

## **A STUDY OF THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL DEMANDS OF DIRECTING ON UNDERGRADUATE PLAY DIRECTORS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Play directors face emotional and mental challenges in the course of their creative work and the managerial complexities of overseeing cast and crew in play production. Directing in the theatre demands a diverse array of skills, and this demand leads directors to frequently experience stress and burnout. Conditions in academic settings compound directors' need to balance the burdens of play productions with their academic obligations, especially in the Department of Theatre Arts, where there seems to be non-stop activities. There is a dearth of research on mental and emotional stress faced by directors, especially undergraduate directors in Nigeria. The extant literature in this area is mainly focused on foreign professional directors. This study, therefore, investigates the mental and emotional stressors among student directors to identify their coping mechanisms and shed light on the psychological effects of directing on student directors in Nigeria. In this research, four student directors of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, were randomly selected for their dexterity and levels of experience. Their directing processes were recorded. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the directors to investigate stressors, coping mechanisms, and academic balance within the demands of directing, and data were thematically and theatrically analysed. Ethical considerations were prioritised, ensuring voluntary participation and comfort. Using Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Stress (1984) as its framework, the study finds that emotional and mental demands of directing combined with academic activities profoundly impact the well-being of student play directors. Anxiety, stress, emotional hangovers, severe moods, and depression are some of the noticeable mental and psychological patterns among student directors. The study concludes that even though student directors face significant and varied mental and emotional demands from play directing, they should develop emotional intelligence and effective communication skills to manage conflicts, give

constructive criticism, and create a welcoming and positive atmosphere while directing. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by student directors, and it recommends the setting up of strong mental health support networks, the introduction of comprehensive mental health resources, de-stigmatising assistance-seeking, and cultivating a culture that promotes the well-being of play directors and performers in both academic and professional theatres.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional demands, play directors, Student directors, mental health, de-stigmatising.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The role of a director is multifaceted and involves collaboration, communication, leadership, and artistic vision. Directing brings special psychological obstacles in addition to great creative fulfilment and the delight of seeing a project through to completion. Directors are under constant pressure to produce outstanding results, with a rigorous workload and high expectations. Stress, worry, and burnout can result from constantly balancing the demands of the creative, practical, and interpersonal spheres. Being a director is a tough and intricate job that calls for a special combination of emotional intelligence, artistic vision, and leadership abilities. Numerous pressures and difficulties that directors encounter might negatively affect their emotional and mental health. The overall artistic vision of a production is the responsibility of the director, and this can be a very fulfilling creative process. However, pressure, anxiety, and self-doubt can also result from this responsibility. High standards set by audiences, critics, and producers frequently weigh on directors.

A unique set of skills is required for the demanding and challenging job of a director in the theatre. Play directors have a lot of emotionally and mentally demanding work to do. Managing a large cast and crew, producing a hit show, and facing constant criticism and public scrutiny are just a few of the reasons behind these demands. The directing process involves significant mental exercise. A study by Culbertson and Schmidt (2016) found that 80% of directors reported experiencing stress, and 50% reported experiencing burnout. Another study by Cook (2020) found that directors often face a few challenges to their emotional well-being, including high expectations and pressure to succeed, long hours and demanding workloads, interpersonal conflict and difficult relationships, creative self-doubt and fear of failure. Directors must possess the creative and strategic thinking abilities to manage deadlines and minute details. They must also be able to articulate their

vision to their cast and crew in a way that motivates them to create their best work. In addition to these general mental demands, play directors face several challenges. They need to be able to comprehend the play they are directing in-depth to produce an interesting stage production. They also need to be able to work well with actors to create characters that are believable and memorable. Emotional demands in directing can be just as great as intellectual ones. Directors must be resilient in addition to handling the criticism that follows a successful production. They must also be able to regulate their own emotions and avoid taking criticism personally. For their actors to create performances that are both believable and emotionally impactful, they must be able to support their emotional needs. They must also be able to tolerate the play's intense emotional content without becoming overwhelmed by it.

