

# COURSE MATERIAL

## ACTING SKILLS

### Day One Theory

#### Your Voice

To capture the attention of your audience when you start your performance the following techniques are important:

#### **Articulation:**

Use your speech organs to speak clearly and pronounce every word without smudging or mumbling.

Your main speech organs are:

Tongue

Lips

Teeth

Teeth Ridge

#### **Audibility:**

##### *Projection*

- Is to let your voice carry right to the back at the last row of the audience without using a microphone or shouting. To master the technique your breath control is of utmost importance.

##### *Breathing*

- Your **diaphragm**,
- **Inter costal muscles** in and out the rib cage
- and your **abdominal muscle** are your breathing tools.

When inhaling

- Diaphragm contracts.
- Inter costal muscles around the rib cage contracts to make space of the lungs to inhale the air.
- Abdominal muscle relaxes.

When exhaling

- Diaphragm relaxes.
- Inter costal muscles relax to push the air from the lungs.
- Abdominal muscle contracts.

Correct breathing helps us to

- Relax
- To have enough breath when phrasing certain lines or acting a character.
- To stay focused and in character

Breathing exercise to improve your breath control

- Take a deep breath, focussing on the diaphragm to push forward.
- Hold your breath for a few seconds.
- Then explode the voice on the 'a' vowel and let the breath flow slowly out of the lungs while doing this.
- Start counting as this continues. Every time you do the exercise see if you could add another digit.

## *Relaxation*

We must be relaxed on stage in order to

- Not to stress and forget our lines
- To focus and concentrate on you character and movements on stage
- To act some improvisation when something happens on stage
- To have a good posture and breath control.

Relaxation exercises

- Roll shoulders, backwards and forward
- Move chin on shoulders from right to left
- Shake hands
- Stress fingers
- Turn feet

Lay on back – start stretching body from arms, lift the shoulders and neck from the ground, then the feet, stretch in the air and hold for three counts. Flop back to the floor, relax and breathe three times.

## *Resonance*

- Sound is made when the breath moves over the larynx.
- The sound is then captured in the resonance cavities
  - Throat
  - Nasal
  - Mouth
- If the cavities are relaxed and open, a good tone is produced.
- There must be enough room inside the cavities to allow the tone to resound.
- The entrance at the back and the exit in front of the mouth must be wide enough to let the sound enter and emerge without any difficulties.

## DAY TWO

### Modulation:

Variation in tone colour

- We colour the tone of the voice with
  - Onomatopoeia
  - Expressing quantity
  - Imagination

The pitch of your voice

- It may be high, medium or low, according to
  - Emotion
  - Characterization

Variation in Pace

- We vary our pace according to
  - Emotion
  - Subject matter

Effective Pausing

- It is when we stop the sound or movement to
  - Breathe
  - Make sense
  - For effect

Correct Phrasing

- Phrasing is when we put a group of words together in order to make sense.

Effective Inflection

- It is the bend of the voice at the end of a sentence or a word.

Volume variation

- We change our volume according to
  - Emotion
  - Characterization

Continuous Intonation

- It is while we are speaking the voice will flow up and down and not keeping a monotone sound.

Applying of Emphasis / Accentuation

- It is when we put weight on a word to make it sound important or stand out.

# COURSE MATERIAL

## ACTING SKILLS

### DAY THREE

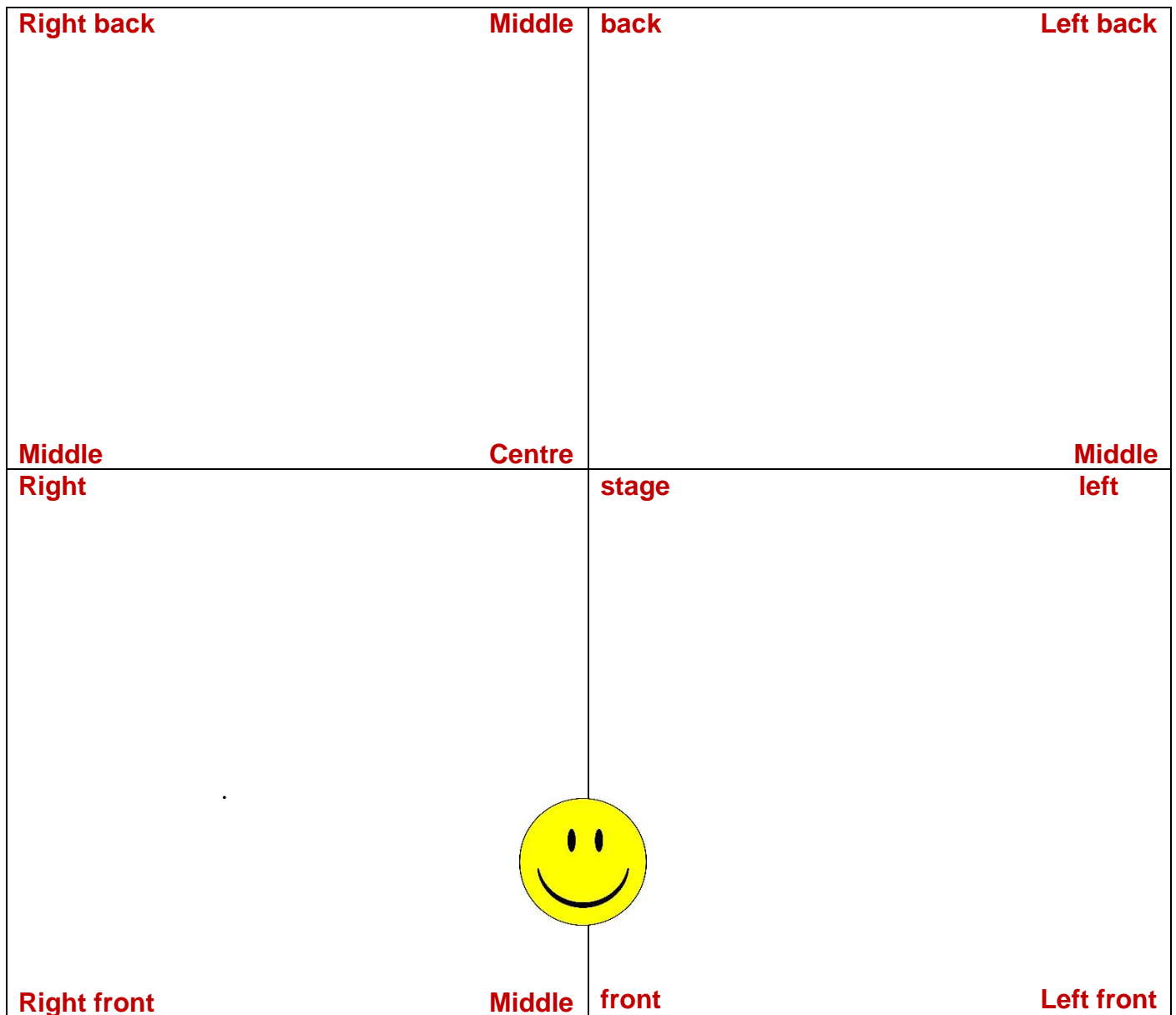
#### STAGE PLANNING

Always plan your movement from the stage facing the audience. Never from the front facing the stage.

