

Robyn Horn
Directing Philosophy

My approach to directing encompasses the roles of collaborator, coach, and editor. Shifting between these different roles throughout the rehearsal process helps me craft a cohesive and compelling production while fostering the agency and artistry of each member of the company.

Collaborator

My first collaboration is always with the playwright. I have been fortunate to work directly with three playwrights on world-premiere productions, but most often this collaboration is mediated through the script. The play text serves as a compass, guiding my conceptual stance and orienting my approach to auditions and rehearsals. For example, my rehearsal schedule for *The Thanksgiving Play* included unstructured time for discussions and activities designed to build ensemble and promote a playful and co-creative work environment. I begin most blocking rehearsals by asking the actors to follow their instincts. Regardless of whether these instinctual choices make it into the final blocking, the practice provides a glimpse of the actor's embodied understanding of the scene and relationships with their scene partners, uncovering a layer of nuance beneath what is revealed in table work.

Coach

I do not come to the process with an idealized version of the characters; my aim is to find the character within each actor. I am selective about what feedback I give when, and how it is delivered. I regularly evaluate what notes can be given orally, those that actors need to work through on their feet, and those that actors might process more fully if put in writing. I generally believe in giving notes publicly when they are about intention, relationship, blocking, or pace, because hearing other actors' notes helps move the company toward a unified vision for the play. However, when a note is rooted in acting technique, I prefer a one-on-one approach followed by practical work. Even when working with professional actors, I view the rehearsal process as a period of learning and discovery that will contribute to personal and technical growth after the curtain comes down.

Editor

As I work with actors to determine which choices best serve the story, I am also considering and reconsidering the production details that will illuminate themes, enhance tone, or clarify action and pace. Many of these details are production-specific—I may work closely with a sound designer, for example, to perfect a specific cue or collaborate on a preshow playlist that sets the tone for the play—but areas that I consistently curate are transitions between scenes and moments of theatrical magic or heightened realism. I craft transitions as storytelling devices, integrating actors in scenic changes to maintain narrative flow. Creating moments of theatrical magic is a particular area of strength. A recent proud success was substituting quiet, paper snow from an obscure magic trick for artificial snow from a noisy, noxious stage snow machine in my production of *The Natural Horse* at Alleyway. I find such discoveries particularly rewarding, with designers, technicians, and actors all making creative contributions to a moment that ignites an audience's imagination.

A successful production is one in which both the product and the process are meaningful, rewarding, and inspiring. Even as production pressure mounts, I strive to model grace, humor, and humility during rehearsals. Sometimes, of course, this is an exercise in acting! But most often it comes naturally, as I am enlivened and uplifted by the theatre-making process, especially when working with young artists.