A director's workload can be excessive, particularly in the last few weeks of a production. Directors frequently put in long workdays, even during weekends. Feelings of fatigue, burnout, and even depression may result from this. There is a popular saying coined by James Howell (1659), which says, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy". This means constant work and no break or relaxation can be injurious to the health of an individual. There is a general misconception about students of the Department of Theatre Arts that all they do is play. This is a misunderstanding. This is because, though Thespians do play, the play is their work. This uninformed thinking would mean students of the department of Theatre Arts do not go through stress or rigorous academic activities. Directing students goes through a lot of stress and educational workload right from the beginning of their first semester, and it continues into the second semester. The production of full-length plays for their practical projects sometimes sends some of these directors into depression and weighs heavily on them mentally. "Choboi", which means "the show must go on" in Nigerian university theatre parlance, is what keeps these students going.

There is, however, a dearth of research on the mental and emotional stress faced by directors, especially student directors in Nigeria. The extant literature in this area is mainly focused on foreign professional directors with little or no attention paid to the emotional demands of students, and this area needs serious academic and research attention. This study, therefore, investigates mental and emotional stressors among student directors to identify their coping mechanisms and shed light on the psychological effects of directing on student directors in Nigeria. The study illuminates the profound impact of directing on the psychological well-being of individual students engaged in this demanding craft. And by examining the experiences of student directors, identifying the stressors they face, and exploring their coping strategies, the research provides valuable insights into promoting

resilience, fostering well-being, and creating a sustainable and supportive environment for directors to thrive in their artistic endeavours.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Stress**

The proposed model of stress and coping (1987) and Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Stress (1984) by Lazarus and Folkman were the bases for the study. The primary and secondary cognitive appraisals are the processes via which an individual processes any stressor before choosing a coping strategy to deal with it. In stressful conditions, people's perceptions are significantly influenced by cognitive appraisal. When attempting to comprehend the mental and emotional strain that student play directors experience, the Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Stress is especially pertinent. These individuals' cognitive assessments of different pressures have a substantial impact on their overall well-being as they manage the dual tasks of play directing and academics. According to the hypothesis, people use a two-stage cognitive process to assess a stressor's significance:

1. **Primary Appraisal:** People evaluate the circumstance or event to ascertain its possible relevance at this point. This entails determining whether the incident has any bearing on their well-being and, if so, categorising it as stressful, irrelevant, or benign-positive. The event moves on to the next appraisal level if it is thought to be stressful.
2. **Secondary Appraisal:** After completing the main assessment, people evaluate their capacity to handle the stressor. This entails assessing their coping mechanisms, abilities, and resources. Whether the person feels capable of managing or controlling the issue is discovered by the secondary appraisal. The mental and physical reactions to stress are influenced by the perceived capacity for coping.

Cognitive Appraisal Theory posits that people's subjective perceptions of events, rather than the events themselves, determine how stressed out they are. Depending on how each person interprets the event, two people may react differently to the same external stressor. Practical implications for stress management interventions arise from an understanding of stress via the lens of the Cognitive Appraisal Theory. Interventions can work to lessen the negative effects of stressors on people's mental and physical health by improving coping mechanisms and addressing individuals' assessments.

The importance of mental health has been a topic of discussion for a long time, but society has only recently started to pay more attention to it. Mental health

is now being recognised as a crucial aspect of overall well-being, and this is evident in various fields of study, including theatre. A theatre director is an expert in the theatre who unifies many production endeavours and components. He supervises and plans the staging of a play, opera, dance, drama, musical theatre performance, etc. In addition to leading the creative team members toward the realisation of their artistic vision, the director's duties also include overseeing the quality and thoroughness of theatre productions (Smith, 2023). This means that the director works in tandem with a group of imaginative people as well as other personnel to plan and carry out research and development for every facet of the production, encompassing both the technical and artistic components (Morley, 2014). For a typical show, the technical aspects are set design, lighting design, sound design, theatrical properties (props), costume design, and stagecraft. Stage combat, dancing, orchestra, chants, and acting are all part of the performance (Cruse et al., 1999). Play directing is "the uses to which the flora and fauna of an author's script or ideas are recreated artistically and scientifically on stage before an audience". It is the *Regisseur* or *Metteur en scene*, or more accurately, the professional director, who has the responsibility for this recreation process (Albright et al, 1955).