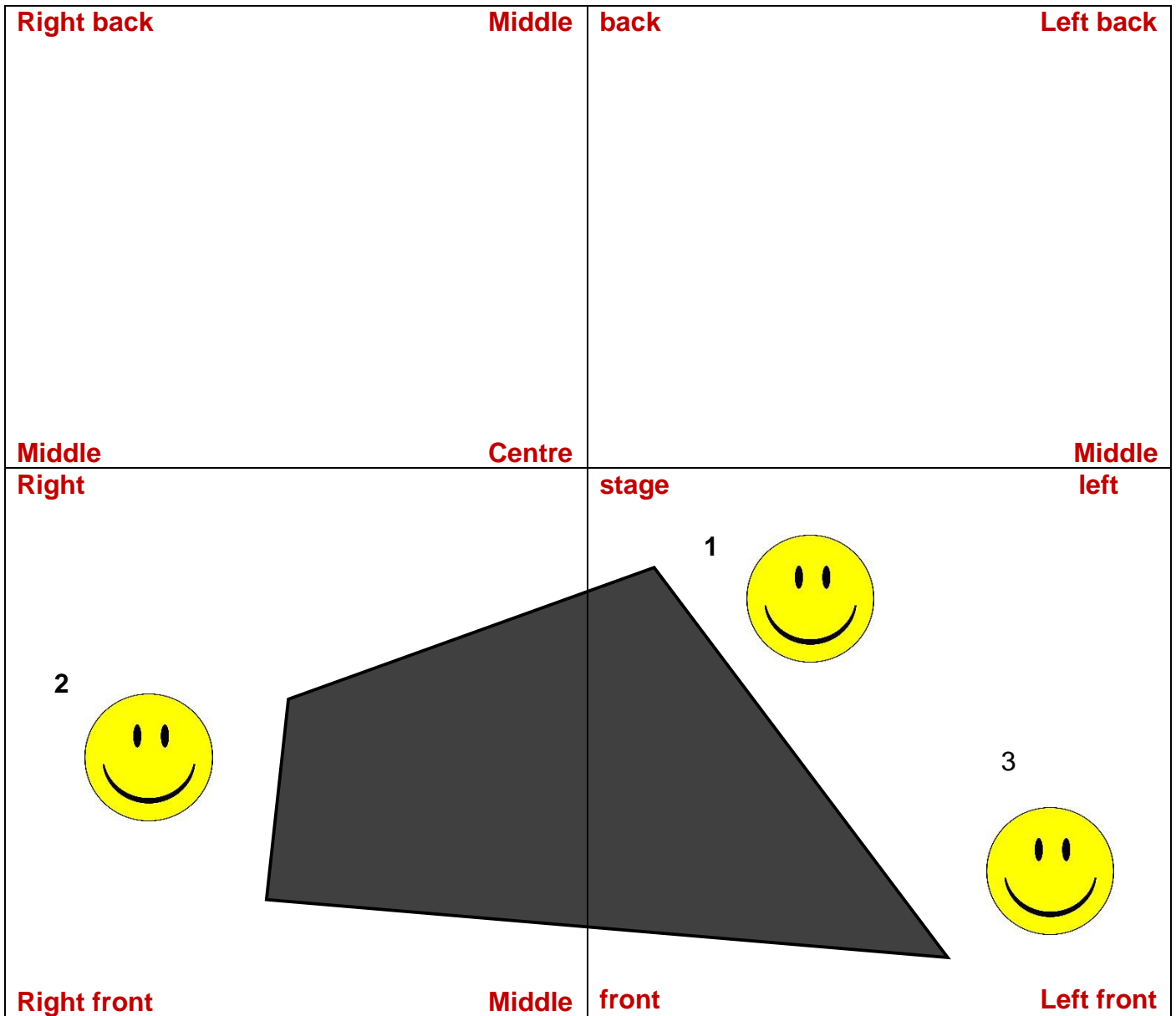
To use the stage when performing is a technique not always appreciated. Make sure that you 'balance' the stage when planning your moves. If you only focus on one side, you 'topple' the stage.

Different kinds of performing acts use different space to balance the stage and to make your performance attractive to your audience for example:

