

Guidelines for Effective Use of Drama in Resort Settings

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Drama in resort settings is a tool that can either draw and touch the heart of the masses, or destroy any relationships and credibility of the ministry personnel. Drama can work in resort settings when the effort is made to relate it to the special situations and needs of the visitors.

Large scale, professional efforts such as passion plays or dinner theater are generally beyond the scope, capability, and budget of most resort missions projects. Thus, there is a need to focus on drama on the small scale. In the typical resort project, drama is used to supplement family programs or worship services on beaches, in campgrounds, etc. It is performed by volunteers who have gathered as a special staff. Often there is little practice time with the entire group. There is pressure to perform, however, and have a meaningful program.

With all this in mind, it is helpful to consider the following guidelines:

1. Staging, sound, props, and lighting systems should be simple to use and effective for the audience and setting (indoors and outdoors).
 - a. Effective resort drama takes advantage of the natural staging to assure visibility by the audience. A raised wall or platform or natural amphitheater can help. Remember, action or props on ground level cannot be seen by most of the audience, thus reducing effectiveness.
 - b. One of the greatest problems of outdoor drama situations is enabling the participants to be heard by the audience. Movement, lack of mobile sound equipment, and competing noises all hinder the sound from reaching the audience. Efforts must be made to overcome this problem.
 - c. Props used in resort drama should be easy to use. As a general rule, it is better to understate the obvious with props and take advantage of the power of suggestion.
2. Participants should practice developing a stage presence.
 - a. Being comfortable with the role and costuming and familiar with the material, enables the actor to better communicate his or her message. Even in simple skits, it helps when the participants make the effort to learn dramatic action and skills. It is helpful to remember that not all volunteers are Oscar- winning material.
 - b. While realizing that most volunteers involved in resort drama are not professionals, a professional attitude and effort on their part is necessary to ensure a competent and credible witness.
3. As a general rule, short (5-10 minutes) drama segments are more potent than longer ones. Resort program audiences generally tend to lose interest if action drags or if the subject matter takes too long to develop and present. By the same token, unless it is extremely well done and is highly visible, mime performances or silent action skits do not hold audiences.

4. Resort drama must be lively in action, sound, and picture. To capture, hold, and communicate to a vacationing audience, the material must present a scene of high energy and action.
5. Subject matter should be in keeping with the general message of the gospel and the specific effort or theme of the program.
 - a. Many times resort drama presents skits that include tricks played on someone. All too often, what we think of as funny and acceptable communicates a message contrary to that of love and acceptance. There is no room for skits that degrade, make fun of, or isolate at the expense of an individual or group.
 - b. Efforts should be made to select material that relates in language and subject to the secular world and that communicates religious truths that the world needs to hear.
6. Audience participation, whether by sound or individuals chosen to act, should be set quickly and use only those who desire to participate.

Note: Instructions for any audience participation must be presented quickly and clearly to avoid loss of interest and flow.

Adapted from an article by Bill Black in the 1993 National Resort Ministries Conference notebook. Used by permission.