Directing in university theatres places certain demands on the director because his job goes beyond simply seeing the act come to life on stage. Here, the theatre director is expected to deliver much more. Since this is educational theatre, the director is required to do more than just locate the cast and crew. Additionally, he/she instructs the crew as well as the actors in the art of theatre performance. The most experienced artist in the play-production process should be the director. This is because he/she oversees the production's primary artistic decisions. But before making these choices, the director carefully considers the play in the light of the performance space and his/her other options. In an academic setting, a play director not only imparts knowledge and skills to the cast and crew of the production but also teaches them these skills because these productions are typically academic exercises that benefit not only the participating students but also the entire Theatre Arts Department and the campus community's general education and entertainment. Most of the time, the director selects plays that can help teach the many aspects of production (Johnson, 2020).

It can be incredibly demanding to work as a director for theatre, television, or movies. The director could be responsible for overseeing the cast and staff, making a lot of important decisions, and juggling the needs of the production in a condensed amount of time. According to Mental Health UK, there are detrimental effects of directing on directors' health:

The pressure is potentially huge. The hours are long, and the days are often relentless. Frequently, we are required to work away from home and family for long periods. On top of that, despite being seen as top dog, there are often many other managers – funders, financiers, commissioners, producers, etc. who can make sudden demands, many of them unreasonable, but seemingly inevitable in such a result- and deadline-oriented business with such big budgets. These pressures can be huge and insurmountable (Frith, 2022).

The shift to an autonomous, adult life that comes with university study can be stressful. Many students find that starting their studies can be stressful because it requires them to make new friends, improve time management skills, deal with overwork, adjust to a new programme, and frequently even move (Teixeira et al., 2021; Beiter *et al.*, 2015). Later in the process, attending university is linked to other stressors, like worries about finding a job once one graduates. Research to date indicates that a growing number of students are experiencing stress and that many find it difficult to manage these pressures (Gallagher, 2008; Mackenzie et al, 2011). Among other things, stress is detrimental to mental health (Beiter *et al.*, 2015; Wirkus et al, 2021). According to Beiter *et al.* (2015), approximately 10% of US university students reported having depression; since 2000, this percentage has risen to 15%. (Hunt, 2016).

The cognitive appraisal theory of stress, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), states that psychological stress can arise when people believe that demands from their environment pose a threat to their health. The appraisal component is the process of comparing one's capacity for adjustment to the demands of the situation. Individuals experience stress when they believe that the demands of their environment exceed their available resources. As a result, this transactional process has a substantial impact on how people perceive psychological stress and the coping mechanisms they choose to use.

Anxiety, stress, and depression are twice as common in performers, including acting students, as in the general population, according to research. In “Demands of Acting Hurting Performers’ Mental Health” (2015), it is stated that emotional hangovers, severe moods, and issues in their personal life might result from the deep emotions that actors must access and portray when playing a part. The body of research highlights the dearth of candid conversations and expert assistance on psychological health in the performing arts. Despite the comparison between a therapist and a client in the interaction between directors and performers, the study found that there is a lack of open communication or professional assistance sought for psychological well-being in the performing arts sector (Robb, 2017)

Research by Karkou *et al.* (2019) and Loughran (2018) offers insightful analyses of the emotional and psychological difficulties faced by theatre directors. Directors oversee creating a safe space where performers can take emotional risks, provide emotional support, and feel emotionally accountable for the welfare of the entire cast and crew. Strong mental health support networks are crucial in the theatrical setting, and the complex nature of these emotional relationships adds complexities to the directing position. Promoting a sustainable and healthy environment for those participating in the art of theatre requires setting up comprehensive mental health resources, de-stigmatising assistance-seeking, and cultivating a culture of well-being within the theatrical community. The growing awareness of mental health issues in the arts underscores the need for continued study and advocacy initiatives to promote positive change and safeguard the overall health of theatre professionals, including directors.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a qualitative approach given the exploratory nature of the topic and the need for in-depth insights into the experiences of student directors. This choice is adopted because the researchers did not intend to manipulate the variables of interest. This approach ensures that the study's findings are grounded in the specific realities of student directors in the theatre setting. The sampling size for this study was selected from the identified student directors at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State. A total of four student directors were randomly selected. The random sampling technique was used to select a sample from the population in which every member has an equal chance of being included. This technique was utilised to minimise the risk of bias in the sample selection process and allows for more accurate generalisations about the population. By reducing bias, the researchers were able to make valid inferences and draw conclusions that can be applied beyond the sample studied. These participants have different levels of experience as student directors, and there is a mix in the types of productions from the very best of the departmental student directors available, who at some point might have experienced some of the issues under study.

