NOTES**

These are very important and may change with each production, but still should be gone over and handed out to actors.

### **THE ACTOR'S TEN COMMANDMENTS TO SURVIVE THE PASSION, PASSION, PASSION PLAY AT DUNDAS ESTATE.**

ONE – You will have no other director but THE DIRECTOR. Honour her above all other production people. (there is a good reason for this, you will find that your actors begin to direct each other and give notes. This only leads to confusion. Establish the fact that the Director is in charge always)

TWO - Listen to the voice of Jesus react to his words and know your cue.

THREE – When wearing a microphone do not say anything that is not scripted and pass the microphone on out of sight of the audience.

FOUR – Observe the rehearsal and production schedule and the learning of lines.

FIVE – Honour your stage mother, father and fellow actors. Remember everyone is a star in the life of Jesus Christ and all must play their part.

SIX – Do not murder the play by not giving your role passion, passion, passion.

SEVEN – Remember the only person who can commit adultery is Mary Magdalene, but make up your own story and relationships. Improvise your own sub-plot.

EIGHT – Under threat from the Property people do not remove any item from any dressing room or acting area, which does not belong to you. Leave well alone.

NINE – If lying or sitting down outside remember the weather. Wear something comfortable under your costume (shorts/vest/something warm) that cannot be seen by the wardrobe mistress. Remember her approval is needed for all attire, including footwear.

TEN – Do not lust after your neighbour's property. Just tell the stage manager what you need.

BUT THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OF ALL IS TO CHERISH AND SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER. REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE TOLD AND DO IT WITH PASSION, PASSION, PASSION.

Young Mary and Joseph must like donkeys, cows, sheep and babies.

The angel Gabriel must be able to manoeuvre with a six-foot wingspan.

The innkeeper's wife may find a folding chair and large umbrella of great comfort whilst waiting for her entrance.

Wise men, be wise and take riding lessons if needed.

All characters need to walk the acting areas and decide how your character moves from one scene to another.

If a quick change of costume is needed you must find the appropriate place to do it out of sight of the audience.

Decide if you need a prop, either bring it yourself and have it approved, or ask the stage manager.

The market people are vital for setting the scene of ordinary people of the time. Find out the history of the period to make your character come to life when talking to the audience.

THE MOST VITAL ITEM IS A BLACK BIN BAG USED FOR -

Taking wet costumes home to dry between performances.

To cover a basket to keep contents dry. (Remember to cover the bin bag with cloth – no plastic in those days!)

Hide a bin bag under your costume to sit on when not in view of the audience (behind the walled garden)

With appropriate holes can be worn as a waterproof whilst waiting to act.

Can be worn under a costume to keep you warm, but remember it will be noisy if wearing a microphone.

Jesus needs special care after the crucifixion. Behind the trees opposite the main entrance to the walled garden there should be a folding chair, towels, hot and cold water, two bowls, soap and a flask of tea or coffee (depending on what Jesus would like) and obviously a black bin bag to store things away.

- have narrator start speaking somewhere clearly visible to the audience and then they can move to where the action is. This helps the audience to see where the main action is. You can have the Narrator cut through an audience which turns the front row into the back row and vice versa.

By putting a note in the programme and using lines such as “come with me now”, the audience gets used to following the Narrator, otherwise, they follow Jesus.

- always look at your sightlines from all angles for the audience. Remember if you have a large audience who are all standing, then the people in the back can't see any action that is done close to the front row or on the same level, so think about moving the action up high [or putting the audience on a high level looking down to the action] or moving it further away from the audience
- create a storyline using the Character profile sheet. The more you do on this, the stronger the character you will play and the more you will enjoy it!
- don't overact! Or wave your arms around too much.
- acting is reacting so be aware of what is being said and done to you and change your reaction accordingly
- don't clump in groups and don't stand in lines [never have more than 2 or 3 people standing together unless it is meant to be a large crowd and even then, you need to use the whole of the acting space that is available]
- watch modernisms eg. “okay” creeping in
- teamwork is important! Stress that the cast all work together, there are no stars!
- Wait until music fades before speaking if you have lines directly after
- Don't speak when music fades if you don't have specific lines. Mimespeak ie. move your lips as if speaking but no sound comes out
- Don't throw the bread into the audience for the feeding of the 5000, it offends people. Likewise don't tip our the wine at the last supper, it can offend. It is alright for Jesus to throw the bread for feeding of 5000 up in the air, especially if you have a large audience so that it is clearly visible.
- If you are using multiple voices, ensure the cast know their number and are prepared to cover for others as undoubtedly someone forgets their line.
- Ensure someone is at audience side of stretcher to ensure cloth doesn't come off of body double if you are using a double from the cross to the tomb.
- Swords and armour go to stage management cabin each night
- The Stage Manager or deputy will call you back from lunch each day
- Don't have t-shirts visible under costumes – or collars.
- Ensure you have dirtied yourself up a bit – no showers in Biblical times!
- Props people will set props unless otherwise agreed. Don't touch them otherwise
- Know any lunch/refreshment arrangements
- Don't speak whilst walking in front of a speaker, in general avoid walking near speakers when possible!
- commit to rehearsals. No backing out after 3 weeks before play

