Suggestions for

Writing in the Theatre of the Mind

Information Sheet

Get your listener hooked at the very beginning. If you don't get your listener hooked early, the rest of the play may never be heard. Bring your listener into the story with an action scene or a dangerous/intriguing setting (both, if possible). Suspense is critical. Establish a situation that begs for answers (conflict), then feed them those answers in small doses that lead up to a dramatic climax and resolution.

Make your main character likeable. The listener must care what happens to your main character.

Let's say your main character is Rachel. Your listener must be concerned about Rachel's well being. If your listener likes your Rachel, and you put her into a situation where her well being is threatened, you are on your way to developing suspense.

Make your villain (antagonist) mean, hateful, or frightening. The contrast between protagonist and antagonist is essential. There should be no doubt in the listener's mind about how bad the “bad guy” is.

Alternate between tension and humor. One way to do this is to create one character (not necessarily the main character) who responds to tense situations with humor. Another suggestion would be to have your characters do the unexpected.

Build toward the climax (the high point in suspense). It is the build to this high point that makes the play worth listening to. Returning to your main character: Rachel must be liked, her well being must be threatened, and the threat must be sustained with growing intensity until the threat is resolved explosively.

Establish a mood and develop meaning. The music, the sound effects, the dialogue, the narration (if any) must work together to create a sense of harmony. One element should not clash with the others. Every word, every scene, every effect must have a purpose in developing the story. Cut out any element if it doesn't contribute.

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