

The Art of Critique

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I. Why We Need Critique

- A. Feedback is part of the writing process
- B. Better songs faster
- C. Growth as an artist

II. How to Solicit and Give Useful Feedback

- A. The Liz Lerman Critical Response Format
- B. Adapting the format to various situations

LIZ LERMAN CRITICAL RESPONSE

Details: http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2003/10/toward_a_proces.php

This process was developed by Liz Lerman from The Dance Exchange in Washington, D.C.

ROLES

1. The Responders

The responsibilities of the responders are twofold: 1) not to bring their own agenda to the work they are responding to and 2) have a desire for the artist to do her/his best work. Responders are attempting to help the artist create her/his piece, not to create their own.

2. The Artist

The responsibility of the artist is to be honest and open. The artist needs to be in a place where they can question their own work in a somewhat public environment. It is the motivation and meaning of the creator that is the basis on which feedback is given, so the artist should be very clear about her/his intent.

3. The Facilitator

In a group setting it is best if one person is designated as the facilitator and that this person be very conscious of the responders in the group. The facilitator should never dominate the dialogue. If discussing more than one piece, sometimes it works to rotate the facilitator position. It is good to limit the number of responses from one responder until all have had the chance to say something in any given step.

PROCESS STEPS

1. Affirmation and Observation

Responders give the artist either positive feedback about the work or moments that affected them. People want to hear that what they have just completed has meaning. The artist must work to really hear the comments. Responders need to try to make the palette of responses as wide as possible. Be specific and expansive in the use of vocabulary about the work.

2. Artist Questions Responders

Artist asks the responders questions about the work. Be specific; nothing is too insignificant. The more the artist clarifies what s/he is working on, the more meaningful becomes the dialogue.

3. Responders Question Artist

Responders ask neutral questions of the artist about the work. It is very important not to be judgmental in the phrasing of the questions. This is a chance for the responders to help the artist step back and analyze the work. If given the chance, most criticisms can be stated or explored in this step in a neutral fashion.

4. Criticisms and Opinions

If there is a criticism that can't be stated in the form of a neutral question, responders can express opinions about the work to the artist after they have asked permission of the artist. The artist is allowed to refuse at any time. The opinions should be positive criticism, based on problem-solving techniques. It may seem redundant to ask permission for every single criticism, but it is very important. This gives the artist control of this very sensitive step and creates a dialogue, albeit a very basic one.