- bring old woollen blankets for kids especially to use onsite if cold weather, not modern multicoloured ones [they can be sold from stalls]
- kids can wear black plimsolls if possible and distress [dirty them]
- if sharing a mic, get as close as possible to each other
- stage fighting needs to be practiced regularly
- always have a reason for entering and leaving a scene. Never stop being in character until you are out of sight from an audience
- Disciples/Pilate/Soldiers remember you are wearing robes, watch exposing underwear!
- Don't eat all the fruit in the market if you are doing multiple performances, it is expensive! Or bring your own if you want to eat it every day.
- Open air acting needs bigger movements/gestures but not overdramatic!
- Don't appear too sombre at Jesus teaching! Some is hard, but some is great news! Think about what is being said and react in character accordingly.
- No jewellery
- Think ahead and anticipate any moves or places you need to be/props you need etc
- It is the actors responsibility to collect personal props if you need them and also to set costumes where you have a change. They must remember to collect costumes at the end of the day and reset
- There will be a sign in sheet on the performance days in the dressing room and all actors should tick their name off first thing. This is the list the stage manager works from to ensure the whole cast is present.
- Look dirty [get mud!]
- Don't bring valuables onsite
- Wedding rings should be taken off or taped with plaster
- Don't disappear if you have a mic and you need to change with someone
- Remember to be astonished at things that are astonishing! [dove at baptism, miracles etc]
- Let us see your face – don't turn your back to the audience especially when speaking!
- Don't run through the Temple – the priests will have you!
- Never speak out of character during the play – you never know if you can be heard on the mic!
- Always check the mic plots and the notes on the mic pouches so that you know who to pass yours too
- If you have a mic, don't decide to leave where you have been standing as others are reliant on you being there!
- In the Nativity, Joseph should be running desperately trying to get a room
- Lots of improvisation amongst Disciples and joking amongst themselves
- If playing Jesus, good idea to have a high energy almost running rehearsal

- Allow time for Jesus to weep at Lazarus death
- Jesus should go to Lazarus on the line “Lazarus live!”
- Lot of energy in the feeding of the 5000
- Actors who are voices, should stand for their line or make a movement so that we know who is speaking
- Jesus line – “love the Lord God” is a massive statement and should have tons of energy
- Soldiers, centurian and Jesus must go over who does what behind the screen for the flogging scene
- Don’t leave litter anywhere, especially on the grounds or in the dressing room or lunch tent
- Be brave and improvise storylines [just check them with the Director first!]
- Don’t approach or talk to Director, Stage Manager or Sound people during the show unless it is an emergency
- Never stand in a straight line or clump together [no more than 3 people in a group together]
- Don’t hug each other when you have a mic on! or slap Jesus on the back [he has his mic lead taped to his back]
- Don’t let your costume cover your mic
- Don’t drop your energy
- Don’t look sad or bored by Jesus’ teaching! It is radical stuff!
- Read scripts frequently!
- Learn your lines immediately you are cast!
- If you have a basket, make sure there is something in it!
- Never leave props lying around especially swords and armour! [those should be returned to Stage Manager after every performance]
- There is only 1 director! Whilst it is helpful to give advice to other actors, anything that could be considered directing should be checked with the Director first in case of changes etc
- NEVER CRITICISE ANYONE ELSE’S PERFORMANCE – encourage each other. Leave it to the Director to make any changes.
- Some actors to volunteer to be catering co-ordinators if required to ensure that the cast all get lunch.
- Be audience aware, they need to see at all times, so don’t block their view especially at walk to the cross
- Space yourselves out in scenes – be spatially aware
- Keep shouting at Jesus from the moment he is sentenced until he reaches the cross. Keep up the momentum
- Be aware of each other and react off each other
- PACE! This means be tight on cues [not waiting in between lines, say your line straight after the previous one unless otherwise directed]
- have confidence in yourself! If the Director has cast you, it is because they know you can do it! However, don’t be over confident that you drop your guard, that is when things go wrong
- Acting is simply reacting – so always be actively listening!