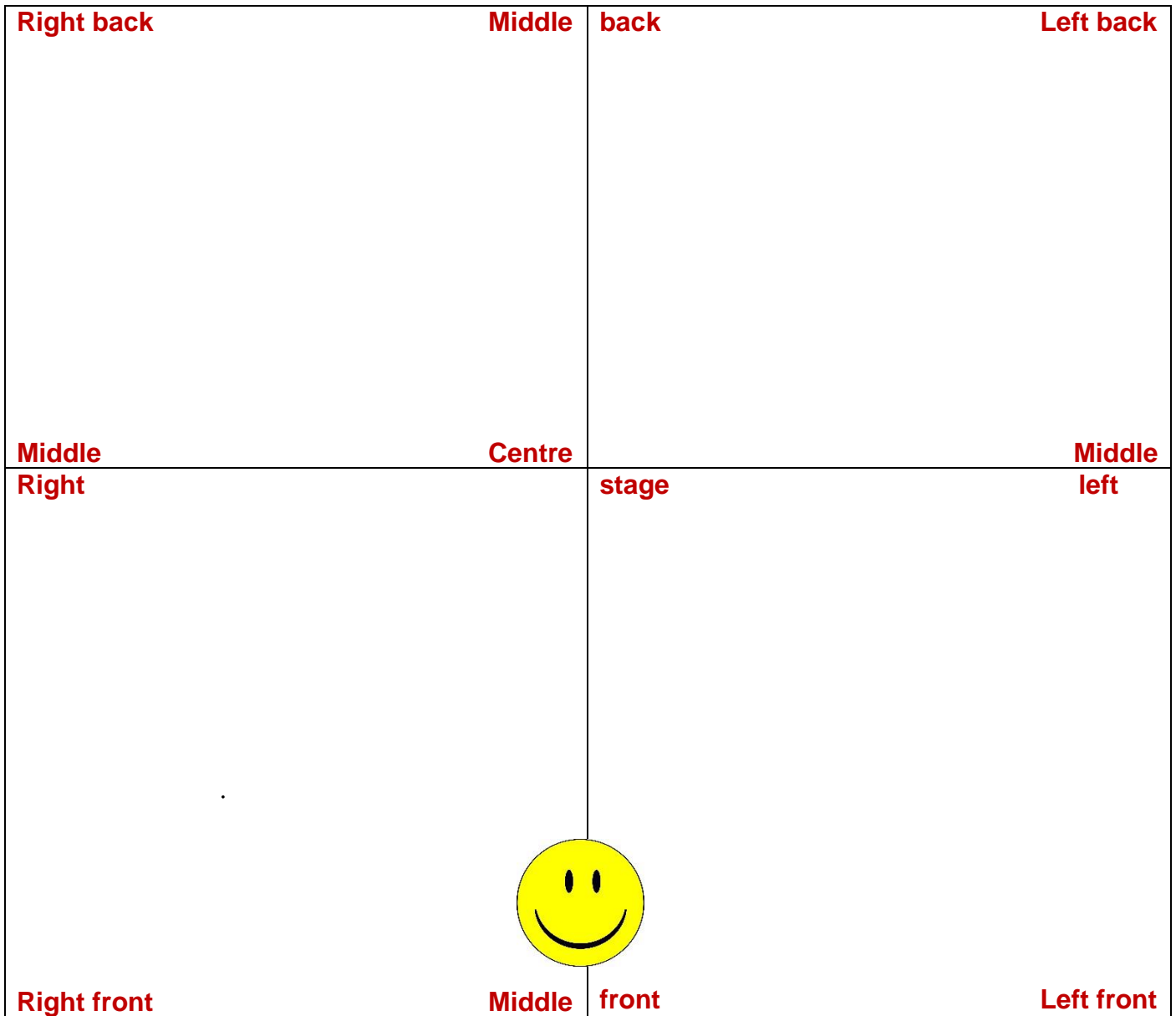
#### STAGE PLANNING FOR LYRIC POETRY



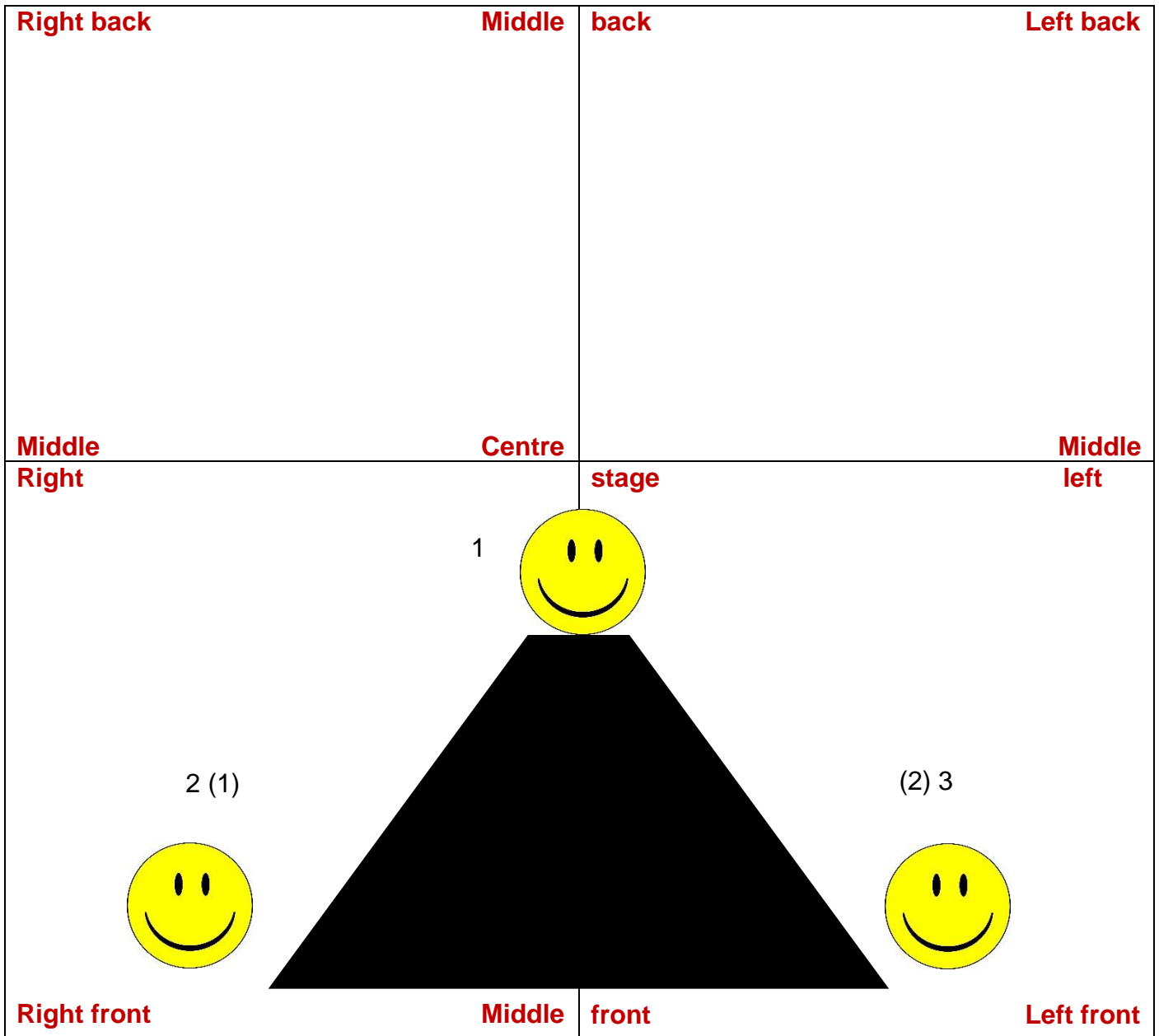
# STAGE PLANNING FOR DRAMATIZED POETRY



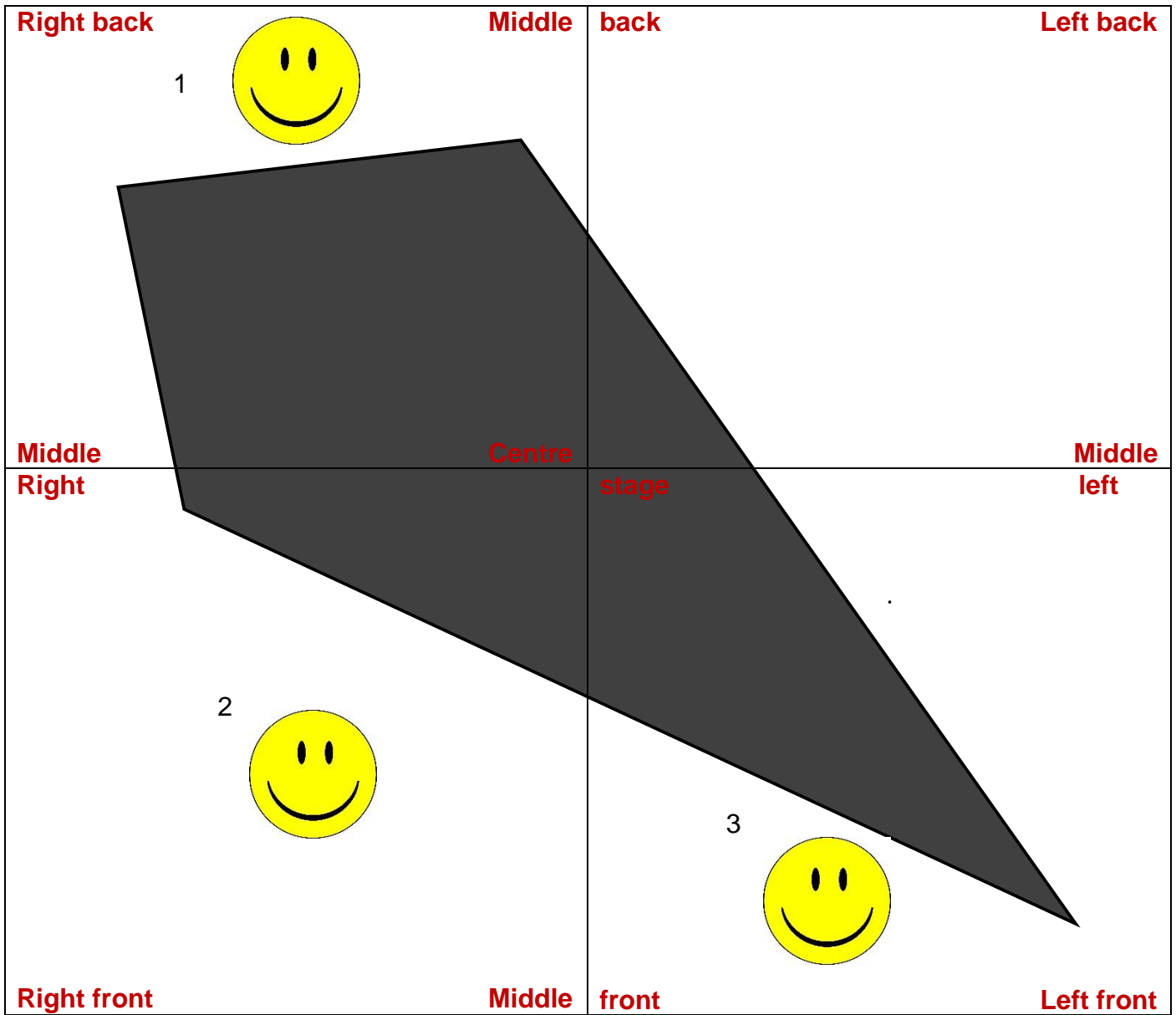
# STAGE PLANNING FOR UNDRAMATIZED PROSE



# STAGE PLANNING FOR DRAMATIZED PROSE

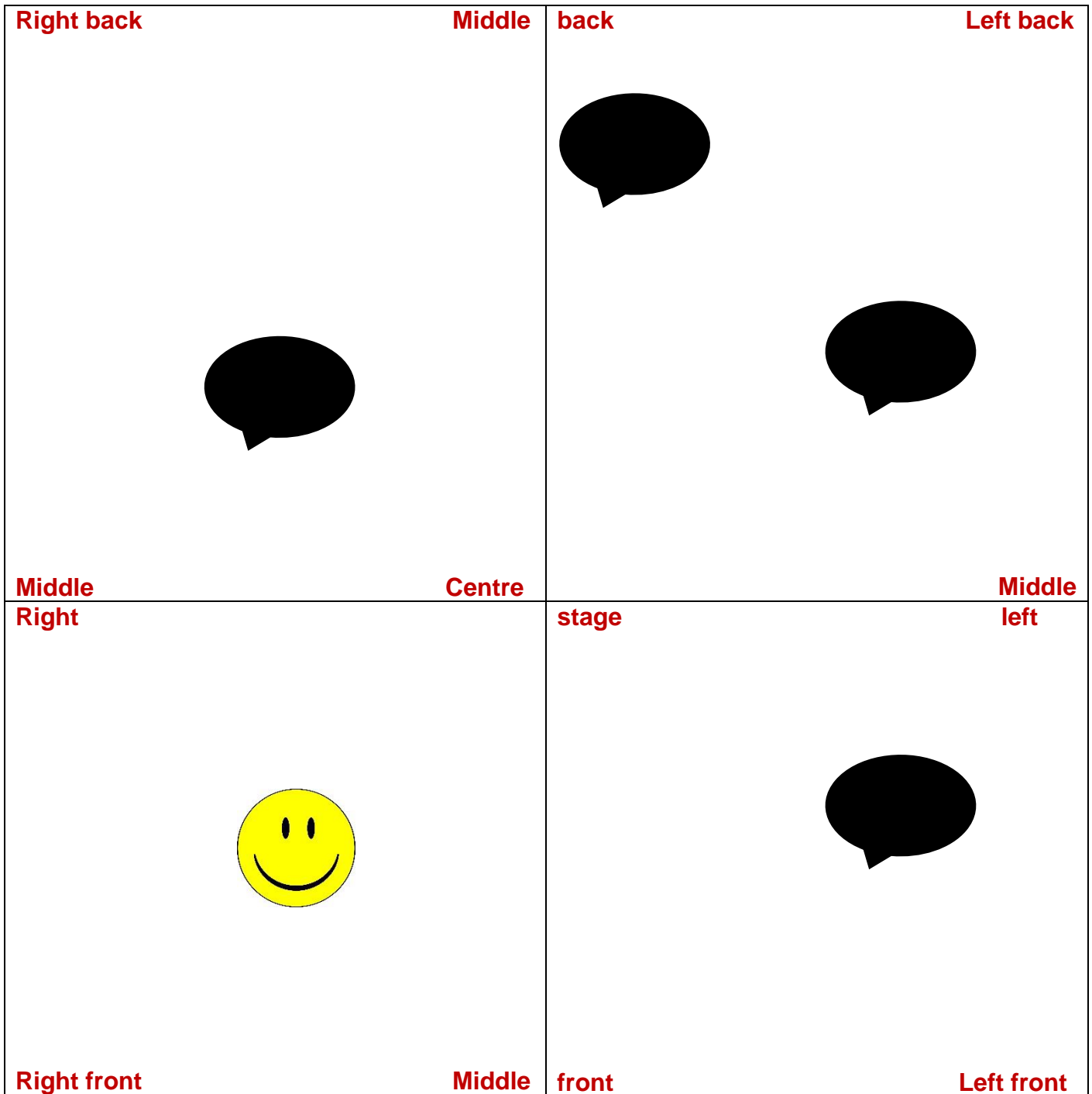


# STAGE PLANNING FOR MONOLOGUE





# STAGE PLANNING FOR GROUP PLAY



Right front

Middle front

Left front



## USING OF PROPS (REQUISITES) ON STAGE

Props are:

- Chair
- Table
- Anything that will give you a level to work with.

It is important to make use of the above for the following reasons:

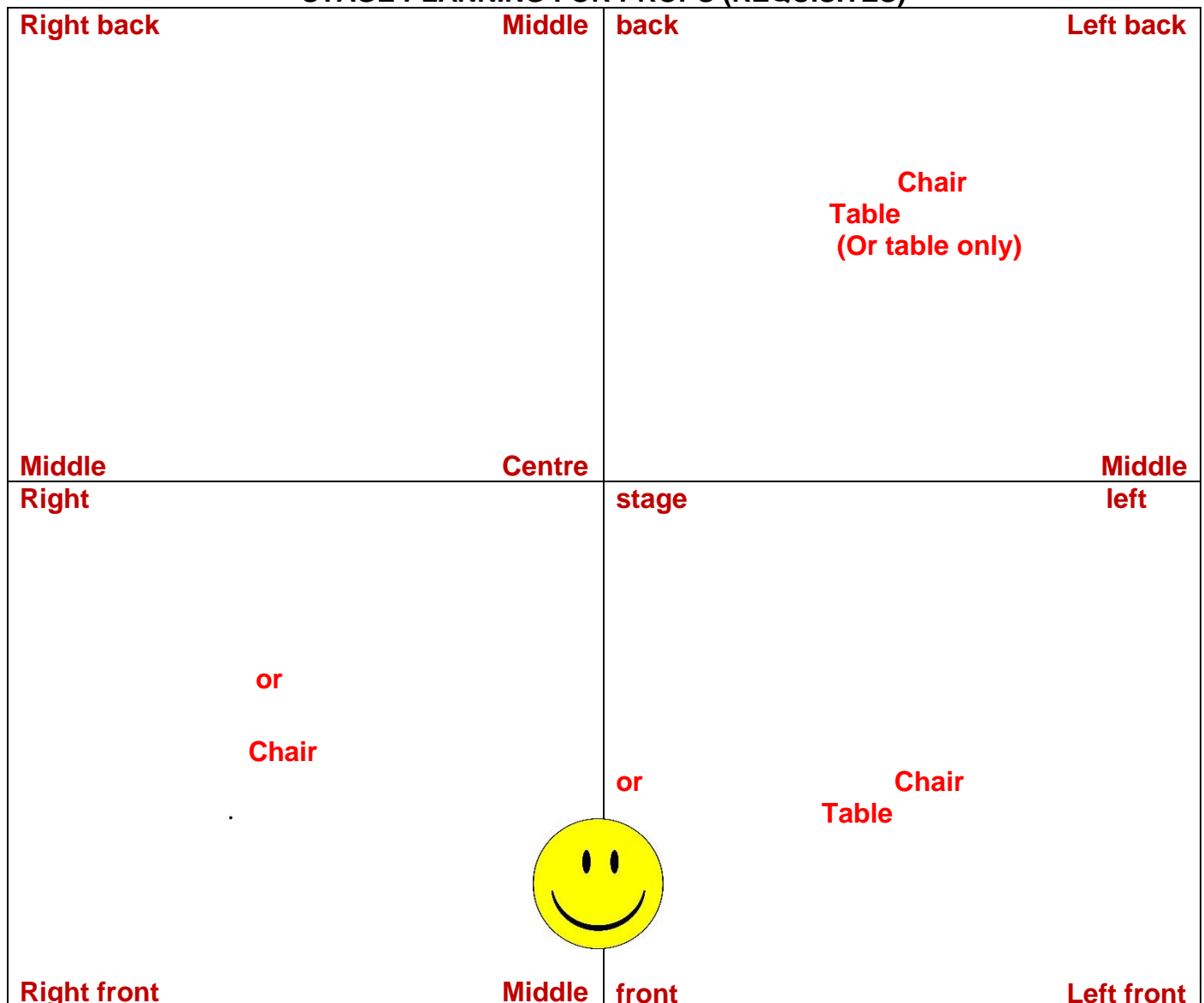
- It provides levels while you are moving around on the stage.
- If you only move in a horizontal line with your body, you bore the eye of the spectator.
- If you sit, jump, stand, lay on the floor you keep your performance interesting.

You can also use them as your focus point. (The place where most of the actions take place.)

You can combine, for example – a table and chair.

Our you can divide. For example – Start with table left back. Use chair right front.

### STAGE PLANNING FOR PROPS (REQUISITES)



## **VERY IMPORTANT:**

If you use props for a dramatized prose or poetry, it must be black. The reason is that it must blend with the black of the costumes.

If you do a monologue, you will be in character then the above will not be applicable. Let me explain and begin with the costumes:

## **COSTUMES:**

- **If you do a lyric**, or **any other** for example **free style poetry**, you can wear anything that is not taking the attention from the poem.
- **Dramatized poetry, prose including undramatised prose** are telling a story.
  1. There will be characters in inverted commas (“). – Example to follow.
  2. There will be more than one character.
  3. Wearing complete black, helps that you can act each characters’ personality individually. They will not be identified in normal clothes.
  4. Therefore, your props will also be black.
- **Monologue** is a character from a scene.
  1. Costume and props will suit the character and the scene.
- **Group play** is for the Director to decide what will be appropriate.