A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions addressing various aspects of the mental and emotional demands of play directing was used to carry out this study. These included questions about responsibilities, stressors, coping mechanisms, and overall experiences. To extract valuable insights from qualitative data that was collected through interviews, non-participant observations, journals, and online articles were used to gather the data. A combination of coding,

interpretation, and analysis techniques was then employed to examine the data using theatrical analysis.

A pilot interview was conducted with a small subset of participants to test the interview guide's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Potential participants were recruited through announcements or direct invitations. After obtaining consent from each participant, explaining the purpose and confidentiality of their participation, the researchers conducted a one-on-one interview with participants in a quiet and comfortable setting, allowing for open and honest discussions. With participant consent, the interviews were recorded for accurate data transcription and analysis.

The questions used in the study were effective in measuring the targeted dimensions and constructs. To ensure their validity and reliability, the study team conducted a thorough assessment of the questions. This included evaluating their face validity, content, and ability to measure the desired constructs. The researcher also assessed the test-retest, intra-rater, and inter-rater reliability of the questions to determine the consistency of the data collected. Overall, the results of these evaluations instil confidence in the quality of the information gathered.

The study adhered to ethical principles and norms to ensure the rights, welfare, and privacy of the participants were safeguarded. Participants were given the option to skip any questions or topics they were not comfortable discussing. The researchers maintained sensitivity when discussing potentially sensitive subjects. Participants were free to leave the study at any time without any consequences. They were also allowed to ask questions and seek clarification before, during, and after they participated in the study. At the end of the study, participants received a debriefing statement outlining the research goals and providing additional resources or support services if needed. Participants were encouraged to contact the researchers if they had any further questions or concerns. The researchers prioritised the welfare of the participants while upholding strict ethical standards to ensure the study's validity and integrity were maintained.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study has been designed to answer the following questions.

### **A. The mental Demands**

1. What are the main psychological obstacles and stressors that directors face?
2. What effects do these pressures and difficulties have on the emotional and mental health of directors?

3. How do directing students combine and balance their rigorous academic work with theatrical directing productions?

**B. The emotional demands**

1. What coping mechanisms and self-care routines do directors follow to keep emotional sanity, handle stress, and avoid burnout?
2. What are the elements that make directors resilient and happy, and what are some ways to nurture these elements?

**C. Follow up question**

What suggestions are there to help directors' mental health and to foster a long-term, healthy work environment in the theatre sector?

**Themes**

As noted in the introduction, the research questions of this study have been themed into two. The mental demand and the emotional demand. The participants have shared their experiences on directing and what they felt mentally and emotionally about directing. They have also discussed how these experiences have shaped their understanding and how they can improve as directors.

**The Mental Demands of Directing on Student Directors in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan**

The term "mental demands" describes the difficulties or requirements on the cognitive and psychological levels related to a specific task, activity, or circumstance. Mental functions, including reasoning, thinking, memory, attention, and decision-making, are required to meet these demands. The phrase is frequently used about work responsibilities, educational pursuits, or any circumstance that calls for cognitive engagement. All these psychological stressors are the mental demands of play directing on student directors from the data provided through interviews in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan.

**The Play Text**

Reading, analysing, and interpreting a play text can be mentally taxing, requiring a variety of cognitive and affective strains. This mental stressor was stated and acknowledged by the four respondents. The first step to bringing any creativity or ideas to life on stage is through reading, understanding, and analysing the play. In this process, the directors go through these mentally challenging processes.

- High levels of literary and linguistic comprehension for analysing and interpreting complex language.
- Directorial choice. Making decisions about the production's interpretation is a common responsibility for directors. Selecting a clear play vision and

making sure that these decisions support the text's intended message are the mental strains.

While these mental stressors can be challenging and exhausting, they may not be particularly bad mentally. Gaining vast knowledge about the history or culture of a people, or basically research, is not bad and should be encouraged. The downside is how these student directors cope with other mental demands required of directing in the academic environment.

### **Time Management**

This refers to arranging, prioritising, and organising the duties and responsibilities involved in managing a theatre production while juggling academic obligations. Student directors are faced with these challenges in time management.

