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## For young actors, plays mirrors reality

### They, too, must face tough choices

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For the umpteenth time on a recent weeknight, James Vesce had had enough. He had a play to direct but too many of the actors were tardy and too many of the ones who were on stage were talking. Others had simply vanished.

The cast knew they were in trouble when Vesce called them into a circle. A circle is never good. After weeks of rehearsals, the young actors and actresses didn't know all of their lines, but they knew that much.

"You guys have got to work with me," Vesce said to the circle. "You're not even listening now. Great. It's all over. The fastest a play has ever been over. You should be proud."

Smirks erased, heads down, the

cast members took the director's outburst like professionals, which they are not. Instead, they are teenagers searching for direction. Many of them are tempted by trouble, some are touched by tragedy, and all say they are trying to do right on stage as well as off.

Staging the play is more than a story of art imitating life: It's a reflection. Opening Thursday at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester, "Brother to Brother" follows two teenagers - one heading to college, one dealing drugs at home - and their attempts to influence their younger brother between the show's hip-hop dance numbers.

As cast members say they do most every day, the characters must choose: good or bad, school or street, THEATER, Page 20



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Director James Vesce (right) rehearses with Jihad Scudder, 14, who portrays a boy facing tough choices in the play "Brother to Brother."