## COURSE MATERIAL

### ACTING SKILLS

#### DAY FOUR

#### PERFORMING POETRY

The most performed categories in poetry are:

- Lyric
- Free Style
- Narrative

#### How to perform a Lyric

The following poem is a Lyric. It is were the last word of a line, rhymes with one in a previous end of a line. It is very difficult by not to fall into a singing mode when performing a Lyric.

### RONNIE

I look at your collage of photos  
All framed together in one golden square  
But what attracts me the most  
Are the white feathers you share  
An Angel from heaven drops them for me  
Every time I think how I love thee  
What wonderful moments we had  
And till today, I will never be sad  
For every feather your Spirit provides  
Brings comfort, knowing that you'll always  
be by my side

RV 2016

It is important to apply the right poetry pauses and phrasing. The audience must capture the emotions of the Poet when she wrote this poem to highlight the sadness and to emphasize the cruelty of mankind

You will stand MF of the stage with no gestures or movement. This poem is to intense, that only your voice and facial expressions will convey the message. You can also sit on a chair if it will make you feel more comfortable.

### **How to perform a Free Style**

A Free Style poem has no rhyme. The Poet wrote the poem according to his/her experience or emotions. The name 'Free Style' says it all. You write your poem the way you feel. The following is a Free Style poem:

## **EXPECTATIONS**

You came into my life  
Guided by the Universe  
You became my hero  
My friend  
My security  
My fantasies

And therefore  
I need you  
To guide me  
With your wisdom  
Take care of me  
With your integrity and dignity  
Accept me with your heart  
And love me with your body  
So that we could become one  
With the Universe

Our energies united  
In the name  
Of unconditional love

RV (2000)

This poem is also not suitable for gestures or movement. You will lose the expectations and emotions of the Poet. It is so intense, that you will have to sit.

## How to perform a Narrative poem

The Narrative is certainly the most popular poetry style. It has many opportunities to express the 'story' the Poet wrote. Narrative means it is in a kind of story telling format. You may find different characters in this poem. (Roald Dahl is a very good example of writing Narrative Poetry.) It can be either a dramatic or humorous story. Very little format is used. The main aim is to identify the different characters by using different voices and character building. Still, the correct phrasing is important for the audience to understand the story.

Here is a very short example of a Narrative poem that will suit primary school students.

### The Family

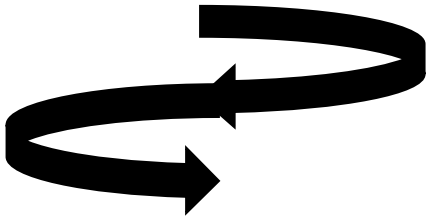
We are all at the beach  
Including aunt Suzie and uncle Frank  
Whom I thought would never dare  
To face the waves.  
Take care Frank, says mom as he  
Tip-toes into the coolness of the water.  
He will be OK, darling, says aunt Suzie  
Following after.  
Suddenly my little sister shouts  
Take care uncle Frank  
The octopus is coming out!  
Oh no, screams dad, not again  
I saw him yesterday, huge, and only wants to play!  
Let's get out of here! Screams Grandad  
While I couldn't keep my laughter  
And started running after.  
That is our family.  
Never a dull moment  
But caring and sharing  
When love is needed  
Even for our dog, Roland.

RV 2018

This poem gives the performer the opportunity to act the characters, to use levels and to make use of the stage from different angles. It is fun combined with dramatic story telling.

## PAUSING AND PHRASING IN POETRY

### ENJAMBED LINE



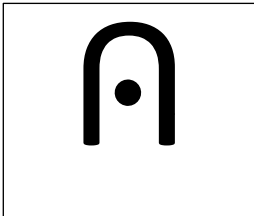
THE MOST IMPORTANT PAUSE IN POETRY  
TO UNDERSTAND THE POEM AFTER IT HAS BEEN  
PHRASED.

At the end of the sentence and then go through to the beginning of the next line.

**REASON:** Because it is one thought.

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### SUSPENSERY PAUSE:

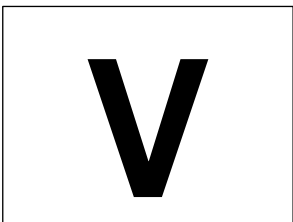


At the end of the sentence and then hang for a moment in the air without taking a breath and then continue to the next line.

**REASON:** To keep the audience in suspense for what is next to come.

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### CEASURAL PAUSE:



In the middle of a sentence and never at the end.

To stop in the middle of a sentence for very short moment without taking a breath.

**REASON:** For verse rhythm.

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### ONE, TWO AND THREE – END STOP PAUSES



Anywhere. Poetry, Prose, Monologues, Plays etc. and while you speak.

**REASON:** To breathe, for effect and so that the audience can understand what you are saying.

# COURSE MATERIAL

## ACTING SKILLS

### DAY FIVE

#### CHARACTERISATION

There are different aspects to consider when performing a character. Either in dramatized poetry, prose, monologue, a play, tv or film.

- You must completely forget about yourself and BECOME the character.
- What is the character's physical characteristics?
- The personality?
- The emotions?
- The verbal elements such as
  - Has the character an accent.
  - Is he/she flat, snobbish, specific tone, fast, slow?

You must convince your audience when being someone. Your hand movements, body posture and facial expression are the non-verbal elements that must be carefully studied.

When you perform a monologue, make sure of the right costume and make-up used. Including the props.

#### YOUR SENSES

Convince your audience by using your five senses passionately.

##### 1. See:

I REALLY see. I don't imagine I see something. Your audience wants to experience what you are seeing.

##### 2. Taste:

I am HONESTLY tasting something (terrible, sweet, sour, delicious) Your audience wants to taste it too!

##### 3. Feel:

I am REALLY feeling the pain in my body. Your audience wants to feel it with you.

##### 4. Touch:

When I touched the plate of the stove, not knowing it is turned on, my hand BURNED. The audience must be convinced the way you come over expressing yourself.

##### 5. Hear:

I DO hear something outside. Not pretending that I am hearing something outside. Your audience must hear it too.



## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PROSE AND A MONOLOGUE**

**(The duration of both can vary. Most of the time between five and seven minutes. When you go for an audition, they normally expect from you to do a short three minutes monologue to prepare.)**

### **PROSE (Dramatized or undramatized.)**

Is an extract from a story where you have different characters to portray and tell the story as it was written.

### **MONOLOGUE**

Is a character from a play where you act as one person pretending having a conversation with an imaginary character from the same scene of the play.

It can also be a character using the audience as soundboard to share his/her experience with.