- **Balancing Academic and Directing Responsibilities:** The workload in the University of Ibadan, according to the student participants, is too much. While Theatre Arts is a very demanding course physically, emotionally, and psychologically, there are other academic workloads that are required of the students. This makes their schedule very tight and busy. Also, from the responses of the participants, it is not particularly easy juggling these two together, and one respondent mentioned that at times it is almost as if they were zombies.
- **Rehearsal Scheduling Challenges:** After doing a survey of directors in the department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, it was discovered that there is a rising number of directors by the session in the department. This would mean that there would be a lot of rehearsals in the department, and there was going to be a conflicting schedule with the availability of cast and crew. All the respondents concurred with this hypothesis that there were times when their actors were engaged in too many rehearsals at the same time and that it was difficult getting them to fully commit to a particular production. This challenge then leads to the next mental stressor, meeting the production deadline.

### **Feedback and Criticism**

Student directors frequently put a great deal of time, energy, and originality into their projects. Since their work reflects their artistic vision and efforts, receiving feedback can make them feel vulnerable. Anxiety and tension over the project's perceived success or failure may result from this fear. Unfavourable criticism, particularly when expressed in an unhelpful way, can undermine student directors' self-esteem. It could cause them to doubt their own abilities and self. Feedback from peers, instructors, and the production team can be inconsistent for student directors.

It can be mentally taxing to integrate and balance different points of view. Many student directors often think criticism is a tearing down of their creative ideas, but most times, it is not. Criticism of a director's work is to make the director improve while pointing out what could have been done better. Even though the goal of constructive criticism is to help with skill improvement, it can nevertheless be mentally taxing. It can be difficult to take criticism and incorporate areas for improvement without getting defensive.

### **The Emotional Demands of Play Directing on Student Directors in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan**

Emotional demands are the pressures placed on oneself by a specific role, task, or circumstance on a psychological and emotional level. These requirements include navigating and controlling one's own emotions in addition to comprehending and reacting to those of others. Emotional demands can be found in many facets of life, such as relationships, employment, and personal growth, and they can vary greatly depending on the situation. The psychological, interpersonal, and other pressures that directors encounter when developing and managing a theatrical production are referred to as emotional demands in directing. The interview data of the participants align with the objectives of this study, which aims to identify the psychological and emotional stress that student directors experience on the job. After an analysis of their responses, it has been deduced that these are the emotional Stressors that student directors go through in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan.

### **Interpersonal Relationships**

Relationships with actors, crew, and other collaborators are something that directors must oversee. Effective communication and emotional intelligence are necessary for creating a happy and productive work environment. The article, "Emotional Intelligence" by Salovey and Mayer (1990), is one of the foundational works in the field of emotional intelligence (EI). Salovey and Mayer conceptualized emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities related to the processing and regulation of emotions.

Cast and crew members need to hear the director's vision, expectations, and feedback clearly. Maintaining open and transparent communication can be emotionally taxing, particularly when dealing with different points of view. It can be difficult emotionally to strike a balance between establishing one's authority as a director and creating a supportive, cooperative environment. When making decisions, student directors might find it difficult to weigh other people's opinions.

The respondents mentioned during their interviews that relationships from their personal lives might affect their rehearsal process. So, trying to keep their friends in line with the vision of the production can be emotionally demanding.

### **Conflict Management**

One vital skill directors need to have is conflict management. It plays a significant role in maintaining a positive and productive working environment during production. The business of theatre can be egoistic at times because one must work with a lot of people, some of whom can be talented in their respective art. This could be a problem because student directors might not be paid for their services, and this could lead to a clash of ideas, egos, and decisions. Maintaining relationship dynamics of different persons, coupled with whatever situation the director is going through personally, might prove overwhelming and too much emotionally to handle. One of the respondents gave an example of how in a production he directed, some of his cast members were not forthcoming and were undisciplined with rehearsal, and after a joint decision by the director and the remainder of the cast and crew, this same people turned against him when he was carrying out the punishment that had already been discussed. In this kind of situation, the surprise and the emotional stress on the director can mess the whole production up.