- Project your voices so that you can be heard [this doesn't mean shouting but being loud enough to be heard] The mic will only enhance your voice.
- Watch not to stay too close to the scenery – use the open air space!
- Help each other
- The cue line for making a big noise in the Pilate trial scene is “all who are not deaf to truth!” – when you hear that, start making noise!
- Always finish off a scene and never leave out of character. The same goes for entering a scene
- Don't speak out of character ever
- If you are cast as a voice or general crowd, then get together to practice to ensure everyone knows what their line is and when to say it
- No cars onsite at all during performance week
- If you require water during the performance, then pre-set that yourself in the morning
- FOCUS!
- CONFIDENCE
- PASSION, PASSION, PASSION!
- ENERGY!
- ENJOY!

#### Actors Setup/General prop/set information

- towels/cloth and hot water for Jesus costume change. This can be done by a couple of the actors or the Costume department. A nice touch to have something warm for the actor to drink at that time!
- thieves up early on cross and have helpers there to help them get up the ladders and into place. Then remove the ladders Also wait until we have our backs turned before coming down ladders. Don't jump off the crosses! Also make sure that the thieves put blood on wrists/feet and dirty up their bodies a bit for crucifixion.
- bread and food for last supper – don't have a food fight!
- Cast put baskets over mound for feeding of 5000 to ensure nobody goes in if using hole in the ground idea.
- Soldiers at cross ensure Jesus has blood on wrists and feet
- Greeters at gate for trials are the ones who call the soldiers ready for the arrest if they are coming in the same way.

Other general tips:

- allow time to get to your car park and then to the rehearsal site [eg it takes 10 mins in Dundas from carpark to the production cabin]
- if parking in a field, watch out for boggy patches!
- If driving on the site, watch out for pedestrians and especially children. Drive very slowly at all times
- Remember to sign in on performance days
- Remember to check with your microphone partners each day and practice the changeover if you need to
- Bring warm and waterproof clothing and footwear. Also midge cream for the summer! Sun cream can also be very useful [think positive!]
- Carry a bar of chocolate or something sweet for energy
- Never pass up an opportunity to go to the toilet especially on the longer productions
- Be prepared for waiting around
- Use the props and set in your area to create storylines [shopping etc]
- Be careful not to trip on costumes
- Try to attend the warmup and Directors notes times – these are invaluable
- Savour the mixture of elation and relief at the end of each performance!

### **Breakdown of the Dundas play notes from 2005**

#### **Before the performance starts.**

There will be a dressing portacabin located on the road just up from the baptism – this is the main portacabin and where you will change and find cast lists etc. (the portacabin used for practices is now for the most part a no go area)

\*The **first** thing you need to do is tick off your name on cast list, this needs to be done as soon as you arrive every day.

\* You may then need to put your costume for the market place (if you have a costume change- usually if you have been in nativity) in the lunch tent

\*you may also want to have a stash of goodies up behind the walled garden – you need to do this before the performance (you might be able to sweet talk someone into taking stuff up for you as it's a steep hill and usually wet first thing in the morning!!)

\*microphones – these are handed out beside the portacabin - it is really important to be there to get your microphone – you also need to look at the microphone plan to see who you are getting the microphone from or who you are passing it on to. You then need to arrange with those people WHEN you will swap microphones and WHERE..

The most important thing about microphone especially if you are a voice – if you have a line and you don't have a microphone GO BESIDE SOMEONE WHO DOES!!!!!!

\*There will also be a check to make sure all the voices are there and they know what they are doing.

\* Around this time there is also have a warm up which everyone should take part in. The warm up usually takes place further along the road so that the crowd can't see (or hear!) us.

\*After warm up, Suzanne and Sir Jack then appear and give any notices etc. There is normally a prayer and then the play begins!!

\*People in the baptism would walk down and get into place.

### **Nativity**

There are a few people who greet the audience as they come in – they have to leave early to get around- examples of some things they might say “Are you going to Bethlehem for the census too?” “It's a cold night isn't it?” “What do you think of this census then?” etc....

.\*Shepherds walk around the path on to the road and all the way around to get ready for their bit waiting behind the inn.

\*most people in the nativity will then go straight to the market place. They may need to have a costume change in the lunch tent (and a fly cup of tea?!!)They will then mostly be responsible for the setting up of the market before everyone arrives. Fruit on stalls, material, make sure straw is covering up mound. The rest of the cast come after they have seen the baptism.

### **Baptism**

\*Everyone should be in position when the audience come down from nativity. (fixing nets, having a chat etc.)

Look as if you're interested – remember this guy John the Baptist eats locusts and honey, lives out in the desert, and dresses in camel skin!!!!!!  
not your average person!