## COURSE MATERIAL

### ACTING SKILLS

#### DAY SIX

#### HOW DO I PERFORM AN UNDRAMATIZED PROSE?

- By standing centre stage.
- Not moving around.
- Make your announcement: An extract from (Story book name) by (Author).
- Count three counts before you begin for the audience to prepare themselves for what is coming.
- Keep the telling parts just as interesting as the characters.
- Portray the characters by tilt your head from right to left for each character.
- You will have some time to 'get into the character' by using the "....." inverted commas as two counts before the person speaks.
- Take care not to mask. (Turning your head 'flat' from the one side to the other. The audience must see your face when you portray the character. When you 'become' that person, let your eyesight be focussed to the left or right back of the venue.
- When you do the telling parts, involve your audience by sharing the story with them.

#### HOW DO I PERFORM A DRAMATIZED PROSE?

By using the same techniques. The only difference will be that you will apply movement and levels as demonstrated in stage planning.

You can make your announcement from where you going to begin, or centre stage and then move to the place on stage you would like to start.

#### EXAMPLE OF A PROSE

##### An extract from 'The Longing' by Ria Vorster

It's been three years since she left the Garden Route. Three dreadful years. Moving from nature back to the cement jungle was not what she really wanted.

The day her daughter phoned and asked: "How many friends do you have down there, mom?"

"Well Carin, if you talk about the Garden Route, not much. Approximately four?"

"And how many do you have in Gauteng before you left eleven years ago?"

"You will have to give me time to think, my girl. There are so many."

"Now don't you think it is time to come back? Your grandchildren are longing for you."

She never thought that her daughter would ask her to go home. They never had much in common. But, being the grandmother of three grandchildren, she decided to sell everything and go back.

"You can come and stay with us" Carin promised.

She arrived with only her suitcase and her laptop. She stayed for three days. Her daughter moved to another city with her recently divorced husband.

The longing to go back to the Garden Route where the sea is calling, never stops.

## HOW DO I PERFORM A MONOLOGUE?

**THIS IS A MONOLOGUE WHERE YOU ONLY USING THE AUDIENCE AS YOUR SOUNDBOARD:**

**(You will find the same kind of free monologues for different age groups on the Internet.)**

### BENJAMIN

**BY: Ria Vorster**

(Sit and plays with toy car) Brrm ..... Brrm ..... Eek!  
Brrrrrrrrrr ..... Brrrrrrrrrr ..... Brrm .....

This was your favourite little car. I remember how it irritated me when you pushed it all around the room. Over the furniture, my shoes, here, there with your 'Brrrr..... Brrrm..... Eek!"

"Mother!" I used to scream, "come and talk to Ben before I stomp on his car! Sometimes I would snatch it from you and hurl it across the room. Then I would really get annoyed when you start crying bitterly ..... (Picks up toy) I miss you Bennie ..... How I wish I had never been so nasty to you ..... I wonder if there are toy cars in heaven for you to play with?"

I wonder if there is alcohol in heaven? Dad would like that. And if its free, he will never wish he was back here on earth. All that evening at Uncle Frank's I wondered whether we would get home safely. The grown-ups spent so much time around the pub. Honestly Benjamin, at one stage I really considered asking Dad if we couldn't go home, but I was afraid he would scold me, and perhaps even a hiding when we get home. By that time, you had already fallen asleep on the couch. I remember Auntie Martha covered you with a little blanket. When we eventually left, she told Mom we could return it later. In the car, Mother held you on her lap as you slept on.

I can't remember why Daddy started driving so fast. I had dozed off. I woke suddenly with Dad shouting something at Mom. She must have said something terrible to him for him to racing that way. They started a terrible row. I had never been so scared in my whole life. "Please Daddy, please don't drive so fast! ..... Daddy we're going to crash ..... Please Daddy listen to me ..... Daddy look out! ..... The light's red ..... Daddy stop! Daddy!!!

I wonder if you know that the little girl in the other car was also killed? Perhaps you have already met each other in Heaven. Her mother is in a wheelchair now .....

Today is your birthday. You would have been seven to-day. Mother would have arranged a birthday party for you. I keep imagining how you would have blown out all the candles at once, then they would have sung: "Happy birthday dear Bennie, happy birthday to you .....

If Dad had not ignored that red light .....

(Starts to cry.)

**This character will have different emotions. Longing, sadness, fear, panic and emotional.**

**Once again take care not to mask your face. The same will apply when you talk to an imaginary character. You will talk to the person from a 'skew' angle.**

## **A MONOLOGUE FROM A PLAY**

**'The Misunderstanding' by Ria Vorster.**

**Once again, first make your announcement: 'I will be portraying the sister in law from the play 'The Misunderstanding' by Ria Vorster.**

**(Peter will be the imaginary character you will talk to.)**

"Hallo Peter! Where have you been? I've been looking all over for you. You went to Suzie!? What for? I never gave you instructions! What is going on between the two of you? Oh really? You've been there almost every day. I don't care if she is your sister! What is she using you for? This is your home, but you are never here when I need you! It is Suzie this, and Suzie that. I'm getting sick and tired of her attitude! Excuse me? What did you just say? Don't get emotional, it is OK, I'm sorry if I've been to harsh on you. What is the matter? Cancer?! But she never told me? I'm so sorry, it must be because of my attitude. Oh, I'm so sorry. Please take me to her."

**The emotions of this character will vary from nasty, to sympathetic to shock and then shame.**

# COURSE MATERIAL

## ACTING SKILLS

### DAY SEVEN

#### MIME



#### What must I wear?

- Preferably black tights and black t-shirt with no designs on the material to distract.
- Short white gloves
- Barefoot

#### Must I paint my face white?

- Not really. But if you feel good by telling your mime with your face white, you're welcome.
- Just remember that the 'teardrop' will only be suitable for a sad story where you will bring out the crying.
- Red lips are important to show the emotions.

#### How do I make my announcement?

- By drawing on a big white board with a black marker your 'Theme'.
- It must be big enough for the audience to read.
- Before you start, go centre stage, lift the board for a few seconds, then put it aside.

#### What are the techniques of mime?

- No lip language. Only a big wide-open mouth when needed.
- Very big and slow movements.
- Your senses used must be exaggerated. BIG see, BIG smell, BIG hear, BIG taste, BIG feel.
- Remember when you pick something up, it must show in your muscles that it is heavy.
- If you drink from a cup, remember to put it down on our imaginary table before you continue with the next action. (Or else your cup will fall to the floor and brake into pieces!)
- If you write something, there is a pen between your two fingers, so the space between the two fingers and the grip of the fingers must show it.
- Anything that you are holding must show how you are holding it.

