

Devised drama is - original and creative. The difference between devised and scripted is the text. The text is the starting point for scripted drama and the finishing point for devised drama. It is exciting, challenging and gives a freedom to bring ideas and creativity.

Devised drama creates a performance text.

Devised drama allows students to communicate their own emotions, passions, ideas and energy. It extends the actor and allows exploration and discoveries raising other people's awareness. When devised in groups it ensures teamwork.

Brief history – Devised drama can be traced back to the Greeks with its roots in ritual. In the 14th Century the Trade Guilds devised their own versions of Bible stories for performance.

In Shakespeare's time Hamlet had the players redraft an old play Marriage of Gonzago. Bottom and his company in A Midsummer Night's Dream devise a play based on the story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Commedia dell'Arte was popular in the 15th, 16th and 17th century in Europe and is a form of collaborative devised theatre. Today devised theatre is alive and well.

Devising is now standard with all theatre courses starting at primary school through to NCEA, Scholarship and Drama Schools. The process has no defined right or wrong way, but the outcome shows its success.

A starting point would be deciding your topic. A stimulus could be –

- Theme
- Issue
- Newspaper article
- Photograph
- Historical figure
- Character
- Poem
- Music
- Myth
- Story

Explore elements and conventions – e.g. Brainstorm, research, mime, improvise, image, freeze frame, dance, song, different endings, chorus of voice, spoken thoughts. It's important to play first, before setting structurally.

With older students consider a theorist like Stanislavski and look at the super-objective, through-line, the magic 'if', emotional memory, and key questions to further develop text. Research develops the deviser's depth of understanding of issues and topics. Research can be thematic, historical or literary.

When you write your text this implies ownership. The text will emerge and writing gives it validity. Annotation gives it life. Annotate the text for motivation and techniques. Remember less is more and cut unnecessary text. Work it and ensure the objective is still being met and the target reached (if it's still relevant). Structure your text and check for tension, conflict and resolution.

Ask these questions –

- Does the style of theatre work?
- Is it in the time limit?
- Is there a coherent and conceptual link between form and content?
- How did the role emerge?
- How does space compliment intention?
- What style of acting is being used?
- How did rehearsal contribute to performance?
- What was the process used? The script – When using an original poem or other text as a stimulus for devised work, bear in mind that the original stimulus should be no more than 25% of the final material presented.