After you see the dove , hear the voice of God - you are out of there gossiping all the way! Along to the market place and help with any remaining setting up. There isn't much time before the audience can see you so you need to start looking 'busy' quite soon.

The devils and anyone else who is left behind probably would change in the 1<sup>st</sup> portacabin and then will walk along with the audience, this is a great opportunity to interact with them. E.g. “What about that man John the Baptist? He's a madman I tell you..” “Are you going to pay your taxes?” “Have you paid your taxes yet? You better make sure you pay your taxes to Matthew, he's a horrible man , but we have to do it. These Romans, what have they ever done for us?” etc etc..( ask around and see what other cast people have said before)

### **Market Place**

- One of the best parts of the play is when the audience are walking along to the market place and finding a place to sit down. This usually takes a long time and there is plenty of opportunity to interact with them. Just remember to stay in character at ALL times! Let them see you interact with each other and see your storylines, who you are related to, how you react to the leper, the Roman soldiers, the prostitutes etc. Sell your wares from the stall.(money unit probably Shekels) A good idea if you want to eat fruit is to bring your own and eat that! (don't eat any fruit that you didn't bring until the Sunday, then you can also sell it to the audience)

Also when the audience are coming along the road, the Roman soldiers do their stuff, harass the audience and prostitutes look for trade!

When you are in the market you need to really be aware of what's going on – what's coming next. When the thieves steal the money have a look to see what's going on and be ready to join in when they want to start an uprising, you hate these Romans!! Remember to be out there NOT hugging the stalls at this point (Keep an eye out for the fire which will be lit!! Everyone also needs to make sure no children are near the fire at any time)

When Jesus comes through the market, as far as you're concerned you don't really know who he is. But then he starts healing people. You need to decide what you think about that. When he goes up into the audience teaching are you going to follow him or are you going to stay in the market and watch from a distance ?

Remember to actually listen to what Jesus is saying! It's radical stuff – he is saying lots of really different things from what other teacher's say and you need to think about what your reaction is to all that and also to all the things that happen.

The prostitute comes in and doesn't get stoned! That's quite a shock,

Then you have the Roman soldier (who is a nasty bit of work!) Jesus says he's not seen such faith!! What is your reaction?

You are starting to leave to go back to the stalls when the leper gets healed - remember to let the audience be able to see. Again what is your reaction when you see her being healed?

Then you move back to the stalls. For the next few scenes you need to be quite low key in the stalls. Samaritan woman, Lazarus, Priest scene, (make sure you're not in the way of the temple and not making any noise!) and also walking on water. This is one of the hardest bits because it's a long time and you're not supposed to know what is going on, and it's really easy to come out of character! So think about your storylines, what are you thinking about Jesus and all that you've seen. When Lazarus is brought back to life again you hear about it and need to have a reaction etc....

Then after walking on the water Jesus comes through the market place and it's feeding of the 5,000 - this time you are really excited and rush up to hear him. After you've passed out the bread then the voices ask Jesus for a sign – they say it's too hard then you must leave straight away.

Next the children's story, and when that is going on you can start leaving for lunch, but think of a reason for leaving. After children's story, time to filter off for lunch.

### **Triumphal Entry**

You will get a call in the lunch tent when to go up to the starting point. (beside the lovely portaloos!)

“Hosanna” up to when child gets healed

then it’s a cheer

Then Inquisitor line

Then Jesus says “even the stones would cry out” it’s “Hosanna “again up to the temple then split around either side but make sure the audience can see!!(be careful of curving around.)

Then after Jesus says “then neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things” and it’s Hosanna again up to Martha’s house then you stop shouting but still wave the palm’s til you’re up the hill.

There is a spot about  $\frac{3}{4}$  up the hill where you put your palm branch, then it’s up and around the corner of the walled garden where we spend the next 40 minutes or so!!! (so remember to stash your goodies there before the play starts!)

The cue to go in for the trial is when the cleaners come out.

In the trial everyone needs to be anti Jesus except, Mary, Martha, Mary mother, Mary Mag. Remember the cue Jesus says “all who are not deaf to truth” for loud heckling!

On walk to the cross you need to get out of the way to let the audience see, so moving down into the grassy area. After Jesus is down from the cross you filter off down to the market place, you can filter back up the hill for the end..... And that’s it! Collapse in a heap!

You may want to talk to the audience at the end and as you walk back down the hill. Remember to make sure you have got all your headscarves etc and put them all back in 1<sup>st</sup> portacabin for next day!

### **Tips for clothes**

A vest or vest top and shorts are the best things to wear under your costume, plain and light coloured. T-shirts etc are more likely to be seen at the collar.

Remember no jewellery, earrings, rings, watches, no nail varnish or make up at all (except if you are a prostitute) and get muddy!