#### Am I allowed to use props?

- Yes, only something to sit on.
- Anything else, for example a table must be imagined.

#### Can I use the stage?

- Yes, proper stage planning is of the utmost importance.
- Once again, take care not to mask your face. Always act with an angle facing the audience.

## IMPROVISATION

- Is when you perform without any preparation and on the spur of the moment.
- It helps with your acting skills including your mental capabilities.
- Many monologues are created from improvisation.
- It might also be expected from you do to improvisation when you go for an audition.
- It can also be a lot of fun discovering your talent as an actor or even as an author!

So, if you follow the rules, you will be successful:

Number one:

Improvisation exists of the following components:

- An Introduction
- A middle section
- A climax
- An ending.

Number two:

The duration is between three and five minutes.

Number three:

Make use of the stage.

Number four:

No costume is needed for you do not know what kind of theme you will have to improvise!

Number five:

It is like an unprepared monologue. It is not telling a story for example like dramatized prose. You are the single character and can use an imaginary character to assist in your act.

Number six:

Make use of levels.

- Sit on a chair
- Jump on a chair
- Lay flat on the floor for a few seconds if you must!

Number seven:

- You can use requisites if they are available for example:
  - A book
  - A coffee mug
  - Pen and paper etc.

Number eight:

Use dramatic pauses and building your climax to capture the attention of the audience and keep them spell bound.

Number nine:

Focus on one place where the story is taking place. For example:

- In a room
- A shop
- A garden
- A kitchen
- A lounge

Any place that will suit your scene.

NEVER MOVE OUT FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE GARDEN AND THEN INTO THE GARAGE. STAY IN ONE PLACE. YOU WILL WALK THROUGH WALLS AND DOORS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT THERE BUT ONLY IN YOUR MIND. DO NOT GET YOURSELF INTO TO TROUBLE.

Number ten:

Give your improv a name for example

- 'A scary moment'
- 'The surprise' etc.

After you had very quickly in your mind did your stage planning and placed your prop where needed. You breathe, go MF and make your announcement. Never say it was 'written' by you. Just say 'A scary moment'

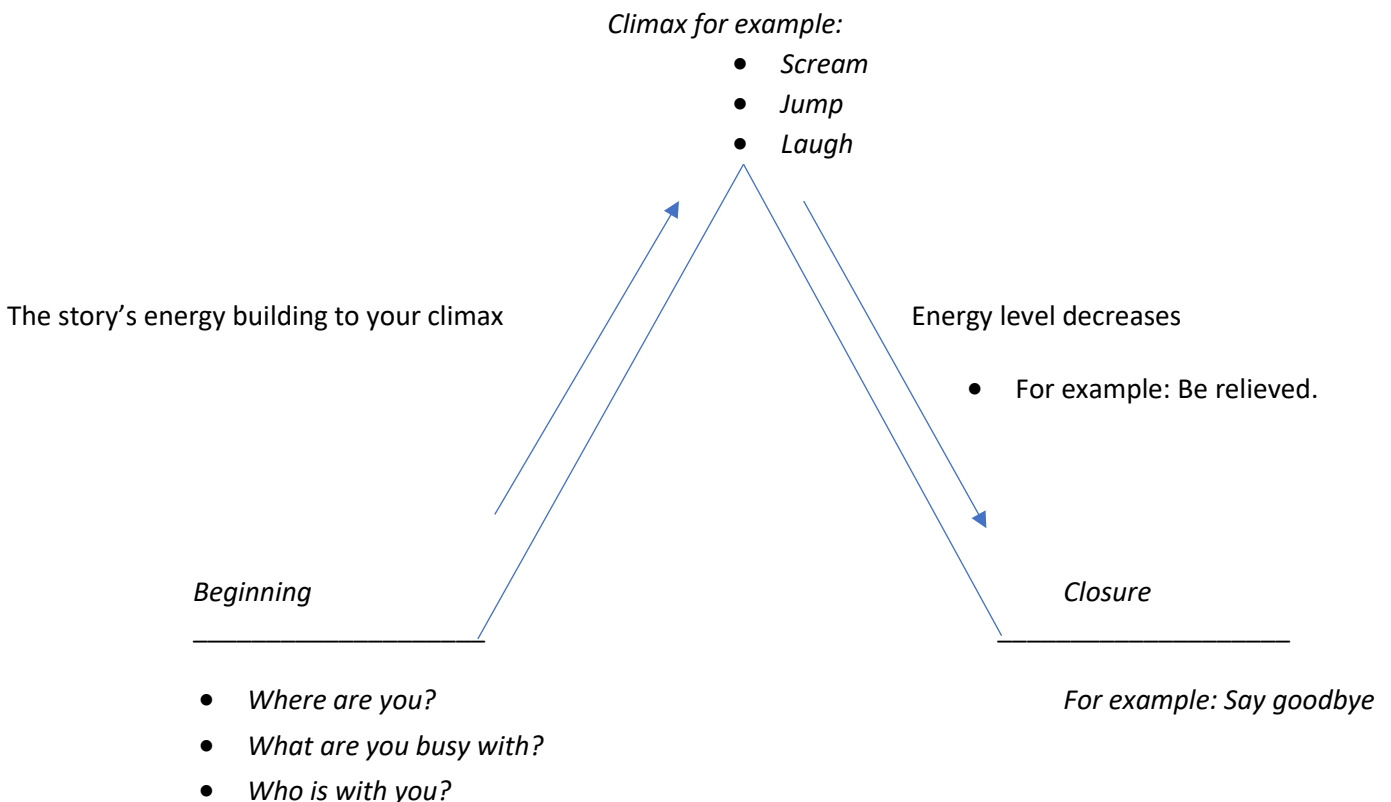
Number eleven:

Go to the place you want to start. Breathe, count three and begin.

At the end, when you're done, just freeze for a few seconds. Don't just walk off the stage or even say: "Well that's it." Stay in character up to the end!

Number twelve:

If you obey the following structure your will be great:



Please note:

If your improvisation is three minutes, divide it as follows:

- Beginning – ½ Minute
- Building climax – ½ Minute
- Climax – 1 Minute
- Decreasing climax – ½ Minute
- Closure – ½ Minute.

**FINALLY:**

Always remember to use your emotion and feelings completely.

- Feel the pain from within.
- Cry from your stomach,
- Laugh from your stomach.
- Scream with your heart.
- Love with your body.

**GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY!**