### **The Emotional Impact of the Play**

For student directors, working with a play text can have a substantial emotional cost. Investing time in the script requires thoroughly examining the characters, themes, and overall story. This deep exploration can present several emotional difficulties. The student director must interpret the play text and choose the best way to visualize its themes and ideas. Directors often form emotional connections with the characters, empathizing with their struggles and joys. This emotional investment can be draining, especially when dealing with intense or challenging themes. Certain play texts tackle delicate or contentious subjects that could arouse intense feelings. When presenting these themes, student directors might find it difficult to balance the audience and their own reactions.

During research, we found a play directed by Akinbo David titled *4.8 Psychosis* written by Sarah Kane. In this play, the director approached it by bringing in a psychologist to break down his actors. He did this by personally triggering their experiences from their personal lives and channelling those emotions into the play. At the end of the production, the psychologist was also there to bring them out of that pain and bring them back to reality. This can be a very effective way to bring down actors and build them in the way the director wants. Triggering an actor

without the proper facilities or resources to help the actors can cause more harm than good.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has focused on the mental and emotional demands of directing on undergraduate directors using undergraduate students of the Theatre Arts Department, University of Ibadan as a case study. Play directors face a lot of mental and emotional stress due to the demands of the art of directing. Apart from the artistic demands, directors encounter several interpersonal obstacles. They must convey their vision to the production team, actors, and designers in an effective manner. They also need to establish a cooperative atmosphere, handle conflict, and settle disagreements. Also, during the rehearsal and performance phases, directors should be emotionally accessible to their actors, offering them support and direction. It can be emotionally taxing to work with actors who are experiencing personal or professional challenges. The mental strain of directing is also quite high. Directors need to be capable of critical thought, wise decision-making, and sustained focus. They also need to be adept at managing several projects with tight deadlines. Student directors must negotiate a challenging environment that includes handling interpersonal relationships, leading by example, and interpreting and moulding a play's artistic vision. This journey has its share of thrilling highs and difficult lows, but it also helps aspiring directors develop resilience and useful skills.

As student directors fully immerse themselves in the characters, themes, and subtleties of the script, the emotional toll starts with their intense engagement with the play text. Student directors bear a heavy burden when it comes to interpretation. The decision-making process adds another level of emotional complexity to the directorship by requiring a careful balancing act between one's own artistic expression and one's comprehension of the play's intended message. The emotional demands are further increased by the interpersonal interactions. Emotional intelligence and effective communication are necessary for managing conflicts, giving constructive criticism, and creating a welcoming and positive atmosphere. This is where leadership dynamics come into play. Managing feedback and criticism from instructors and peers is another area where student directors are emotionally pushed. They are vulnerable to the effects of evaluations because they have invested personal creativity and effort, and it is a constant struggle to control these reactions while retaining motivation and confidence.

Despite these difficulties, the mental and emotional strain of play directing presents numerous chances for development, self-discovery, and the improvement of

critical abilities. As they deal with obstacles, disagreements, and the need to perform well, student directors learn how to be resilient. The process of creating becomes a furnace for developing the emotional intelligence, flexibility, and effective communication skills that are essential for success in both the creative and professional spheres.

Educational institutions can be very important in creating a safe and encouraging environment. A positive learning environment for student directors is enhanced by offering mentorship, fostering open communication, and stressing the value of self-care. Destigmatizing the difficulties involved in play directing also comes from acknowledging the emotional demands as a necessary component of learning.

In the end, undergraduate directors who take on the mental and emotional challenges of play directing not only produce engaging theatrical productions but also grow into strong, compassionate, and competent individuals who are prepared to pursue prosperous careers in the entertainment and media industries and beyond.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The thorough examination of the psychological and emotional tolls that play directing takes on undergraduate directors offers insightful information about the opportunities and difficulties that come with being a director. The following suggestions are put forth to create a nurturing and stimulating environment for student directors:

- Theatre Arts Departments should include workshops in the theatre curriculum that address stress management and mental health awareness.
- Student directors should have access to personalized services. Having a private area to talk about worries, anxieties, and personal struggles can be very beneficial to their mental health.
- Departments should run training courses aimed at helping student directors become emotionally intelligent by placing a strong emphasis on self-awareness, empathy, and effective communication techniques.
- Departments should promote the development of an upbeat and welcoming rehearsal space, while encouraging a spirit of respect and unity among the crew and actors. Student directors can gain from tactics that encourage teamwork, such as opening lines of communication, recognizing the importance of all team members.

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